

Executive Summary

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS, or “the sanctuary”) is one of 15 national marine sanctuaries administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association’s (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS). MBNMS is located along the central coast of California and encompasses 6,094 square miles (15,783 square kilometers) of ocean. The highly productive biological communities in MBNMS are host to one of the highest levels of marine biodiversity in the world, including 30 threatened and endangered species. The sanctuary is home to numerous species of mammals, seabirds, fishes, invertebrates, and algae in a productive coastal environment, abounding with life, from tiny microscopic plants to enormous blue whales. Approximately 8 million people live within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of its shoreline, many of whom rely on sanctuary resources for pleasure or work. With its great diversity of habitats and life, and its importance to the human communities along its shoreline, MBNMS is a national focus for recreation, research, and education.

This management plan revises the 2008 MBNMS management plan and continues to focus on understanding and protecting the resources of the sanctuary. This update was developed using scientific assessments of the condition of sanctuary resources; public input from public scoping meetings and written comments; and Sanctuary Advisory Council and working group meetings, all providing input and recommendations regarding which issues ONMS should address and how to address them. This final management plan revises the 2008 management plan, and focuses on identifying, characterizing, assessing, and protecting the sanctuary’s resources.

The management plan includes 13 action plans grouped into issue-based and program-based themes guiding ONMS’s management of the sanctuary over the coming decade. These action plans provide strategies to understand the issues and protect the coastal and marine environments comprising the sanctuary and address these issues through education and outreach, research and monitoring, collaborative planning and management efforts, regulation, and enforcement. The majority of actions described within this management plan are addressed in partnership with local, state, and other federal agencies, as well as many stakeholders with an interest in MBNMS.

The issue-based action plans are:

- Climate Change
- Coastal Erosion and Sediment Management
- Davidson Seamount Management Zone (DSMZ) and Sur Ridge
- Emerging Issues
- Introduced Species
- Marine Debris
- Water Quality
- Wildlife Disturbance

The program-based action plans are:

- Education, Outreach, and Communication
- Maritime Heritage
- Operations and Administration
- Research and Monitoring
- Resource Protection



As a result of this management plan review, NOAA has also [revised the regulations](#) for MBNMS to address resource protection concerns in the sanctuary. The regulatory changes will make available an additional option for addressing shoreline erosion in the sanctuary by clarifying NOAA’s ability to review and approve the application of suitable dredged material from four harbors adjacent to MBNMS for habitat protection or restoration projects; allow modest increased access for motorized personal watercraft (MPWC) users at the Mavericks surf zone (MPWC Zone 5) by reducing the requirement of High Surf Warning conditions to High Surf Advisory conditions; improve buoy station integrity and reduce the likelihood of detached buoys by changing the configuration of four motorized personal watercraft zones; and correct the existing regulations, which incorrectly state that the Department of Defense’s exempted activities appear in the [2008 final environmental impact statement](#).

A [final environmental assessment](#) describes the purpose, need and environmental consequences of the management plan and new regulations.