



MBNMS
Superintendent's Report
May 19, 2023

Lisa Wooninck, Superintendent

Program Ops - MBNMS staff retreat



Day long retreat at Elkhorn Slough NERR

Two purposes for retreat:

- Enhance team culture by appreciating colleagues at a deeper level
- Strengthen staff participation in and commitment to MBNMS priorities
- 26 staff - including visitor center staff from SEC and CDC
- Mindful NOAA
- Hike through reserve and fun team building exercise
- Met new staff and reacquainted with colleagues

MBNMS priorities addressing threats

- Iconic Kelp
- Marine Debris
- Climate Change
- Whale Conservation
- Vessel Incidents

MBNMS priorities Enhancing connections

- Sanctuary Watch
- Indigenous Communities
- DEIJ
- Exhibits and signage
- Southern Region
- Recreational Fishing

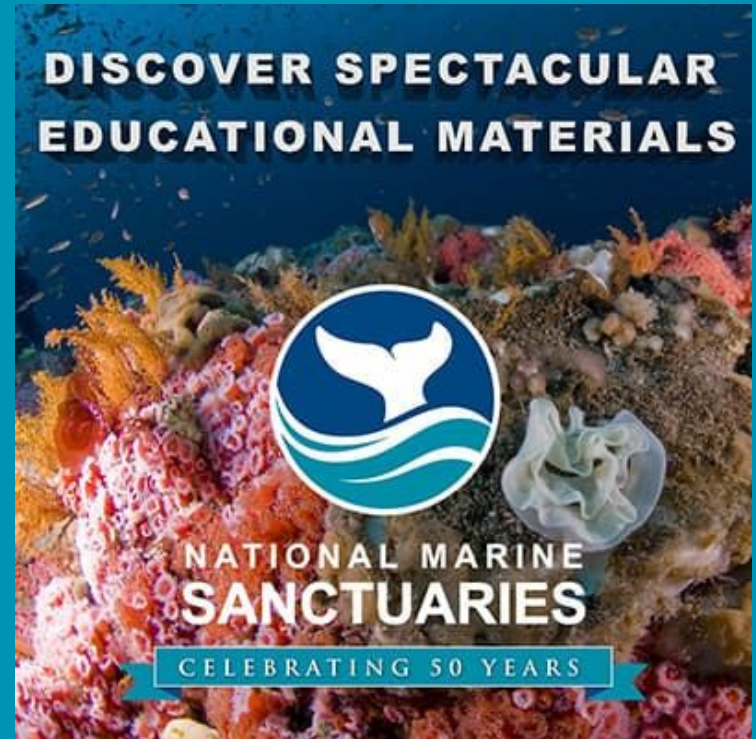


Program Ops - Mini Grant



2023 ONMS Mini Project Award

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mini Grant: Supporting DEI efforts with the MBNMS Advisory Council
- \$5,000 Award
 - 2 Meetings with AC D&I Subcommittee
 - 3 Council training opportunities



MBNMS Education



Capacity Building - training volunteer work force

- SEC Docents: 11 new, 43 total
- CDC Docents: 7 new, 16 total
- Bay Net Volunteers: 17 new, 36 total
- Team OCEAN Volunteers: 5 new, 12 total

107 Education Volunteers



**New SEC Manager
Ariel Hunter
as of April 10!**

MBNMS Education



Coastal Signage Project: 40 new designs

- City of Santa Cruz: 3
- City of Monterey: 8
- City of Pacific Grove: 8
- California State Parks: 16
- Local Harbor Districts: 5

Current status:

- 26 installed by property owners
- 14 awaiting delivery and installation (in Southern Region)



MBNMS Education - Upcoming Events



May 27: Dia de la Comunidad

- Exploration Center, 10 AM - 3 PM
- 4th and 5th grade students, families, and mentor interns that promote the sanctuary's health in Watsonville classrooms
- Student-led pop up booths for public

June 2: First Friday with Steve Mandel

- Sanctuary Exploration Center, 4 PM - 7 PM
- Exploring Plankton Viewing and Photography

June 10: Plankton Exploration Day

- Sanctuary Exploration Center, 11 AM - 3 PM
- UCSC Intern-led pop up booths for public

