DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

15 CFR Part 942
[Docket No. 90239-90239]
RIN 0648-A850

Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary

AGENCY: Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM); National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice of National Marine Sanctuary designation; final rule; and summary of final management plan.

SUMMARY: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, by the Designation Document contained in this notice, designates an area of marine waters encompassing a total of 597.05 square nautical miles surrounding Cordell Bank, which is located approximately 60 nautical miles west-northwest of San Francisco, California, as the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Further, NOAA by this notice issues regulations to implement the designation and regulate activities in the Sanctuary consistent with the provisions of the Designation Document. Finally, this notice summarizes the final Management Plan (MP) prepared for the Sanctuary, which details the goals and objectives, management responsibilities, research activities, interpretive and educational programs, and enforcement, including surveillance, activities for the area.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Pursuant to section 304(b) of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act [16 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.], Congress has forty-five days of continuous session beginning on the day on which this notice is published to review the designation and regulations before they take effect. After forty-five days, the designation and regulations automatically become final and take effect unless the designation or any of its terms is disapproved by Congress through enactment of a joint resolution. A document announcing the effective date will be published in the Federal Register.

For further information contact: Joseph A. Urrutia, Chief, Marine and Estuarine Management Division, OCRM, NOS, NOAA, 1225 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230 (202) 673-5122. Copies of the final Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan (FEIS/MP) are available upon request from OCRM.

Supplementary information: Title III of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, as amended [16 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.], authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to designate discrete areas of the marine environment as National Marine Sanctuaries if, as required by section 303 of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1433), the Secretary finds, in consultation with the Congress, a variety of specified officials, and other interested persons, that the designation will fulfill the purpose and policies of the Act (set forth in section 301(b) (16 U.S.C. 1431(b)) and: (1) the area proposed for designation is of special national significance due to its resource or human-use values; (2) existing State and Federal authorities are inadequate to ensure coordinated and comprehensive conservation and management of the area, including resource protection, scientific research, and public education; (3) designation of the area as a National Marine Sanctuary will facilitate the coordinated and comprehensive conservation and management of the area; and (4) the area is of a size and nature that will permit comprehensive and coordinated conservation and management.

Section 303 of the Act requires the Secretary to make a number of findings before he or she can designate an area as a National Marine Sanctuary. Section 304 of the Act requires the Secretary to give notice of the designation in the Federal Register, to take a variety of other actions including preparation of a MP for the Sanctuary and a FEIS for the designation, and to issue necessary and reasonable regulations implementing the designation.

The authority of the Secretary to designate National Marine Sanctuaries has been delegated to the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere by DOC Order 10-15, § 3.02(e) (Jan. 11, 1988). The authority to administer the other provisions of the Act has been delegated to the Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management of NOAA by NOAA Circular 83-38, Directive 05-50 (Sept. 21, 1983, as amended).

The waters surrounding Cordell Bank were nominated for designations as National Marine Sanctuaries in July 1981. On June 30, 1983, NOAA declared the area an active candidate for designation. A public scoping meeting to gather information to determine the range and significance of issues related to designation and management was held on April 25, 1984.

Cordell Bank and its surrounding waters, because of a rare combination of oceanic conditions and undersea topography, provide a highly productive marine environment in a discrete, well-defined area. The prevailing California Current flows southward along the coast, while the upwelling of nutrient-rich bottom waters brings nutrients and stimulates the growth of planktonic organisms. These nutrients support the entire food chain from small crustaceans to fish, marine mammals and seabirds that form the exceptionally vigorous ecological community flourishing at Cordell Bank. The area is being designated as a National Marine Sanctuary for the purpose of protecting and conserving the area and ensuring the continued availability of the ecological, research, educational, aesthetic, and recreational resources therein. In addition, historical or cultural resources may be present within the Cordell Bank area and its designation as a Sanctuary will protect these resources as well.

On August 28, 1987, NOAA published proposed regulations to implement the proposed designation for the Sanctuary in the Federal Register (52 FR 32563) and invited public comment. On the same date, NOAA issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and MP which described in detail the proposed regulatory regime and alternatives to it and, in accordance with section 304(a)(1)(C) of the Act, sent a Designation Prospectus to the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries of the United States House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the United States Senate for review and approval.

