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**JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW UNDERWAY FOR
THREE CALIFORNIA NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES**
Series of Scoping Meetings Slated as Part of Public Process

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced today the beginning of a joint management-plan review for Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries. These three sanctuaries and their communities will jointly evaluate regulations, boundaries and strategies for management and operations.

Periodic management-plan review is required by Congress for all of the 13 national marine sanctuaries to ensure that sanctuaries continue to best conserve, protect and enhance their nationally significant living and cultural resources. The joint review will look at optimum coordination of the management programs at all three sanctuaries. The process, which is expected to take several months, involves the public throughout, with a number of public meetings, hearings and comment periods.

"Active and informed public participation is the critical element of sanctuary management," said Daniel J. Basta, director of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program. "The National Marine Sanctuary Program incorporates the public as a key resource-management partner and values their input in helping shape and manage marine sanctuaries."

Sanctuary staff will hold a series of public scoping meetings in communities along California's north and central coasts, beginning in Santa Cruz Nov. 28, with the final meeting taking place in San Jose Jan. 17, 2002. Scoping meetings provide an opportunity for the public to make direct comments on issues related to the region and management of the sanctuary's natural and cultural resources as well as overall sanctuary administration. The public comment period will remain open until Jan. 31, 2002. The complete list of scoping meeting times and locations will be available online.

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The three sanctuaries, part of the National Marine Sanctuary System, are located adjacent to one another along the shores of north and central California and share many of the same resources and issues. Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 526 square miles of open ocean off Point Reyes, north of San Francisco. Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, at 1,255 square miles, is located off the coast west of the San Francisco Bay area. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary stretches along 276 miles of the central coast and encompasses 5,328 square miles of coastal and ocean waters.

The joint management plan review process begins with the release of State of the Sanctuary reports that provide information about each sanctuary, its significant accomplishments to date and the current resource management issues of concern. The three reports are available online at <http://sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/jointplan> or at any of the three sanctuary offices.

The National Marine Sanctuary Program, established in 1972 by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, is administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) and protects a network of 13 special marine and freshwater areas. The goal of the sanctuaries act is to set aside and manage areas for resource protection, research, enhanced public education and compatible public and private uses.

NOS is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. NOS balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.