July 29: Get Into Your Sanctuary Day - **Mini Grant Award**

- SEC and CDC - exact times TBD
- Celebrating and Protecting California Salmon - A FishFest in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

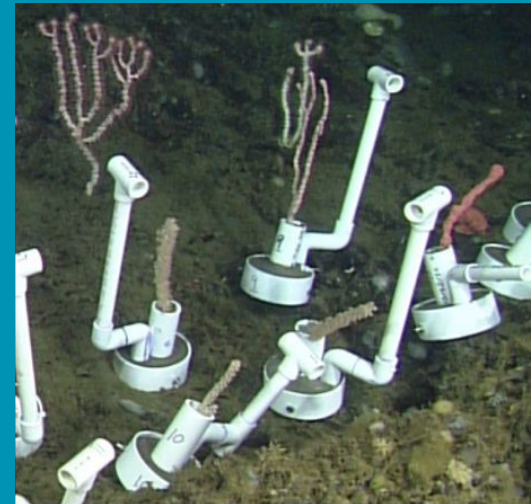
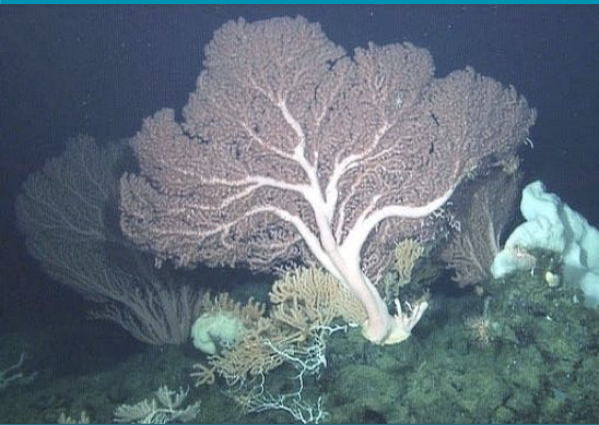
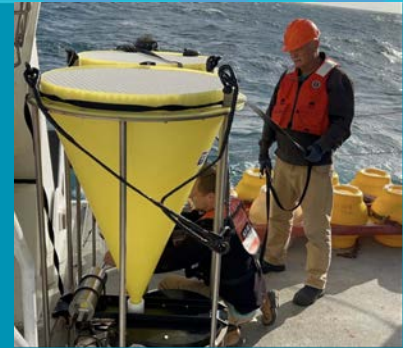


MBNMS Research - Coral Observatory



Multiple cruises per year to Sur Ridge:

- Current meters; transect surveys; particle traps; eDNA samples; respirometers; camera images every 30 min; cm scale mapping; experiments
- Developed methods to translocate coral branches that have survived > 6 years and are reproducing

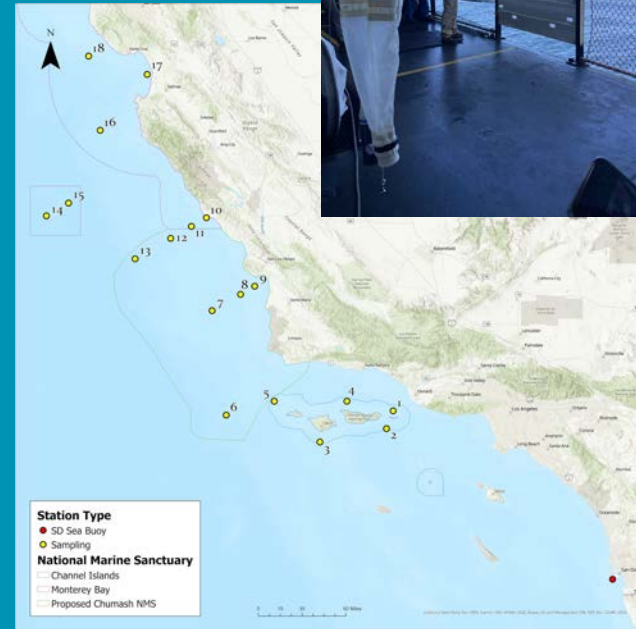


MBNMS Research – Spring CalCOFI



Participated in CalCOFI cruise (April)

