Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Emerging Issues...
Artificial Reefs
Emerging Issues Action Plan

Goal:

Develop a system to identify, track and respond to emerging issues which are potential threats to MBNMS resources
Emerging Issues Action Plan

A sampling of issues:

- Wave or wind generators
- Deep sea mineral development
- Rapid ferry service
- One-man submersibles
- Acoustic technologies
- Bioengineering
- Small plastic marine debris
- Artificial reefs (for coastal development purposes)
- Etc.
Plan Strategies

1) Identify and track emerging issues

- Develop and prioritize list of issues to track
- Develop means to track issues with limited resources
- Consider “early warning” system
Plan Strategies

2) Develop process to address emerging issues

• Establish evaluation criteria--threat level, rate of growth, etc.

• Define alternative categories--defer conduct new research staff address short-term resolution full action plan and long-term effort
Plan Strategies

3) Develop emerging issues staffing and operations structure

- Staffing allocation
- When to bring issues to SAC

- Plan Implementation Priority--Low
  SAC meeting Aug. 04
Emerging issue--Artificial reefs

What are they?

- Various structures --aircrafts, ships, cars, tires, and household appliances
- Intentionally sunk in the world’s oceans to attract divers and/or fish
- Recent national policy defines how NMSP will consider proposals to establish artificial reefs
Artificial reefs, a background

• Artificial reef development is prohibited in Sanctuaries

• May only be undertaken by going through the permit or authorization process

• Within the NMSP, only the Florida Keys Sanctuary has approved such structures
MBNMS Prohibitions include:
(among others)

- Discharge or deposit of any material (some specific exceptions)
- Altering the seabed
National Artificial Reef Policy Statement

- Outlines NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act).
  - Requires EA / EIS

- Outlines permitting process & criteria
  - Must meet permit category requirement
  - Whether it meets MBNMS threshold of short-term negligible adverse effect
  - Application contents
May also require approval from…

Federal
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
NOAA Fisheries
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
California Coastal Commission
California Department of Fish and Game
California State Lands Commission
FKNMS- Speigel Grove

- Vessel is 510 feet in length, 84 feet wide
- May 2002- FKNMS issued permit--goal of diver displacement from natural reefs
- May 2002- accidentally sunk upside down
- June 2002 efforts to right it unsuccessful--final position on starboard side
- June 2002 began leaking small amounts of hydraulic fluid
- July 2005-- a storm 200 miles to west resulted in currents which caused the vessel to flip upright
Recent inquiry on artificial reef proposal in MBNMS

- Proposal to sink excess Navy vessel (approx. 350-feet long by 80 feet wide, 2,900 tons)
- Project proponents met with MBNMS staff
- Proponent’s goal is to:
  - Create a wreck dive site
  - Attract additional divers to area and provide new site for existing divers
  - Create “additional habitat space” for fish and invertebrates
MBNMS concerns:

• Seabed alteration
• Loss of natural habitat
• Discharges
• Vessel condition: PCBs, asbestos, hydrocarbons, paint chips, fuel tanks
• Fishing interactions
• Stability and long-term placement
• Monitoring
• Liability/clean-up
Artificial reefs--lessons learned

- Stability issues with past NMSP permitted projects
- Unexpected resource issues: vessel condition- leaking fuels, when none thought to be onboard
- Ongoing monitoring efforts to assess goal of diver displacement are still inconclusive
Recent and next steps…

• Recently met with interested parties & provided them with relevant info

• Indicated these types of projects must undergo a thorough review

• Indicated very significant challenges in getting a project like this approved.

• Proponents interested in moving forward with the application / NEPA process anyway if there was public support.
For more info, contact:

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