Public hearings to receive comments on the proposed designation and DEIS/MP were held in Bodega, California, on September 29, 1987, and in San Francisco, California, on September 30, 1987. Comments received by NOAA in response to the Federal Register notice and at the public hearings on the DEIS/MP were reviewed and, where appropriate, the recommendations contained therein were incorporated in the FEIS/MP. The significant comments on the proposed regulations and the
viable oil and gas reserves under Cordell Bank and the area within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank (together, the core area of the Sanctuary, consisting of approximately 16.14 square nautical miles) and the special environmental sensitivity of Cordell Bank has deferred, until its expiration in February 1992, leasing the core area. The 5-year plan, the Sanctuary regulations, the management framework, and other Federal regulations and statutes were believed adequate to protect Sanctuary resources from being damaged from hydrocarbon exploration and development activities.

Upon publication of the FEIS/MP, NOAA received additional public comments urging that oil and gas activities be banned throughout the Sanctuary. NOAA also received a letter from EPA stating that based on information provided by the FEIS, a Sanctuary-wide ban on hydrocarbon development appeared to be the environmentally preferable alternative.

Based on all the above, NOAA is:
(1) By this notice of final rule banning all oil and gas activities on Cordell Bank and within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank; and
(2) Initiating a rule making considering expansion of the ban to the entire Sanctuary.

Expanding the ban to the entire Sanctuary was chosen over taking regulatory action with respect thereto in this notice of final rule, because the notice proposing this rule (52 FR 32563, Aug. 28, 1987) and the DEIS/MP did not consider such a ban. A regulatory prohibition of this magnitude should not be imposed without assessing the protection to sensitive Sanctuary resources that would be afforded by such a prohibition and the effect of such a prohibition on this nation's domestic energy reserve potential and on potential lease revenues to the United States, and without all interested persons having notice and an opportunity to comment.

Unauthorized oil and gas activities in the core area by this notice of final rule is justified given the special environmental sensitivity of the core area and that a ban on oil and gas activities in the core area was an alternative examined in the DEIS/MP, upon which public comments were solicited.

(3) Comment: Several commentators recommended that a proposed ocean sewage outfall pipe from the City of Santa Rosa be prohibited because of their belief that discharges from the outfall could adversely impact the Sanctuary.

Response: The City of Santa Rosa is considering several sites for the disposal of sewage effluent. The plans of the City are in the preliminary stages and the eventual disposal site and the nature of permissible discharges have not been decided. NOAA, as manager of PRNMS, is a member of the task force set up by the California Regional Water Control Board to determine the optimal site and nature of the discharges.

No sewage can be discharged into the ocean without a permit from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued under the Clean Water Act (CWA). Under § 942.9 of the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary regulations, since the discharge of sewage into the Sanctuary, and the discharge of sewage outside of the Sanctuary if such discharge enters the Sanctuary, injures a Sanctuary resource, are prohibited under § 942.9(a)(1), EPA permits allowing such a discharge are not valid without a NOAA certification. Thus, if necessary to protect Sanctuary resources, NOAA cannot impose conditions as a prerequisite of giving its certification or even deny certification.

(4) Comment: Many commentators recommended that anchoring on the ridges and peaks of Cordell Bank be banned to prevent damage to benthic organisms.

Response: Anchoring on the Bank can destroy or disturb many benthic organisms by physical impact of the anchor and drag of the anchor chain. Because at present only a few vessels visit Cordell Bank and anchor on it, anchoring does not now threaten the Bank's resources. However, if anchoring activities significantly increase, there could be a significant adverse effect on the Sanctuary's benthic flora and fauna. Accordingly, Article 4 of the Designation Document has been expanded to authorize the regulation of anchoring and NOAA intends to monitor anchoring carefully. If anchoring activities increase and threaten the Bank's resources, NOAA will amend the regulations to control anchoring. If anchoring is controlled, the controls would be applicable to only Cordell Bank and the area within the 50 fathom contour (isobath) surrounding the Bank. This is the area in which the benthic resources are most concentrated and susceptible to anchor and anchor chain damage.

(5) Comment: Some commentators were unclear as to whether the Sanctuary regulations would apply only to Cordell Bank and the area within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank (i.e., the core area of the Sanctuary.
consisting of approximately 18.14 square nautical miles) or throughout the entire Sanctuary. One commentator felt that the regulations should apply only to the core area.

Response: NOAA stated in Volume II of the FEIS that Article 4 of the Sanctuary Designation Document has been revised to eliminate ambiguities concerning the application of the Sanctuary’s regulatory program. The Designation Document authorizes the regulation of five categories of activities: depositing or discharging of materials or substances; removing, taking, or injuring or attempting to remove, take, or injure benthic invertebrates or algae; hydrocarbon (oil and gas) activities: anchoring and removing, taking, or injuring or attempting to remove, take, or injure historical or cultural resources. At this time, only depositing or discharging materials or substances; removing, taking, or injuring or attempting to remove, take, or injure benthic invertebrates or algae; and hydrocarbon activities are being regulated. The prohibition against depositing or discharging applies to the entire Sanctuary. In addition, discharges or deposits beyond the boundary of the Sanctuary which enter the Sanctuary and injure its resources are prohibited.

The prohibition against the taking of benthic invertebrates or algae applies only to the core area. Prohibition within this discrete area is deemed sufficient to protect the unique benthic resources of the Sanctuary found on the submerged seamount. This prohibition does not restrict commercial or recreational fishing activities. The accidental taking of invertebrates or algae during normal fishing operations would not violate this prohibition.

The prohibition against hydrocarbon activities presently also applies only to the core area. However, as discussed under the response to comment (2) above, NOAA today is proposing a rule considering banning hydrocarbon activities throughout the entire Sanctuary.

At this time, anchoring is not being regulated. If in the future, it is necessary to control anchoring in order to prevent damage to Sanctuary resources, such regulation will apply only to the core area. This area is where the benthic resources are most concentrated and potentially susceptible to anchor damage.

Also at this time, the taking of, removal of, or injury to or attempt to take, remove, or injure historical or cultural resources is not being regulated. If in the future it is necessary to impose such regulation, it would apply to the entire Sanctuary.

(6) Comment: One commentator stated that existing regulations made the proposed regulation prohibiting the discharge or deposit of material in the Sanctuary unnecessary. That commentator stated that with the exception of solid wastes the discharge of materials or substances was covered adequately by existing laws and regulations.

Response: NOAA disagrees. The regulation prohibiting discharges or deposits within the Sanctuary complements the existing regulatory system, will enhance the area’s overall recreational and aesthetic appeal, and will help maintain the present water quality in the Sanctuary. While numerous regulations and rules apply to the disposal of waste in the marine environment, most Federal decisions regarding whether waste may be so disposed are made on a case-by-case basis. Thus, protection of the complete Sanctuary habitat would not be certain without prohibiting discharges in an area which protects the complete Sanctuary habitat.

The CWA provides for a maximum penalty of $10,000 for a single discharge incident without the initiation of a civil action. This does not provide sufficient deterrent for protecting important Sanctuary resources. Sanctuary regulations provide for a maximum penalty of $50,000.

Certain gaps exist in the regulatory framework. The discharge of oil and other hazardous substances in the territorial sea is subject to EPA requirements under the CWA and United States Army Corps of Engineers requirements under the Rivers and Harbors Act (for discharges that might obstruct navigation). These statutes are not sufficient to provide comprehensive protection of a marine area and do not specifically prohibit certain activities that may harm the resources of the Sanctuary, such as the overboard disposal of trash from ships.

Beyond the territorial sea, EPA approval is needed for ocean dumping and for the placement of new ocean outfalls. EPA regulations require EPA to consider the ecological productivity and sensitivity of any area proposed for dumping or an outfall. However, such regulations do not guarantee that EPA will prohibit the disposal of waste in the Sanctuary. Specifically, the provisions of the CWA do not apply to discharges of non-biodegradable solid wastes such as casual litter. The prohibition in the Sanctuary regulations is designed specifically to protect the area’s important living resources from the effects of all harmful effluent and solid wastes. In addition, it prevents floating or submerged waste debris (e.g., non-biodegradable plastics) from being deposited in areas where animals could eat or become entangled in the debris, possibly leading to illness or death. Finally, the deposit of non-biodegradable litter reduces the aesthetic qualities of the Bank and thereby detracts from its recreational value.

(7) Comment: Several commentators recommended that NOAA consider provisions to increase shipping safety in the area such as the deployment of special buoys, establishment of communication systems, and redirection of vessel traffic to prevent collision that might result in spills of hazardous materials.

Response: The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has jurisdiction over shipping safety in United States waters. The USCG has determined that existing safety regulations and Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) are adequate for the number of vessels using the ocean approaches to the port of San Francisco Bay in the area around Cordell Bank. This determination was based on an USCG Port Access Route Study and the fact that while compliance with the TSS is voluntary, virtually all traffic uses it.

The USCG has also initiated the Offshore Vessel Movement Reporting System, an advisory service, to inform mariners of the locations and movements of large vessels, such as oil tankers, in the ocean approaches to San Francisco Bay, including areas east of Cordell Bank. Participation by mariners is voluntary, but by monitoring the radio transmissions of vessels, close encounters and possible collisions between ships may be avoided. NOAA will cooperate with the USCG in enforcement and surveillance procedures that relate to shipping within Sanctuary waters.

Under international law, foreign flag vessels in waters beyond the limits of the United States territorial sea, such as those in the vicinity of Cordell Bank, cannot be regulated directly by the United States Government. Under international law, any regulation of navigation on the high seas must be endorsed by the International Maritime Organization in order for it to apply to foreign flag traffic.
Activities may be regulated only to the extent authorized in the Designation Document. Under section 304(2)(4) of the Act, the Designation Document may be modified only by the same procedures by which the original designation was made. Thus, the Designation Document serves as a constitution for the Sanctuary by establishing the purpose of the Sanctuary designation; the characteristics of the area that give it conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, research, educational or aesthetic value; and the types of activities subject to regulation by the Secretary to protect those characteristics.

The Designation Document for the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary follows:

Designation Document for the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary

Preamble

Under the authority of Title III of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1431 et seq. (the "Act"), the Cordell Bank and its surrounding waters offshore northern California, as described in Article 2, are hereby designated as a National Marine Sanctuary for the purpose of protecting and conserving that special, discrete, highly productive marine area and ensuring the continued availability of the ecological, research, educational, aesthetic, historical, and recreational resources therein.

Article 1. Effect of Designation

The Act authorizes the promulgation of such regulations as are necessary and reasonable to protect the characteristics of the Sanctuary that give it conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, research, educational, or aesthetic value. As used in the Act, this Designation Document, and the Sanctuary regulations, the word "historical" includes cultural, archaeological, and paleontological.

Article 4 of this Designation Document lists those activities requiring regulation now or which may require regulation in the future in order to protect Sanctuary resources. Listing of an activity authorizes but does not require its regulation. Therefore, the listing of an activity does not imply that the activity will be regulated in the future. However, if an activity is not listed it cannot be regulated, except on an emergency basis for no longer than 120 days where necessary to prevent immediate, serious, and irreversible damage to a Sanctuary resource, without amending Article 4 to list the activity. Such an amendment can only be accomplished by following the same procedures through which the original designation was made.

Article 2. Description of the Area

The Sanctuary consists of a 397.05 square nautical mile area encompassed by a boundary extending at 10° from the northernmost boundary of the Point Reyes-Farallon Islands National Marine Sanctuary (PRNMS) to the 1,000 fathom isobath northwest of the Bank, then south along this isobath to the PRNMS boundary and back to the northeast along this boundary to the beginning point. The precise boundaries are set forth in the regulations.

Article 3. Characteristics of the Area That Give it Particular Value

Cordell Bank is characterized by a combination of oceanic conditions and undersea topography that provides for a highly productive environment in a discrete, well-defined area. In addition, the Bank and its surrounding waters may contain historical resources of national significance. The Bank consists of a series of steep-sided ridges and narrow pinnaclers rising from the edge of the continental shelf. It lies on a plateau 300-400 feet (91-122 meters) deep and ascends to within about 115 feet (35 meters) of the surface. The seasonal upwelling of nutrient-rich bottom waters to the upper levels of the Bank stimulates the growth of planktonic organisms. These nutrients, combined with high light penetration in Bank waters and wide depth ranges in the vicinity, have led to a unique association of subtidal and oceanic species. The vigorous biological community flourishing at Cordell Bank includes an exceptional assortment of algae, invertebrates, fishes, marine mammals and seabirds.

Article 4. Scope of Regulation

Section 1.—Activities Subject to Regulation

The following activities may be regulated within the Sanctuary and adjacent waters to the extent necessary and reasonable to ensure the protection of the Sanctuary’s conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, research, education or aesthetic values:

a. Depositing or discharging any material or substance;

b. Removing, taking, or injuring or attempting to remove, take, or injure benthic invertebrates or algae located on the Bank or within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank;

c. Hydrocarbon (oil and gas) activities within the Sanctuary;
exercises and vessel operations, shall be subject to all prohibitions contained in the Sanctuary regulations.

Section 3.—Other Programs

All applicable regulatory programs shall remain in effect, and all permits, licenses, approvals, and other authorizations issued pursuant to those programs shall be valid, subject only to the regulation of activities pursuant to Article 4.

Article 5. Alterations to This Designation

This designation may be altered only in accordance with the same procedures by which it has been made, including public hearings, consultation with interested Federal and State agencies and the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and approval by the Secretary of Commerce or his/her designee.

[End of Designation Document]

Summary of Final Management Plan

The final MP for the Sanctuary sets forth the Sanctuary’s location and provides details on the important resources and uses of the Sanctuary. The MP describes the resource protection, research, and interpretive programs and details the specific activities to be undertaken in each program. The MP includes a detailed breakdown by program area, of agency roles and responsibilities. The Sanctuary goals and objectives as set forth in the MP are:

Resource Protection

The highest priority management goal is to protect the marine environment and resources of the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. The specific objectives of resource protection efforts are to:

- Prevent damage to the resources by promulgating regulations to protect them from the adverse effects of harmful effluents and solid wastes and from being injured, removed, or taken by divers;
- Establish cooperative agreements and other mechanisms for coordination among the agencies participating with NOAA in Sanctuary management;
- Develop an effective and coordinated program for enforcement of Sanctuary regulations;
- Promote public awareness of, and voluntary user compliance with, the regulations through an interpretive program stressing resource sensitivity and wise use; and
- Reduce threats to Sanctuary resources raised by major emergencies through contingency and emergency-response planning.

Research

The goal of Sanctuary research activities is to improve understanding of the Cordell Bank environment and resources and to resolve specific management problems, some of which may involve resources common to both the Bank area and the nearby PRNMS. Research results will be used in interpretive programs for visitors and others interested in the Sanctuary, as well as for resource protection. Specific objectives of the research program are to:

- Establish a framework and procedures for administering research to ensure that research projects are responsive to management concerns and that results contribute to improved management of the Sanctuary;
- Initiate a monitoring program to assess environmental changes as they occur;
- Identify the range of effects on the environment that would result from predicted changes in human activity;
- Incorporate research results into the interpretive program in a format useful for the general public; and
- Encourage information exchange among all the organizations and agencies undertaking research in the Sanctuary to promote more informed management.

Interpretation

The goal of interpretive programs is to improve public awareness and understanding of the significance of the Sanctuary and the need to protect its resources. The management objectives designed to meet this goal are to:

- Provide the public with information on the Sanctuary, its goals and objectives, with an emphasis on the need to use these resources wisely to ensure their long-term viability;
- Broaden support for the Sanctuary and Sanctuary management by offering programs suited to visitors with a range of diverse interests;
- Provide for public involvement by encouraging feedback on the effectiveness of interpretive programs, collaboration with Sanctuary management staff in extension and outreach programs, and participation in other volunteer programs; and
- Collaborate with other organizations to provide interpretive services complementary to the Sanctuary program.
itor Use

The Sanctuary goal of visitor management is to encourage commercial and recreational use of the Sanctuary compatible with the primary goal of resource protection. Specific management objectives are to:

- Provide relevant information about Sanctuary regulations, use policies and standards;
- Collaborate with public and private organizations in promoting compatible use of the Sanctuary by exchanging information concerning the commercial and recreational potential of the Sanctuary; and
- Assess the current levels of use and monitor use over time to identify and control potential degradation of resources and minimize potential user conflicts.

Summary of Regulations

The regulations prohibit a relatively narrow range of activities, establish procedures for issuing permits to conduct otherwise prohibited activities for a narrow range of purposes, and set forth the maximum per day penalty for conducting a prohibited activity without a permit.

Specifically, the regulations add a new Part 842 to title 15, Code of Federal Regulations.

Section 842.1 sets forth the statutory authority for the designation of the Sanctuary and for the issuance of the regulations.

Section 842.2 sets forth as the purpose for designating the Sanctuary: protecting and conserving the highly productive area of Cordell Bank and its surrounding waters and ensuring the continued availability of the ecological, research, educational, aesthetic, historical and recreational resources therein.

Section 842.3 and Appendix 1 following § 842.2 set forth the boundaries of the Sanctuary.

Section 842.4 defines various terms used in the regulations. “Person” is defined to mean any private individual, partnership, corporation, or other entity; or any officer, employee, agent, agency, department or instrumentality of the Federal government, any state or local government, or any foreign government.

“Sanctuary” is defined to mean the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. “Injury” is defined to mean to change adversely, either in the long- or short-term, a chemical or physical quality or the viability of a Sanctuary resource. “Sanctuary resource” is defined to mean a living or non-living resource of the Sanctuary that contributes to its conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, research, educational, or aesthetic value. Other terms appearing in the regulations are defined at 15 CFR 322.2.

Section 842.6 prohibits three types of activities and thus makes it unlawful for any person to conduct them. However, any of those activities could be conducted lawfully if necessary for national defense, if necessary to respond to an emergency threatening life, property, or the environment; or pursuant to a permit or certification issued under § 942.9 or § 942.9 by the Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management of NOAA.

The first type of activity prohibited is depositing or discharging from any location within the boundaries of the Sanctuary materials or substances of any kind, except for fish, fish parts and chumming materials (bait) produced and discarded during routine fishing activities conducted in the Sanctuary and water (including cooling water) and other biodegradable effluents, specified in § 942.6(a)(1)(i)(B). Depositing or discharging, from any location beyond the boundaries of the Sanctuary, materials or substances of any kind except for those excluded discussed above is also prohibited if such deposit or discharge enters the Sanctuary and injures a Sanctuary resource.

The second type of activity prohibited is attempting to remove, take, or injure or removing, taking, or injuring benthic invertebrates or algae located on Cordell Bank or within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank. Section 842.5 allows all activities to be conducted in the Sanctuary (subject to all other prohibitions, restrictions, or conditions imposed under any other program) except for those activities prohibited in § 942.6.

The third type of activity prohibited is oil and gas activities on the Bank or within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank. Section 842.7 sets forth the maximum statutory civil penalty per day for conducting a prohibited activity—$50,000. Each day of a continuing violation constitutes a separate violation. Further, in rem actions against any vessel used in conducting a prohibited activity are statutorily authorized. Regulations setting forth the administrative procedures governing the assessment of civil penalties, enforcement hearings and appeals, permit sanctions and permits for enforcement reasons, and the issuance of written warnings appear at Part 904, Title 15, Code of Federal Regulations.

Section 842.8 sets forth the procedures for applying for a permit to conduct an otherwise prohibited activity in the Sanctuary and the criteria governing the issuance or denial of such permits.

Permits are granted by the Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management if he or she finds that the activity will further research related to Sanctuary resources, further the educational or historical value of the Sanctuary, further salvage or recovery operations in or near the Sanctuary in connection with a recent air or marine casualty, or assist in the management of the Sanctuary. In deciding whether to issue a permit, the Assistant Administrator may consider such factors as the professional qualifications and financial ability of the applicant as related to the proposed activity, the appropriateness of the methods and procedures proposed by the applicant for the conduct of the activity, the extent to which the conduct of the activity may diminish or enhance the values for which the Sanctuary was designated, and the end value of the applicant’s overall activity.

Section 942.9 states that all permits, licenses, approvals, and other authorizations issued pursuant to any authority are valid within the Sanctuary subject only to the provisions set forth in § 942.6. Other authorizations allowing the discharge or deposit of materials or substances otherwise prohibited under § 942.6(a)(1), or the removal, taking, or injury of, or attempt to remove, take, or injure benthic invertebrates or algae otherwise prohibited under § 942.6(a)(2), are valid if certified by the Assistant Administrator as consistent with the purpose of the Sanctuary and having no significant effect on Sanctuary resources. The certification may impose terms and conditions to ensure consistency.

Section 842.10 sets forth the procedures governing appeals of the grant, denial, conditioning amendment, suspension or revocation of permits by the Assistant Administrator.

Additional Information

Executive Order 12291

NOAA has concluded that these regulations are not “major rules” within Section 1(b) of Executive Order 12291 because they will not result in:

1. An annual effect on the economy of $100 million or more;
2. A major increase in costs or prices for consumers, individual industries, Federal or state governments, or geographic regions; or
3. Significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, and innovation or on the ability of United States-based enterprises to
part 942—Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary


§ 942.1 Authority.

The Sanctuary has been designated by the Secretary of Commerce pursuant to the authority of Title III of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanities Act of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1431 et seq. ("Act"). The regulations in this part are issued pursuant to the authority of sections 303, 304, 305, and 307 of the Act.

§ 942.2 Purpose.

The purpose of designating the Sanctuary is to protect and conserve the special, discrete, highly productive marine area of Cordell Bank and its surrounding waters and to ensure the continued availability of the ecological, research, educational, aesthetic, historical and recreational resources therein.

§ 942.3 Boundary.

The Sanctuary consists of an area of marine waters approximately 50 miles west-northwest of San Francisco, California. The Sanctuary consists of a 397.05 square nautical mile area extending at 180° from the northernmost boundary of the Point Reyes-Parallon Islands National Marine Sanctuary (PRMS) to the 1,000 fathom isobath northwest of the Bank, then south along this isobath to the PRMS boundary and back to the northwest along this boundary to the beginning point. The boundary coordinates are listed in Appendix I following § 942.10.

§ 942.4 Definitions.


(b) "Administrator" means the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Estimate or any other aspect of the collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Joseph A. Uralevich, Chief, Marine and Estuarine Management Division, OCRM, NOS, NOAA, 1325 Connecticut Ave., NW., Washington DC 20235, and to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Paperwork Reduction Project (0648-0141), Office of Management and Budget, Washington DC 20503.

National Environmental Policy Act

In accordance with section 304(a)(2) of the Act and the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4370), a DEIS was prepared for the designation and the proposed regulations. As required by section 304(a)(2) of the Act, the DEIS included the resource assessment report required by section 303(b)(3) of the Act, maps depicting the boundaries of the proposed designated area, and the existing and potential uses and resources of the area. The DEIS was made available for public review on August 28, 1987, with comments due on October 12, 1987. Public hearings to receive comments on the proposed designation were held in Bodega, California, on September 29, 1987, and in San Francisco, California, on September 30, 1987. All comments were reviewed and, where appropriate, were incorporated into the FEIS and these regulations.

Executive Order 12012

This rule does not contain policies with Federalism implications sufficient to warrant preparation of a Federalism Assessment under Executive Order 12012.

Executive Order 12630

This rule does not have takings implications sufficient to require preparation of a Takings Implications Assessment under Executive Order 12630.

List of Subjects in 15 CFR Part 942


(Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog Number 11.429 Marine Sanctuary Program)


John J. Carey.

Acting Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management.

Accordingly, for the reasons set forth in the preamble, 15 CFR is amended as follows:

1. Part 942 is added to read as follows:
listed in paragraph (a)(1)(i) of this section, which enter the Sanctuary and injure a Sanctuary resource.
(2) Removing, taking, or injuring sanctuary resources. Removing, taking, or injuring or attempting to remove, take, or injure benthic invertebrates or algae located on Cordell Bank or within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank. There is a rebuttable presumption that any such resource found in the possession of a person within the Sanctuary was taken or removed by that person. This prohibition does not apply to accidental removal, injury, or taking during normal fishing operations.
(3) Hydrocarbon (oil and gas) activities. Hydrocarbon (oil and gas) exploration, development, and production activities on Cordell Bank or within the 50 fathom isobath surrounding the Bank.
(b) All activities being carried out by the Department of Defense (DOD) within the Sanctuary on the effective date of designation that are necessary for national defense are exempt from the prohibitions contained in these regulations. Additional DOD activities initiated after the effective date of designation that are necessary for national defense will be exempted by the Assistant Administrator after consultation between the Department of Commerce and DOD. DOD activities not necessary for national defense, such as routine exercises and vessel operations, are subject to all prohibitions contained in these regulations.
(c) The prohibitions in this section are applicable to foreign persons and foreign flag vessels only to the extent consistent with generally recognized principles of international law, and in accordance with treaties, conventions, and other international agreements to which the United States is a party.
(d) Where necessary to prevent immediate, serious, and irreversible damage to a Sanctuary resource, any activity may be regulated within the limits of the Act on an emergency basis for no more than 120 days.

§ 942.7 Penalties.
(a) Section 307(c) of the Act authorizes the assessment of a civil penalty of not more than $50,000 for each violation of the Act or any regulation or permit issued pursuant to the Act. Each day of a continuing violation constitutes a separate violation. Section 307(c)(3) further authorizes a proceeding in rem against any vessel used in such violation and for which a civil penalty has been assessed.
(b) Regulations setting forth the administrative procedures governing the assessment of civil penalties.

enforcement hearings and appeals, permit sanctions and denials for enforcement reasons, and the issuance of written warnings appear at 15 CFR Part 904.

§ 942.8 Permit applications—procedures and criteria.
(a) If a person wishes to conduct an activity prohibited under § 942.6, that person must apply for, receive, and have in possession on board any vessel used a valid permit issued pursuant to this part authorizing that person to conduct that activity.
(b) Permit applications shall be addressed to the Assistant Administrator, Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management; Attn: Marine and Estuarine Management Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1825 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20235. An application shall include a description of all activities proposed, the equipment, methods, and personnel (particularly describing relevant experience) involved, and a timetable for completion of the proposed activity. Copies of all other required permits, licenses, approvals, and other authorizations shall be attached.
(c) Upon receipt of a complete application, the Assistant Administrator may seek the views of any person, within or outside the Federal Government, and may hold a public hearing, at his or her discretion.
(d) The Assistant Administrator, at his or her discretion, may issue a permit subject to such terms and conditions as deemed appropriate, to conduct an activity otherwise prohibited by § 942.6. if the Assistant Administrator finds that the activity will further research related to Sanctuary resources; further the educational or historical value of the Sanctuary; further salvage or recovery operations in or near the Sanctuary in connection with a recent air or marine casualty; or assist in the management of the Sanctuary. In deciding whether to issue a permit, the Assistant Administrator may consider such factors as the professional qualifications and financial ability of the applicant as related to the proposed activity; the appropriateness of the methods and procedures proposed by the applicant for the conduct of the activity; the extent to which the conduct of the activity may diminish or enhance the values for which the Sanctuary was designated; and the end value of the applicant’s overall activity.
(e) A permit issued pursuant to this section is nontransferable.
   The Assistant Administrator may suspend or revoke a permit issued pursuant to this subsection, in whole or in part, if the Assistant Administrator determines that the permittee has acted in violation of the terms or conditions of the permit or of those regulations or that other good cause exists for suspending or revoking the permit. Any such action shall be communicated in writing to the permittee, and shall set forth the reason(s) for the action taken.
(f) Either the holder or the issuing agency may appeal any action conditioning, denying, amending, suspending, or revoking any permit in accordance with the procedure provided in § 942.10.
§ 942.10 Appeals of administrative action.
(a) Except for permit actions taken for enforcement reasons and therefore covered by the procedures at Subpart D of 15 CFR Part 904, an applicant for a permit, a permittee, or any other interested person (hereinafter appellant) may appeal the grant, denial, conditioning, amendment, suspension, or revocation of any permit under § 942.8 to the Administrator of NOAA. In order to be considered by the Administrator, such appeal must be in writing, must state the action(s) appealed and the reason(s) therefore, and must be submitted within 30 days of the date of the action(s) by the Assistant Administrator. The Administrator, in his or her discretion, may hold an informal hearing on the appeal.
(b) Upon receipt of an appeal authorized by this section, the Administrator may request the permittee, the permit applicant or permittee, or any person, within or outside the Federal government, to submit such information as the Administrator may deem appropriate in order to decide the appeal. The Administrator shall decide the appeal based on the record before the Assistant Administrator and the record of the appeal. The Administrator shall notify the appellant and other interested persons of the final decision and the reason(s) therefor in writing, normally within 30 days of the date of the receipt of adequate information to make the decision.
(c) If the Administrator determines that an informal hearing should be held, the Administrator may designate an officer before whom the hearing shall be held. Notice of the time, place, and subject matter of the hearing shall be published in the Federal Register. Such hearing shall be held no later than 30 days following publication of the notice in the Federal Register, unless the hearing officer extends the time for reasons deemed equitable. The appellant, the applicant or permittee and other interested persons may appear personally or by counsel at the hearing and submit such material and present such arguments as determined appropriate by the hearing officer.
Within 30 days of the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing officer shall recommend a decision in writing to the Administrator.
(d) The Administrator may adopt the hearing officer's recommended decision, in whole or in part, or may reject or modify it. In any event, the Administrator shall notify the appellant and other interested persons of his/her decision, and the reason(s) therefor in writing within 30 days of receipt of the recommended decision of the hearing officer. The Administrator's decision shall constitute final agency action for the purposes of the Administrative Procedure Act.
(e) Any time limit prescribed in this section may be extended by the Administrator for good cause for a period not to exceed 30 days, either upon his/her own motion or upon written request from the appellant, permit applicant or permittee, stating the reason(s) therefor.
Appendix I to Part 942: Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Boundary Coordinates

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