

DRAFT
MBNMS Conservation Working Group Statement
January 30, 2013
CWG Co-Chairs: Geoff Shester and Lauren Dockendorf

CWG Members:

Sarah Damron (Surfrider Foundation) – Not present, represented by Ximena Waissbluth
Lauren Dockendorf (Save Our Shores) [Co-chair] - Present
Carol Maehr (American Cetacean Society) - Present
Patricia Matejcek (Sierra Club, Ventana Chapter) - Present
Harriet Mitteldorf (At-Large) - Present
Nick Naccari (Native Animal Rescue) – Not present
Geoff Shester (Oceana) [Co-chair] - Present
Steve Shimek (Monterey Coastkeeper) – Not present
Deborah Streeter (Upwellings Ministry) - Present
Anna Weinstein (Audubon California) – Not present
Mary Whitney (Fluke Foundation) - Present

The Conservation Working Group met on January 16, 2013 at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary office in Monterey. In addition to CWG members, the meeting was attended by Robert Chatham (SAC Member), Bonnie Van Hise (Congressman Farr's office), and MBNMS staff Karen Grimmer.

The CWG wishes to thank the SAC for their deliberate consideration of the forage issue over the past year, commends the SAC for its letter and resolution on this issue at the December meeting, and hopes to build a stronger, more integrated relationship with the SAC moving forward.

The CWG is pleased and appreciative to hear that the full SAC will be hearing Dr. Scott Benson's presentation on Pacific leatherbacks. The CWG sub-committee presented its progress, which includes the development of a draft proposal to secure funding to host an international meeting between the Sanctuary, the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, the State of California, representatives from West Papua, Indonesia, and non-governmental organizations. The goal of the proposed meeting would be to establish a trans-Pacific partnership focused on increasing reproductive output of Western Pacific leatherbacks at nesting beaches. The CWG wishes to make it clear that this effort would not focus on U.S. fisheries interactions with leatherbacks. The CWG requests that this meeting concept be agendaized for the next SAC meeting in April and welcomes input from the SAC.

MBNMS Staff Karen Grimmer updated the CWG on the benthic-focused Sanctuary Ecologically Significant Areas in federal waters and the Sanctuary's potential involvement in the Pacific Fishery Management Council's 5-year review of Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat. The CWG is highly supportive of the deliberate, science-based effort to identify SESAs, as this effort will greatly improve the capacity of the Sanctuary

to achieve its resource protection goals, and better engage in multiple relevant policy processes.

Over the past year, the CWG has been developing criteria and draft “areas of interest” for the purpose of discussing additional habitat protections in the context of the Essential Fish Habitat review process. Moving forward, the two main objectives for the CWGs efforts regarding “areas of interest” are to identify additional areas for Sanctuary consideration as SESAs and to engage in discussions with Sanctuary staff and a broader set of stakeholders regarding opportunities for a potential Sanctuary proposal to modify management measures under Essential Fish Habitat. The CWG remains concerned that the draft SESAs are limited in scope to benthic-focused criteria and federal waters. To ensure that the SESA exercise is useful for multiple purposes and understanding that SESAs are non-regulatory, the CWG recommends that the Sanctuary include California state waters in its SESA exercise and expand the scope of primary criteria so it is not focused on benthic habitat.