

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**December 10, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting

VOTING MEMBERS

Agriculture: Sarah Lopez
AMBAG: Steve McShane
At-Large: Dan Haifley
At-Large: Gary Hoffmann
At-Large: PJ Webb
Business & Industry: Tom Rowley
CA Coastal Commission: absent
CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife: Paul Reilly
CA EPA: absent
CA Resources Agency: Tova Handelman

CA State Parks: Eric Abma
Commercial Fishing: absent
Conservation: Rachel Kippen
Diving: Brian Nelson
Education: Pamela Neeb Wade
Harbors: John Haynes
Recreation: Gary Pezzi
Recreational Fishing: Jose Montes
Research: John Hunt
Tourism: Mike Bekker

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Channel Islands NMS: absent
College: Jacob Winnikoff
Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank
NMS: Brian Johnson
U.S. Coast Guard: LTJG Chris Bell

Monterey Bay NMS: Lisa Wooninck
Elkhorn Slough NERR: Dan Brumbaugh
National Marine Fisheries Service: Steven Lindley

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Cynthia Matthews – At-Large
Keith Rootsart – Diving
Adam Helm – Recreational Fishing
Steven Haddock – Research

Dawn Mathes – Tourism
Chelsea Protasio – CDFW
LTJG Andrew Ireland – USCG
Dawn Hayes – MBNMS

I. Call to Order

Chair Brian Nelson called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Roll call was taken by Secretary Sarah Lopez

Approval of August Meeting Minutes: with 3 editorial suggestions by Paul Reilly
Motion by Dan Haifley, seconded by PJ Webb
Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstain: 1

MOTION: Passed

II. STANDING ITEM: MBNMS Superintendent's Report

Superintendents' Reports

New MBNMS Superintendent, Lisa Wooninck, shared the Report for MBNMS. Look for her to set up "office hours" in town to facilitate meeting those of you who can make it.

1. [Reconstituted Sanctuaries Caucus](#) in the US House of Representatives, Jimmy Panetta and Salud Carbajal are members, see link above for the full list of bipartisan members.
2. Notices of Intent to designate [Chumash Heritage](#) and [Paphānaumokuākea](#) as national marine sanctuaries have been posted and comments are being received. Please be sure to share the links.
3. ONMS is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2022, there is a dedicated 50th Anniversary [web](#) page with a video, new posters, a webinar series and a social media [tool kit](#) with key information, themes, suggested postings, logos and more.
4. [MBNMS Revised Management Plan and Regulations](#) published Nov 15th
5. 2021 Staff presented with numerous top awards
 - a. Steve Lonhart, NOS Employee of the Year
 - b. Pam Krone, NOS Team Member of the Year
 - c. Andrew White and WCR Team member Nishan Perera, NOS Special Award
 - d. Chelsea Prindle Sea to Shining Sea Award
6. The determination by Superintendent Wooninck that permit requirements for fish tagging from the sanctuary office would be temporarily suspended for conventional tags until there is a comprehensive assessment.

Brian Johnson – Deputy Superintendent for Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank NMSs shared his report. Highlights included:

1. Greater Farallones and Cordes Bank NMSs are now two sites with one staff.
2. Updates on conservation science included new Beach Watch volunteers, the upcoming Beyond the Golden Gate Research Symposium (Jan 19-21,2022), presentations at COP26, the international Blue Carbon Conference and [Blue Carbon in MPAs Storymap](#).
3. Updates on research included commenting on NPS Air Management Plan and 2021 CA climate Adaptation Strategy, a new Seabird Protection Network Action Plan and the Bolinas Lagoon Living Shorelines Project.
4. Education updates on Sharktoberfest (688 viewers), the GFNMS Virtual Cruise and other virtual programming.

III. Action Item: Letter of Support for the Chumash Heritage NMS (CHNMS) designation

Lisa introduced the topic, giving a brief overview of the process of the CHNMS nomination. Dan Haifley outlined the executive committee's role in drafting the letter and PJ Web shared the enthusiasm of the nomination and its effect on the region. This grass roots effort has shaped the nomination and the team behind the process. Numerous members thanked PJ for her tireless work on the proposal. Public's scoping will start this week and will continue through January 13, [Link to Notice of Intent](#).

Q: Does the boundary include GAviota Beach?

A: Part of the beach is included, up to the creek.

Q: How will this affect the Moro Bay wind farm call out area?

A: Currently there is no intersection between the proposed sanctuary and the call area.

Comment (Sarah Lopez): Wants to recognize the value of the proposed designation. Thanked Lisa W. for meeting with her and the SLO Farm Bureau to go over the nomination. Sarah would like to request that the MBNMS WQ program be replicated for CHNMS with any designation. The SLO Ag community would like to support this, but there are concerns with the potential for inland reach of the sanctuary's oversight. There are farms adjacent to the ocean that would be affected by the additional potential authority. There is already a lot of regulatory oversight for the Ag community. There is also concern with the potential to slow down future desalination projects. They would like to be able to support the designation, but more dialog needs to happen. MBNMS's Agriculture Water Quality Alliance program is very beneficial and appreciated. There are also concerns with external conservation organizations becoming litigious over regulations.

LIs W: Please be sure to submit these comments to NOAA, it is important for them to know this.

PJ: Agriculture is very important to the Chumash and she will convey this to the Chumash representatives. She feels the conversations happening will revitalize the sanctuary program.

Comment (John Haynes): The harbors support the points in the letter and the recognition of the conservation and native cultures. The harbors are not ready to support a new sanctuary because of the sanctuaries' proclivity to support MPAs.

