

June 8, 2010

Dear Sanctuary Advisory Council Members,

In 2008, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) concluded that there was a need for marine protected areas (MPAs) in the federal waters of the Sanctuary to address the following ecosystem-based management (EBM) goals:

- i. protect unique and rare places within MBNMS in their natural state for future generations;
- ii. protect areas within the MBNMS where natural ecosystem components (e.g. food web structure) are maintained and/or restored;
- iii. establish research areas within the MBNMS that can be used to differentiate between natural variation versus human impacts to ecological processes and components.

The MBNMS arrived at this decision with input from the public, the MBNMS Advisory Council, partner agencies, and NOAA management. As an MPA planning process moved forward, MBNMS staff engaged its agency partners in thoughtful discussions on how best to integrate the broad EBM goals with other related partnership processes and objectives. Given the productive outcome of these discussions and a shared recognition of opportunities to both the goals above but also compatible partner goals, the MBMNS has added an additional goal to:

- iv. promote ecologically and economically sustainable uses, including fisheries, in the Sanctuary.

This additional goal reflects the broad requirements of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act while addressing priorities of our key ocean management partners. The 2008 “MPA” process is now expanded to include the goal focused on ecologically sustainable uses, but also compatible partner tools and processes. The former “MPA” process is now called the Enhanced Ecosystem-based Management Initiative. The Initiative, adopted in 2010, uses a collaborative approach to bring together the best available science to explore how we can meet the EBM goals, using several ocean management tools (including, but not limited to, MPAs). The Initiative relies on several analytical approaches to create the information base, including expert workshops, scientific assessments and ecosystem models.

To address the goal ii) protect ecosystem components, the MBNMS is fortunate to have been selected as a focus of NOAA’s Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA), an innovative scientific support and modeling tool for doing ecosystem-based management. Since 2009, MBNMS has been engaged in the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem (west coast) IEA. Led by NOAA Fisheries’ scientists with input NOAA Fisheries and Sanctuaries managers, NOAA is working to develop the analytical framework of the west coast IEA using dedicated FY 2010 funding. In this fiscal year, we anticipate the IEA analysis to deliver: a) robust indicators to assess ocean health; b) an evaluation of how the Sanctuary ecosystem is responding to current

management and oceanic conditions (status quo); and c) an evaluation of how adjustments to current management strategies (e.g., models that look at different protection zones) may affect biological and socio-economic services.

Beginning in Fall 2010, the MBNMS will host a series of expert workshops to develop guidelines and criteria to address the goals: i) protect unique and rare places iii) establish research areas, and iv) promote sustainable uses. These scientific workshops will be for invited experts, appropriate management partners and select Advisory Council members. The workshops will be open to the public with opportunity for public comment.

During 2011, we anticipate further engaging the public, as part of the IEA, to gain input on priority ecosystem services for federal waters of the Sanctuary. In the interim, the MBNMS would like to have a Sanctuary Advisory Council sub-committee provide advice on targeted tasks of the Initiative (e.g. invites to experts for specific workshops). We need to ensure that the Initiative is strongly focused on protecting the Sanctuary's ecosystem, while helping us to realize ecologically sustainable uses. Throughout this process, MBNMS will work with our agency partners and stakeholders. We look forward to working with you to achieve the goals of the Enhanced Ecosystem-based Management Initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Michel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Michel
Superintendent