- 116 sampling stations between San Diego and Point Reyes (up to 350 miles offshore)
- Surveyed distribution and abundances of pelagic species, prey, eDNA, and biotic & abiotic environment
- 18 new stations within sanctuaries (MB, CI, proposed Chumash)
- Sanctuary scientists will participate Fall & Spring



MBNMS Research – Travis Leggett



Travis is a NOAA Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI) Graduate Program Fellow at CSUMB and working with MBNMS

- In April he attended the annual week-long conference of the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS)
- Travis' talk titled, "Examining diver-operated stereo-video as a benthic surveying tool in temperate rocky reefs" won the Best Student Paper Award



MBNMS Resource Protection



Sampling Program M1W

- Project goal is to understand runoff and pollutants around Moss Landing and Elkhorn Slough & will be conducted by CCLEAN
- Funded by the Sanctuary Asset Forfeiture Fund (SAFF), which received funds due to raw sewage spill in MBNMS in 2018 (2.8M gals)

Vessel Speed Reduction Program

- MBNMS AC recommended that the Sanctuary team participate in a year-round voluntary vessel speed reduction with CINMS, CBNMS, and GFNMS
- The NOAA Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Program became effective on May 1st in all of MBNMS waters!
- The Blue Whales & Blue Skies incentive program has also expanded to MBNMS



MBNMS Resource Protection



Two grants awarded from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and NOAA's Climate-Ready Coasts initiative:

- Large Marine Debris Removal Grant
 - National Marine Sanctuary Foundation was awarded \$14.9M for removal marine debris in five NMS, including MBNMS
- Commercially Scalable End-Of-Life Solutions for Ag Field Plastic Films Used in Watersheds Draining to MBNMS
 - CA Sea Grant was awarded \$2.7M to collaborate with the Ag sector and partners to develop best practices for removal of plastic mulch and drip tape in ag fields



MBNMS Resource Protection



Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



Sea Otter Viewing Etiquette and Protection

Large Sea Otter Rafts in Monterey, California



Photo: Gene Bertell

Sea otters in kelp in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Background

Since January 2023, particularly large rafts of sea otters have been resting together in the kelp between Monterey Harbor and Point Cabrillo.

A "raft" is a group of sea otters resting together, and they often occur in kelp, but not always.

Although raft sizes can vary throughout the day, some estimates have had more than 200 otters in the largest aggregations.

Sea otters generally have relatively small home ranges of a few miles, with no large seasonal migrations.

Sea otters may move in response to weather, age, and sex, and often gather in more protected areas during

prolonged storms. The exact reason for recent unusually large rafts is unknown. Other factors beyond weather could also be contributing.

Please Give Sea Otters Space

It is important to give these animals space to rest and save energy, especially during the winter season. Disturbance can be harmful!

The rafting otters are especially sensitive to approaches from boaters, divers, and kayakers.

If you are on the water, please keep your distance and follow all federal laws so as not to harass or disturb the otters whether in a raft or not.

Please visit www.seaottersavvy.org for more tips on viewing guidelines. To report disturbances, call MBNMS at (831) 236-6797.



Photo: Gene Bertell

Sea otters rafting up in large groups.

Tips for Kayakers, Divers, and Boaters to avoid disturbances

- Divers should avoid surfacing under or near a sea otter raft from below.
- Kayakers and boaters should remain a *minimum of 10 boat lengths* (scaled up by craft size) away from rafting sea otters.
- *Passing by parallel* is less threatening to sea otters and other wildlife.
- If, at any distance, a sea otter has raised its head and is looking at you, you are too close and should move further away to avoid disturbance.
- Be aware of the location of sea otters before you dive, boat or kayak into an area.



If I am looking at you, you're too close!



Large sea otter raft in front of Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Photo: Dan Schwartz



MONTEREY BAY
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



Monterey Bay Aquarium

<https://montereybay.noaa.gov>

Sea Otter Outreach

- Partnered with kayak shops, divers, Monterey Bay Aquarium and Sea Otter Savvy to reduce boater and diving disturbances to large sea otter rafts