

2015 Accomplishments



CONDITION REPORT COMPLETED

MBNMS finished a peer-reviewed Condition Report, summarizing sanctuary resources, pressures on those resources, current conditions and trends and management responses to reduce or mitigate human pressures. This report addresses 4 areas of the sanctuary – estuarine (Elkhorn Slough), near shore, offshore and the Davidson Seamount (an underwater extinct volcano). While the Sanctuary is healthy compared to the rest of the world oceans, improvements are outlined for water quality and some other habitat and living resource issues. This Condition Report provides a critical science and policy assessment tool for ecosystem health, status and trends in the MBNMS and informs the Management Plan review.



SANCTUARY EXPLORATION CENTER OPENS NEW EXHIBITS

New exhibits and art were installed at the Sanctuary Exploration Center since opening 3.5 years ago. This renovation allowed MBNMS to make improvements on existing exhibits but also improve the building exterior and add more hands-on educational activities for younger children. Exhibits include using NOAA NMFS Green Seas Blues Seas Ray Troll artwork in a fisheries exhibit, a new watershed exhibit, an engaging interactive about animal migrations and an exhibit culminating in a stewardship activity.



MBNMS IMPACTS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

MBNMS has built strong partnerships with a variety of local businesses, NGOs and hospitality associations to promote sanctuary awareness, conservation and increase recreation and tourism. Numerous community-based events immersed the public in the sanctuary. These included being part of PBS and BBC multinational television program Big Blue Live, Whalefest Monterey with the Monterey Wharf Association, Beneath the Waves Film Festival at the Exploration Center and Get into Your Sanctuary where the public used social media (hashtag #VisitSanctuaries) to highlight sanctuary activities.

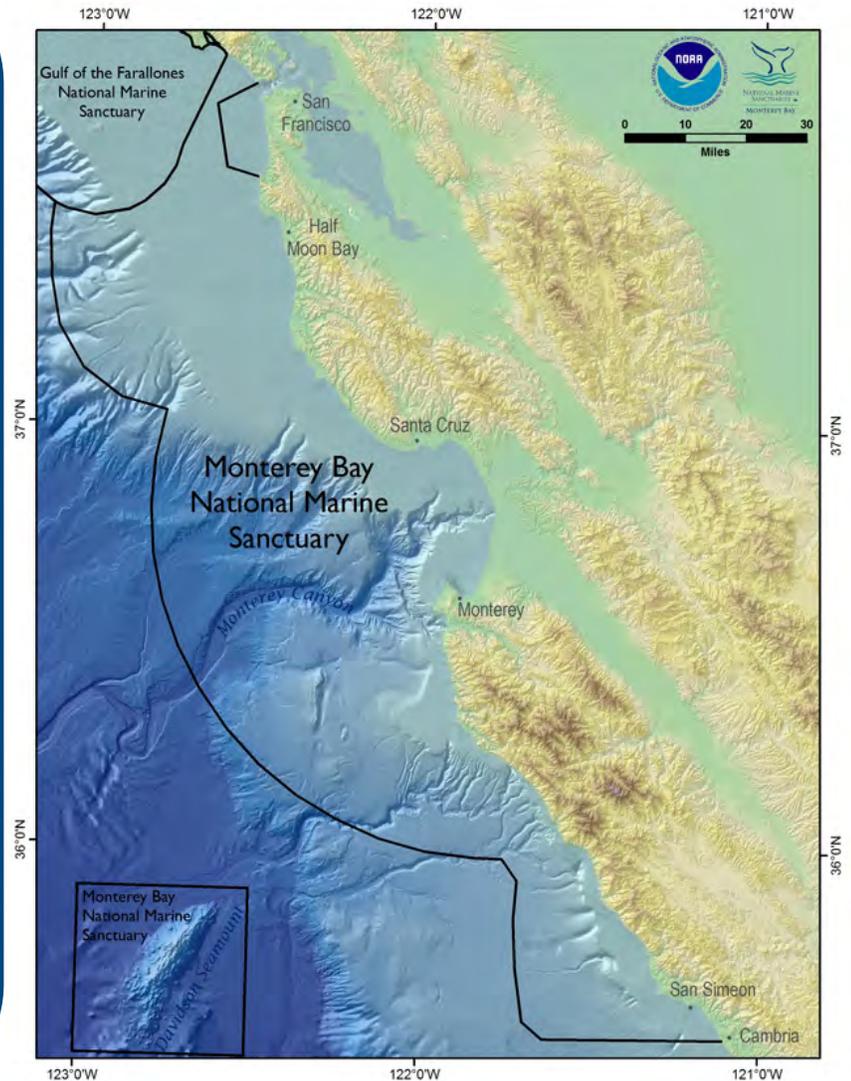


MBNMS RESPONDS TO ENTANGLED WHALES

Whale entanglements are increasing and are identified by the West Coast sanctuaries as a priority issue. In 2015, 62 whales were entangled in California. On two separate occasions, MBNMS working with the CA Whale Entanglement Team aboard the R/V Fulmar responded and rescued two humpback whales. MBNMS also participated in a meeting hosted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Ocean Protection Council, and NOAA Fisheries to open dialog with the Commercial Dungeness crab fishery industry about the high incidence of whale entanglements off the coast and possible strategies to reduce the risk this threat.

LOOKING AHEAD

- MBNMS enters the second year of its management plan review process. Staff and Advisory Council members will review suggestions made through public scoping. Advice gained through working groups, workshops and experts will go into drafting the new management plan.
- We will continue to maintain and build upon our key partnerships to assist with visitor centers, citizen science and volunteers, science and monitoring efforts and water quality. Partnerships will help us deliver programs, produce useful information and raise awareness.
- One of MBNMS' 2016 conservation objectives is serving as the lead for carrying out the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review for two proposed desalination projects and considering two other proposed projects. The associated permitting process follows guidelines developed in the last management plan cycle.



Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary spans more than 6,000 square miles of coastal waters off central California. Within its boundaries, a rich variety of habitats teem with an amazing array of life. The sanctuary is home to rugged rocky shores, lush kelp forests, a towering offshore seamount, steep underwater canyons and other coastal environments. These diverse habitats host 34 species of marine mammals, more than 180 species of seabirds and shorebirds, 345 species of fish and a wealth of invertebrates and algae. The sanctuary was established on September 18, 1992.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is committed to supporting lives and livelihoods across the nation and in sanctuary communities through socioeconomic research and monitoring to understand the economic and social drivers of sanctuary resources and improve management practices.

