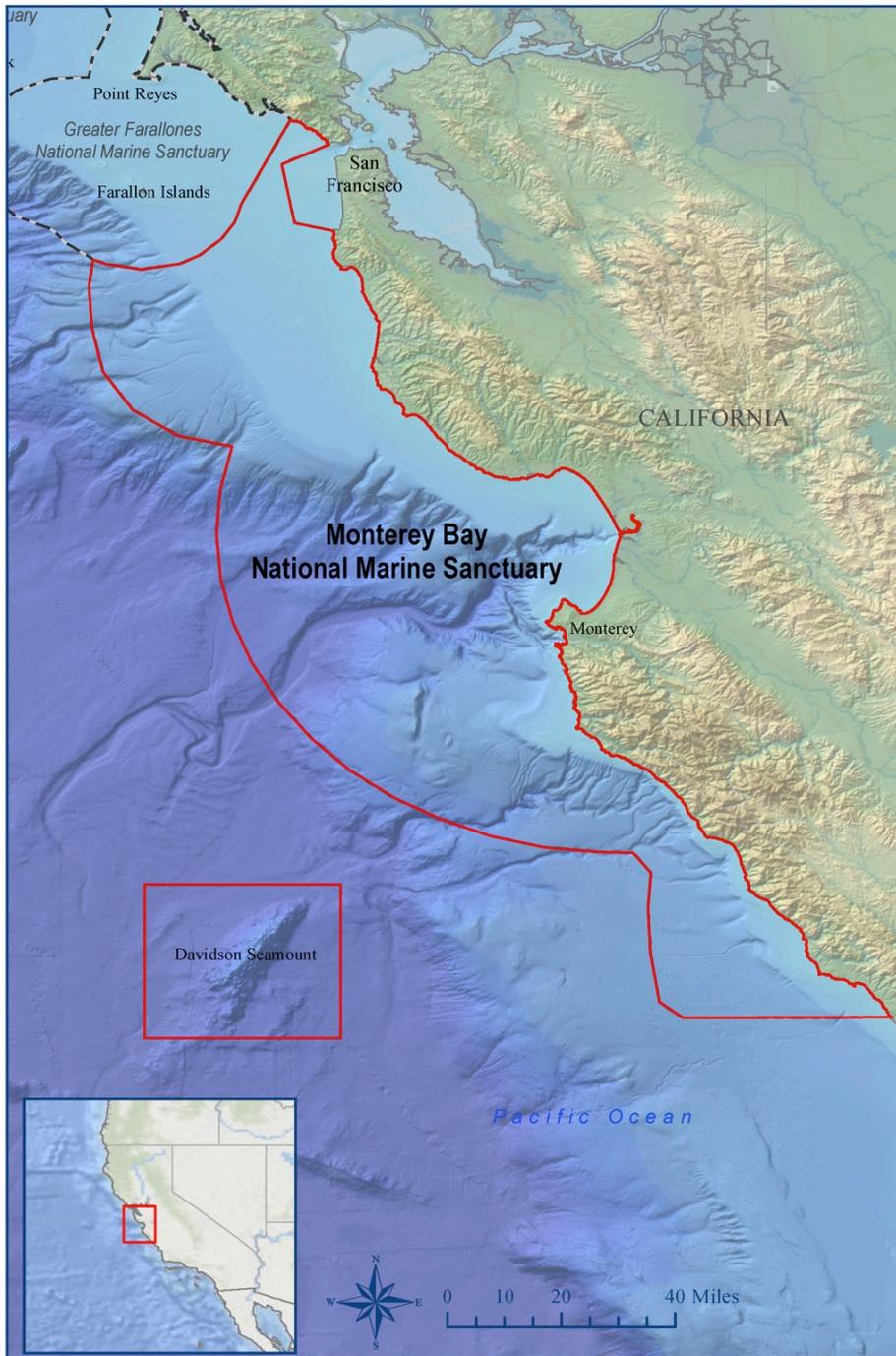


FY16 Accomplishments

BACKGROUND

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1992 to protect and preserve pristine beaches, jewel-like tide pools, lush kelp forests, steep canyons and an offshore seamount teeming with life -- from tiny shrimp to giant blue whales. Known as the "Serengeti of the Sea," the sanctuary is home to 34 species of marine mammals, more than 180 species of seabirds and shorebirds, 525 species of fish, an abundance of invertebrates and algae, and 26 threatened or endangered species. The sanctuary's seafloor also holds historic and cultural treasures.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is part of the National Marine Sanctuary System, which is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. National marine sanctuaries are managed for the conservation of their natural and cultural resources, while supporting sustainable recreation, tourism and compatible commercial activities. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.



