

MBNMS Conservation Working Group Statement
February 21, 2014

CWG Members:

Lauren Dockendorf (Save Our Shores) – present
Carol Maehr (American Cetacean Society) – absent
Patricia Matejcek (Sierra Club, Ventana Chapter) – present
Harriet Mitteldorf (At-Large) – absent
Nick Naccari (Native Animal Rescue) – present
Geoff Shester (Oceana) [Chair] – present
Steve Shimek (Monterey Coastkeeper) – present
Deborah Streeter (Upwellings Ministry) – present
Bonnie Van Hise (Citizen At Large) - present
Anna Weinstein (Audubon California) – absent
Mary Whitney (Fluke Foundation) – present

The Conservation Working Group met on February 12, 2014 at the Moss Landing Harbor Office. In addition to CWG members the meeting was attended by MBNMS staff Karen Grimmer and Sophie De Beukelaer.

All CWG meetings are open to the public and SAC members are invited to attend. To this end, the CWG adopted a schedule for future CWG meetings for the remainder of 2014 as follows:

CWG meetings (all 1pm-4pm):

- April 11th ESNERR
- August 6th ML Marine Labs
- October 8th ML Harbor Office
- December 3rd ESNERR

The CWG remains concerned about the deleterious effects that high-energy seismic surveys have on marine wildlife, and is encouraged and appreciative of the SAC for considering the CWG's proposed resolution and prioritizing the issue of acoustic impacts. We look forward to further discussing this issue and getting additional input from the RAP and the SAC. It is our understanding that this issue is currently scheduled for expert presentations to the SAC at the February and April SAC meetings. The CWG understands that acoustic impacts are a complex issue, and we are appreciative of the deliberate and holistic approach the SAC is taking to better understanding the broader issues of ocean noise and the current regulatory tools used by NOAA. As such, we request that the SAC continue presentations on the broader context, consider taking Final Action on a resolution at the August SAC meeting, and ensure that any desired outreach, input, and information gathering occurs in the meantime.

The CWG received a presentation by MBNMS staff Sophie De Beukelaer and Karen Grimmer regarding the MBNMS analysis of vessel traffic from 2009-2012 with respect to shipping lanes in and around the Sanctuary. The CWG was impressed with the analysis and the information products the Sanctuary is now enabled to provide to the US Coast Guard to help minimize the risks of vessel accidents at sea. The CWG encourages the Sanctuary to continue working with the US Coast Guard to assess vessel traffic and identify deviations from shipping lanes on a quarterly basis, if possible.

The CWG received an update from Chair Geoff Shester and MBNMS staff Karen Grimmer on the outcomes and next steps of the Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Summit that took place in Monterey on October 14-16, 2013. The CWG commends the Sanctuary Education Panel (particularly SEP Chair Simona Bartl) for their leadership in the ongoing educational exchanges before, during, and

after the Summit, and hopes to build upon this cross-working group collaboration in future endeavors. The CWG encourages the Sanctuary to move forward with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement, and establish a Sister Sanctuary relationship between MBNMS and the Abun Marine Protected Area as discussed at the Summit. The CWG suggests that a motion by the SAC to this effect would be helpful.

The CWG is aware of the proposed expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries and is fully supportive of the proposal. The CWG is also supportive of AB 1603 (Stone) and urges the SAC to submit a support letter on this environmental education legislation. In the open discussion and announcements, concerns were raised by CWG members over the ongoing discussions of Monterey Bay trawling, the proposed expansion of drift gillnet fishing into Davidson Seamount, the increased frequency of toxic algal blooms resulting from agricultural discharges, and the impacts of desalination projects on Sanctuary resources. The CWG plans to further examine these issues at future CWG meetings.