

MBNMS Conservation Working Group Statement

April 12, 2013

CWG Co-Chairs: Geoff Shester and Lauren Dockendorf

CWG Members:

Lauren Dockendorf (Save Our Shores) [Co-chair] - Present
Carol Maehr (American Cetacean Society) – Not Present
Patricia Matejcek (Sierra Club, Ventana Chapter) – Not Present
Harriet Mitteldorf (At-Large) – Not Present
Nick Naccari (Native Animal Rescue) – Present
Geoff Shester (Oceana) [Co-chair] - Present
Steve Shimek (Monterey Coastkeeper) – Present
Deborah Streeter (Upwellings Ministry) - Present
Anna Weinstein (Audubon California) – Not present
Mary Whitney (Fluke Foundation) - Present

The Conservation Working Group met on March 27, 2013 at the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. In addition to CWG members, the meeting was attended by Bonnie Van Hise (Congressman Farr’s office), Greg Helms (Ocean Conservancy), Seth Atkinson (Natural Resources Defense Council), and MBNMS staff Karen Grimmer and Bridget Hoover.

The CWG leatherback sub-committee presented its progress, which includes the development of a draft proposal to secure funding to host an international meeting between the Sanctuary, the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, the State of California, representatives from West Papua, Indonesia, and non-governmental organizations. The goal of the proposed meeting would be to establish a trans-Pacific partnership focused on increasing reproductive output of Western Pacific leatherbacks at nesting beaches. The CWG reiterates its request to provide an update at the next SAC meeting, which would be in August. We are aware that the SEP is interested in collaborating with the CWG on this effort, and we request the SAC’s blessing for cross-working group collaboration on leatherbacks.

MBNMS Staff Karen Grimmer updated the CWG on the benthic-focused Sanctuary Ecologically Significant Areas in federal waters and the Sanctuary’s potential involvement in the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s 5-year review of Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat. The CWG is highly supportive of the deliberate, science-based effort to identify SESAs, as this effort will greatly improve the capacity of the Sanctuary to achieve its resource protection goals, and better engage in multiple relevant policy processes. The CWG views the initial draft SESAs as a good first step, and hopes to see further SESA refinement in the coming years, including state waters within the Sanctuary and a more comprehensive set of criteria.

Over the past year, the CWG has been developing criteria and draft “areas of interest” for the purpose of discussing additional habitat protections in the context of the Essential Fish Habitat review process. Karen Grimmer invited the CWG to engage in discussions

with the local fishing fleet to discuss ideas for a potential collaborative Sanctuary proposal. The CWG is willing to participate in such discussions in hopes of exploring potential win-win opportunities.

The CWG strongly supports the proposed resolution regarding the potential expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, and urges the SAC to adopt the resolution at this meeting.

Bridget Hoover gave a comprehensive overview presentation to the CWG on the Water Quality initiatives of the Sanctuary, including urban runoff, agricultural discharges, desalination, citizen monitoring. The CWG found this presentation impressive and highly informative, and will be working to hone in on more specific water quality focus areas for future work. The CWG welcomes input from the SAC on the focus areas in which the CWG could be most helpful.