UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, California 93940

November 30, 2010

Dear Sanctuary Advisory Council Members,

As you know, over the past year and a half we have been developing a new planning effort that transforms and broadens marine protected area (MPA) planning and focuses on enhancing ecosystem protection and management and sustainable uses. The Ecosystem-Based Management Initiative (EBMI) builds upon previous planning and assessment efforts, such as the ecosystem protection action plans in our Management Plan and the Condition Report to name a few. This exciting new initiative uses a collaborative approach to bring together the best available science to explore how we can utilize ecosystem-based management principles to assess and assure a healthy ecosystem and sustainable uses. The Initiative relies on several analytical approaches to create the information base, including expert workshops, scientific assessments and ecosystem models.

The goal of this initiative is to enhance ecosystem-based management and marine spatial planning in the MBNMS by applying best available science and integrating and coordinating with partner agencies. The four main objectives are to:

- Maintain/restore marine ecosystem health and function;
- Ensure protection of unique and rare features of the ecosystem;
- Facilitate research to differentiate between natural variation and human impacts;
- Facilitate ecologically and economically sustainable uses, including fisheries.

We are 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 analysis. Since 2009, MBNMS has been engaged in the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem (west coast) IEA. NOAA Fisheries' Science Center (with input from NOAA Fisheries and Sanctuaries) is leading the IEA effort. In this fiscal year, we anticipate the IEA analysis to deliver: a) indicators to assess ocean health; b) an evaluation of how the Sanctuary ecosystem is responding to current management and oceanic conditions; and c) an evaluation of a modeling tool that could assess various management strategies and their affect on biological and socio-economic services.

Beginning in October 2010, we have launched a series of expert workshops to define, refine, and explore the four objectives. The workshops are open to the public with opportunity for public comment.

Also during 2011, we anticipate further engaging the public, as part of the IEA, to gain input on priority ecosystem services. Throughout this process, MBNMS will work with our agency partners and stakeholders to propose and implement actions, policies, projects, and studies as needed and appropriate. We will also be providing you (the MBNMS Advisory Council) with regular updates and involving the EBMI Subcommittee in the details of planning, workshop execution, and IEA. We look forward to working with you to achieve the goals of the Enhanced Ecosystem-based Management Initiative.

Sincerely,

Paul Michel
Superintendent