

CHAPTER 2

PROPOSED ACTION AND PURPOSE AND NEED

2.1 Description of the Proposed Action

The proposed action is to update management activities occurring within Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) conducted by NOAA staff that are related to research, monitoring, education, outreach, community engagement, and resource protection. The proposed management activities include implementing routine field activities, updating the sanctuary management plan, and updating sanctuary-wide regulations. The proposed action is intended to continue the protection of living marine resources and their habitats in MBNMS and nationally significant seascapes and shipwrecks, while allowing compatible recreational and commercial uses, as outlined in the NMSA. The proposed action would guide management decision-making and contribute to the attainment of the goals and objectives of the NMSA and the purposes for which MBNMS was established.

2.2 Purpose of the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to fulfill the purposes and policies outlined in Section 301(b) of the NMSA, 16 U.S.C. § 1431(b), in order to protect and manage the resources of MBNMS. As required by Section 304(e) of the NMSA, this management plan review enables NOAA to evaluate the substantive progress toward implementing the current management plan and goals for the sanctuary, especially the effectiveness of site-specific techniques and strategies, and to revise the management plan and regulations as necessary to fulfill the purposes and policies of the NMSA. A revised sanctuary management plan and regulations would enable sanctuary staff to manage the resources of MBNMS more effectively and transparently by building stronger partnerships and providing the public with a management plan with clearly defined and detailed sanctuary priorities.

2.3 Need for the Proposed Action

The need for the proposed action is based on widespread and emerging threats to marine resources and NOAA trust resources within MBNMS. The 2008 management plan action plans are no longer sufficient to ensure long-term resource protection and ecosystem function into the future, as a large percent of the actions identified in the management plan have been completed and because new issues and threats have since emerged. This assessment is based on staff and public input on the current MBNMS management plan as well as the findings in the 2015 MBNMS condition report. The report concluded some of the most prominent pressures in MBNMS include marine debris, vessel traffic,

commercial and recreational fishing, agricultural and urban runoff, harmful algal blooms, coastal development, and disturbances to wildlife. In addition, larger, more global issues, such as climate change and ocean acidification, are significant areas of concern, where some impacts are being detected, but long-term effects are not well understood. See <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition/monterey-bay-2015/welcome.html> for the condition report summary and full document.

ONMS is currently operating MBNMS under a 2008 management plan and regulations. An updated management plan and associated regulations are needed because much has been accomplished, and new issues and threats have emerged:

- sanctuary resources face increased threat from local, regional, and global impacts;
- new scientific data and information has become available; and
- visitor numbers, use patterns, types, and recreational interests have changed.

Each of these changes has implications for MBNMS. Consequently, the sanctuary's current regulations and 2008 management plan need to be updated to reflect current strategies for management decisions to further natural and cultural resource protection. Public scoping for the management plan review yielded the need to address wildlife disturbance, water quality, climate change, marine debris, beach nourishment, and increased public awareness. At the same time, there is a need for continued research, exploration, restoration, and education related to the nationally significant ocean resources in MBNMS. As such, there is a need to update management activities in MBNMS relating to research, monitoring, education, outreach, community engagement, and resource protection to address these new and changed issues. This work is critical for assessing changes occurring in the environment, fostering a stewardship ethic, and developing a better understanding of the ecosystem services sanctuary resources provide for communities throughout MBNMS.