

MBNMS Conservation Working Group Statement
December 4, 2013

CWG Members:

Lauren Dockendorf (Save Our Shores) – present
Carol Maehr (American Cetacean Society) – present
Patricia Matejcek (Sierra Club, Ventana Chapter) – absent
Harriet Mitteldorf (At-Large) – present
Nick Naccari (Native Animal Rescue) – absent
Geoff Shester (Oceana) [Chair] – present
Steve Shimek (Monterey Coastkeeper) – present
Deborah Streeter (Upwellings Ministry) – absent
Anna Weinstein (Audubon California) – absent
Mary Whitney (Fluke Foundation) – present

The Conservation Working Group met on December 2, 2013 at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. In addition to CWG members, the meeting was attended by Tim Maricich (captain of the Donna Kathleen), Sierra Ryan (MLML) and MBNMS staff Karen Grimmer and Sara Hutto.

Earlier in the year the CWG expressed its concerns regarding the deleterious effects seismic surveys have on marine wildlife, and proposed a draft resolution that was distributed to the SAC in support of:

- banning seismic airgun activity within Sanctuary boundaries;
- weighing in on airgun activities outside Sanctuary boundaries; and
- further characterizing the threats posed by other seismic activities.

This proposed draft resolution was scheduled as an action item for potential adoption at the October 2013 SAC meeting, however, that meeting was canceled due to the government shutdown. Since then, the CWG solicited and received additional feedback from outside experts and from the Sanctuary program to ensure scientific accuracy and consistency with Sanctuary authority under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. The CWG spent considerable time at its December meeting making further revisions based on the feedback received, and has resubmitted its revised Dec. 3, 2013 draft to the SAC for consideration, along with supporting documentation including recent correspondence between Superintendent Michel and the California Coastal Commission regarding the proposed 2012 seismic testing that cites concerns raised by the SAC. The CWG strongly urges the SAC to adopt this resolution at its December 2013 meeting.

CWG Chair Geoff Shester provided a report on the Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Summit that took place in Monterey on October 14-16, 2013. The Summit, spurred largely by the efforts of the CWG Leatherback Sub-Committee, was a resounding success, convening over 50 scientific and political leaders from California and the TAMBRAUW Region of Indonesia where California leatherbacks nest. Key leaders signed an international Declaration codifying a mutual commitment on both sides of the Pacific to work together to protect leatherbacks throughout their long-distance migrations. The CWG commends the Sanctuary Education Panel (particularly SEP Chair Simona Bartl), for their leadership in the ongoing educational exchanges at the Summit, and hopes to build upon this cross-working group collaboration in future endeavors. The CWG appreciated the attendance of SAC Chair Kirk Schmidt at the Summit, and is thankful to Sanctuary leadership and staff and the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation for helping make the Summit possible. The CWG encourages the Sanctuary to move forward with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement, and establish a Sister Sanctuary relationship between MBNMS and the Abun Marine Protected Area as discussed at the Summit.