

Guidance Document for Letters of Support from MBNMS

Agencies, programs, principal investigators, and students often seek a letter of support or a letter of recommendation from Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS), usually to accompany a funding proposal (but such letters are not limited to funding proposals). Below is guidance on how to successfully undertake this process.

1. **Timing.** We ask that requests be made 2 weeks prior to the deadline for proposal submission. This may not always be possible, but when a letter is requested 2-3 days prior to submission, the quality of the letter may be compromised, and we cannot guarantee completion.
2. **Proposal.** Please provide the proposal when making a request. Staff will read the proposal and craft a letter that highlights linkages between the proposed project and the mission and goals of MBNMS.
3. **Connections.** Letters are strengthened when there are clear, direct connections between the proposed project and sanctuary mandates. The proposal should reference explicit needs as written in sanctuary management documents such as:
 - National Marine Sanctuaries Act (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/about/legislation/>)
 - MBNMS Designation Document (<http://montereybay.noaa.gov/intro/mp/welcome.html>)
 - MBNMS Management Plan (<http://montereybay.noaa.gov/intro/mp/welcome.html>)
 - Science Needs Assessment (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment/mbnms.html>)
 - Condition Report (<http://montereybay.noaa.gov/research/techreports/tronms2015.html>)
4. **Draft letters.** While not necessary, draft letters of support written by the principal investigator (PI) may be useful. Typically there are always sanctuary-centric components to any letter from MBNMS written by staff. We may or may not use all or parts of any draft letter of support submitted by the principal investigator.
5. **Directions.** Please include in your request for a letter of support the following items:
 - a. Project title
 - b. Principal Investigator contact information and collaborators
 - c. Entity receiving proposal, including address and point of contact
 - d. Date letter is due
 - e. Format for letter submission (e.g., send separately, send to PI, upload to URL)
 - f. If the entity has particular instructions for letters, please include those
6. **Contact:** Steve.Lonhart@noaa.gov

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- Avoid using phrases like “This research will support sanctuary management and improve efforts to minimize negative impacts to natural resources and ecosystem services.” Sure, this is a nice general sentiment. But what, **exactly**, will sanctuary management (i.e., Superintendent or other MBNMS staff) be able to do? Before making statement about

what the sanctuary can do, make sure you clearly understand our regulatory authority. If you are unclear, talking to staff prior to submitting a draft proposal and request for a letter of support is a really good idea.

- There are several ways your research can support the sanctuary. First, there is always a need to better understand the processes, species, and habitats within the sanctuary. We sometimes think of this as characterization, which can simply improve a description of a resource (e.g., higher resolution substrate maps, improved tracking a species that uses parts of the sanctuary) or add to the mechanistic understanding of how species and the environment interact to create such a unique and special place. This type of research may not be about sanctuary management *per se*, but it takes place in the sanctuary and will increase our understanding about the resources we manage. Second, your research may be a direct response to a science need as described in a sanctuary document or web site (e.g., “comprehensive literature review of documented MPWC interactions with marine wildlife such as seabirds, marine mammals, and turtles”, <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment/mbnms.html>). Research that has a strong connection to a management need is likely to generate a very strong letter of support.
- If the research you propose is useful to an agency other than the sanctuary, be sure to make note of that. For example, the sanctuary cannot close a beach but we do work with city, county, and state agencies and authorities that can close a beach. So if your proposal will address an issue that is handled by another agency, such as closing a beach after a sewage spill, be sure to highlight that, since we likely partner with that agency.