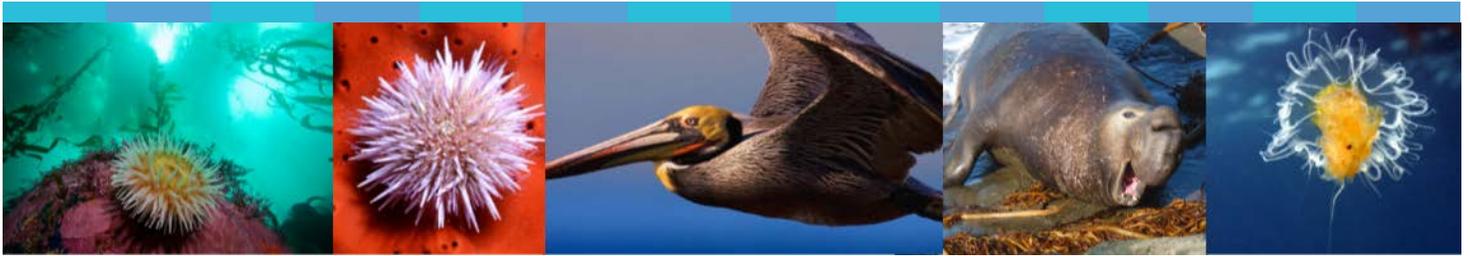


Photo: Bureau of Land Management

Young naturalists explore Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Chad King, NOAA

NOAA Ship *Bell M. Shimada* crew prepare deployment of a conductivity, temperature and depth instrument (CTD).



Photo: Karen Grimmer, NOAA

MBNMS Water Quality Program Director Bridget Hoover is at a test slant well installation for a proposed desalination plant in MBNMS.

Volunteers, partnerships benefit wildlife viewing, enjoyment and stewardship

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary builds capacity and stewardship through partnerships and a network of dedicated volunteers, such as the development of interpretive enforcement activities to benefit safe and educational viewing of northern elephant seals along the San Luis Obispo County coast. The program is responsible for a decrease in wildlife harassment and an increase in positive viewing practices in visitors from around the world.

Marine Biodiversity Observation Network team recognized for excellence

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is a sentinel site for characterizing changes in biodiversity as part of the Sanctuaries Marine Biodiversity Observation Network (MBON) project. The Sanctuaries MBON team has been integrating data from a variety of long-term observation programs and developing new methods to improve our understanding of changes in and connections between marine biodiversity and ecosystem functions. In 2016, the project was selected for National Oceanographic Partnership Program's (NOPP) "Excellence in Partnering Award" that best exemplifies diversity in partners, level of partner effort, and impact on ocean research and education.

Responding to the needs of the community

In response to community-level needs for adequate water supplies, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries began the internal review/assessment for the possibility to allow desalination facilities to operate in national marine sanctuaries. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary staff have identified potential impacts to reduce harm. A desalination facility could cause disturbance to the seafloor and discharge brine into the sanctuary. In collaboration with the California Public Utilities Commission, sanctuaries staff wrote two joint draft Environmental Impact Report/Statements (EIR/EIS) for the proposed desalination facilities within the sanctuary. Other contributors include the California State Lands Commission, NOAA Fisheries, and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Looking Ahead to FY17

- As the sanctuary continues the management plan review process, sanctuary staff and Advisory Council members will begin to incorporate public scoping comments into a new draft management plan that will be released to the public early in 2018.
- To celebrate 25 years in ecosystem protection, MBNMS staff, along with science and community partners, will highlight the health of the sanctuary through multiple public engagement strategies. MBNMS will promote recreation and tourism through "Get Into Your Sanctuary Day," and hold festivals and events at MBNMS visitor centers.
- The sanctuary, along with local research partners, will be compiling underwater soundscape data from Monterey Bay Aquarium Institute's new hydrophone placed within the sanctuary, which will ultimately be integrated into the NOAA Noise Reference Station Network and utilized by the sanctuary's visitor center to interpret ocean noise to the public.