



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

JUN 28 2001

The Honorable Dan Albert
Mayor
City of Monterey
Monterey, California, 93940

Dear Mayor Albert:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary management plan review process. I am encouraged to see that the City of Monterey is taking a proactive approach to their involvement with the management plan review. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) greatly values its partnerships with local communities and fully recognizes that effective resource management can only be achieved through a coordinated effort that is sensitive to the needs of all resources and their users.

As you are aware, the ONMS is required by law to review, and if necessary, update individual sanctuary management plans so they adequately protect sanctuary resources and address current issues. In recent years we have made tremendous progress working with local communities to develop new or revise existing management plans. Our management plan review team continues to evolve this process based on lessons learned from the two most recent rigorous public processes at the Florida Keys and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuaries, which involved an unprecedented level of public participation. These experiences will greatly benefit us as we proceed with the joint management plan review in Monterey Bay, Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries.

I agree with your comment in the letter asserting that management plan reviews should include a comprehensive assessment of the existing management plan, including all pertinent issues, goals, and agreements that led to its initial approval. That is a necessary part of the review. However, we cannot stop there. In order to fulfill our resource protection and stewardship mandates, we will also ask the public for input on the implementation of the existing management plan to date, and whether the management plan allows us to adequately protect sanctuary resources and address emerging resource management issues.

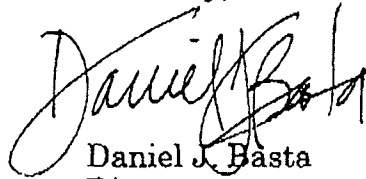
Both of these aspects of management plan review will involve extensive public input. It is crucial that the ONMS work closely with local communities and stakeholders to determine how to most effectively involve the public in this process. I truly believe these issues are best resolved at the local site level, and in particular with the cooperation between the Sanctuary Superintendent and the Sanctuary Advisory Council. Superintendent Douros and I agree these are topics the SAC should address before the scoping meetings begin later this fall.



I have also received a copy of the letter you sent to Congressman Farr on June 6 requesting that he hold a congressional hearing on the management plan review process. Overall, I support your efforts to get Congressman Farr involved in the management plan review. He is an avid supporter of marine conservation issues and the National Marine Sanctuary System, in particular the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. We stand ready to help in any way. My only caution is that you clearly distinguish the purpose of these hearings to the public in a way that does not confuse them with our public scoping meetings that will be held later this fall.

The ONMS is committed to making management plan reviews as inclusive and broad reaching as possible. I encourage you and your colleagues to continue working closely with Superintendent Douros, his staff, and the Sanctuary Advisory Council as they move forward with this process. Your involvement is very important to this review process.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Basta
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries