

MBNMS Conservation Working Group Statement

April 23, 2014

CWG Members:

Lauren Dockendorf (Save Our Shores) [Co-Chair] – absent

Carol Maehr (American Cetacean Society) – present

Patricia Matejcek (Sierra Club) – present

Harriet Mitteldorf (At-Large) – absent

Nick Naccari (Native Animal Rescue) – present

Geoff Shester (Oceana) [Co-Chair] – present

Steve Shimek (Monterey Coastkeeper) – present

Deborah Streeter (Upwellings Ministry) – absent

Bonnie Van Hise (Citizen At Large) - absent

Mary Whitney (Fluke Foundation) – absent

The Conservation Working Group met on April 11, 2014 at the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. In addition to CWG members the meeting was attended by MBNMS staff Karen Grimmer. All CWG meetings are open to the public and SAC members are invited to attend.

The CWG is appreciative of the deliberate and holistic approach the SAC is taking to better understanding the broader issues of ocean noise, and now recognizes an opportunity for the MBNMS to provide a national model for managing an ocean soundscape. The CWG appreciates the SAC for hearing expert presentations at the February and April SAC meetings, and recognizes that several efforts are currently underway that will enable the Sanctuary to better manage and assess acoustic impacts to Sanctuary resources. The CWG remains concerned about the deleterious effects that high-energy seismic surveys have on marine wildlife and fisheries, reiterates that the SAC received over 30,000 public comments supporting a ban on high-energy seismic testing, and believes that the upcoming management plan update would be an appropriate venue to develop a strategic plan for managing acoustic impacts. This strategic plan should include the establishment of new regulations to place a complete ban on the most harmful seismic testing activities such as those used in petroleum exploration. The CWG hopes to assist the SAC in the development of a revised resolution on acoustic impacts for final action on adoption at the August 2014 SAC meeting, and is happy to provide additional information to the SAC upon request.

The CWG received a presentation by Dr. Clarissa Anderson, UCSC Research Faculty, on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in Coastal California. Dr. Anderson discussed three relevant types of HABs that occur off California, including:

1. *Alexandrium*, which produces Saxitoxin (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning)
2. *Pseudo-nitzschia*, which produces Domoic Acid (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning)
3. *Microcystis*, which produces Microcystin (responsible for recent deaths of sea otters in MBNMS)

The presentation was excellent, informative, and highly relevant to an emerging issue that affects fisheries, wildlife, and human health. In fact, the California Department of Public Health issued a health warning on April 4, 2014 not eat certain seafood (mussels, sardines, anchovies) based on dangerous levels of domoic acid detected in Monterey Bay. HABs may occur naturally, and also may be caused by human activities. Specifically, major run-off events have been shown to induce HABs. The CWG commends the Sanctuary for supporting research and monitoring efforts on HABs, and encourages the SAC to closely consider the effects of runoff. The CWG recommends the SAC invite Dr. Anderson to give a presentation on HABs.

The CWG appreciates and is highly supportive of the draft Motion regarding Leatherback Sea Turtles. 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 briefly discussed the Supplemental Proposed Rule on Introduced Species, and encourages the SAC to become informed of the details of the new changes to the original proposed rule to help ensure that it captures the same spirit, intent, and effectiveness of the SAC's 2013 Resolution on Introduced Species.