Lisa W: Your comments are important to shape the development of the draft designation documents (management plan, regulations and environmental). These will likely be released for public review a year from now.

Approval of the CHNMS support letter with three minor edits

Motion was made by Gary Pezzi and seconded by PJ Webb.

Motion passed with 13 Yes, 1 No and 3 abstentions.

IV. Information Item: MPA Decadal Review Process Sara Worden, CDFW

Sara gave an overview of the CA MPA timeline from MPLA passing in 1999 to the decadal review process. She identified the four program pillars of Outreach and Education, Research and Monitoring, Enforcement and Compliance, and Policy and Permitting. She outlined the review process, the two-phase approach to the research and monitoring, and touched on the ten long-term monitoring projects. She described the science advisory working groups, how they will engage Tribes and public comments. The timeline was shared through 2022 and 2023 with a February Commission meeting and a Review Symposium and partner open house anticipated in March 2023. Here is the link to the [Decadal Management Review Webpage](#). The email is MPAManagementReview@wildlife.ca.gov. See additional attached files for more information.

Q: Can you comment on how COVID has impacted the long term habitat projects?

A: There will be a callout box in the actual report. Initial thoughts were that nothing would happen in 2020. With new safety protocols in place, most groups were able to conduct a full suite of monitoring and others conducted most of the monitoring, so there will not be a significant gap in the data as anticipated at the onset of the pandemic.

Q: Are the Tribes of the central coast considered north or south in terms of Tribal Consultation?

A: Sara W was not familiar with all of the Tribal Councils, but CDFW staff are consulting with groups throughout the state. The Southern and Northern CA Councils reached out to CDFW directly. She will inquire about central CA Tribal engagement.

V. Information Item: Tanker Reef Monitoring

Dan Abbott - Reef Check CA, Steve Lonhart - MBNMS, Keith Rootsart - Dive Alternate
Dan shared kelp forests have changed with the onset of the sea star wasting disease and marine heat waves, resulting in a large increase in the purple urchin population. The Tanker Reef project kelp restoration project is located off Del Monte Beach in Monterey. The treatment area is a small subset of the project area with a control area nearby. April 17, 2021 initiated the removal of urchins in the grid and continued through September 2021. Results show the grid was effectively cleared below the 2 urchins/m² threshold while the control area had increased numbers. Noted a very small recruitment of urchins from outside of the grid, but not something they couldn't control.

Steve gave some background related to the 3-year CDFW regulatory amendment for purple and red urchins and the 2020 joint agency comments to the FGC asked to evaluate the efficacy of the urchin culling. MBNMS and CDFW divers conducted targeting monitoring related to urchin size, numbers and number of kelp stripes in the grid and a reference site prior to culling activities. Results of monitoring showed similar data to Reef Check for purple urchin numbers. The overall size of urchins in the grid was reduced. This monitoring will continue for two years. The kelp will be assessed in spring of 2022.

Keith outlined some of the characteristics of the bottom of the ocean in the Tanker Reef area. He expanded on the criteria for success by sharing the culling effort should not have any bycatch, damage to the reef structure or disturb marine mammals. The effort culled 266,235 urchins over 424 dives for 328 hours. The kelp coverage in the surrounding area was highlighted and they hope to see the expansion to areas across the grid. Challenges and opportunities were highlighted. Next steps are to submit their 4th petition to expand to granite environments in other State Marine Conservation Areas.

Q: Can you clarify your comment about sea otters not eating purple urchins?

A: The urchins onsite lack the gonads for the caloric content and the otters know this and leave them alone.

Q: How long will the removal and monitoring last?

A: April 2024, a report will be generated by all parties and presented to CDFW and FGC.

Q: With some of the challenges presented, can there be more notification to various groups about the project so these things don't continue?

A: We thought we had, and there are several safety procedures in place. USCG has posted a notice to mariners.

Comment: PJ praised the immense efforts.

Q: What is the life cycle for purple urchins? What else eats them? Is this the only area the urchins are eating the kelp?

A: Urchins can live 10-20 years +, they can shrink with less food and have many mechanisms to persist and can eat other food sources. There are very few predators here and with their condition, they won't be eaten. The kelp depletion is definitely widespread, up the north coast there is significant kelp loss. This is being seen globally.

Q: Impressive work with the scale of the project and proposed alternatives. Given the effort for this one location, how do you see making significant impacts overall?

A: We are looking at how to incentive divers to do this. The urchin accumulator idea (baited area) is under consideration and other lessons learned.

Q: Have you reached out to the Monterey Yacht Club about this?

A: Without a regular schedule it is hard, and some boaters aren't part of the club.

VI. Information and Action Item: MBNMS Advisory Council Work Plan Brian Nelson, Chair

The MBNMS AC submitted topics for the council to consider for next year's meetings. Lisa mentioned in future years, she will present sanctuary priorities to the AC in advance, so there will be more direction for a more focused integration with the AC schedule and MBNMS needs. John Hunt asked the council to consider the overall importance vs urgency of the topics to be considered as selection criteria. Dan Haifley reminded everyone it is important to keep in mind the tools and authority of the sanctuary. There are a lot of things that are under the control of others where the Sanctuary advises vs. things the sanctuary actually regulates or permits and has authority over.

Climate change, beach nourishment, sea level rise, threats to tidal marshes and invasive species were discussed, in addition to the items on the spreadsheet.

The comprehensive topical list will be sent out to all council members to select the top four items of interest. These will be collated, reviewed by the AC Executive Team and the MBNMS Superintendent and a proposed work plan presented in February.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm