

WEST COAST REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Krill Harvest Prohibited along the West Coast

In August 2009, NOAA published a regulation prohibiting the harvesting of krill (small shrimp-like crustaceans key to the marine food web) in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington. While the three states currently have regulations prohibiting the harvesting of krill within three miles of their coastlines, there was no similar federal restriction within the EEZ, which stretches from three to 200 miles from the coast.

The krill prohibition was adopted as Amendment 12 to the Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan, which was developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The krill harvest prohibition was originally proposed to the PFMC and NOAA Fisheries Service by the West Coast Region of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. It reflects strong teamwork within NOAA and a commitment to addressing the issues raised by the PFMC and the sanctuary advisory councils for national marine sanctuaries in California. The rule preserves key ecological relationships in the California Current ecosystem, which includes five national marine sanctuaries.

NOAA Partners Test New Research Vessel *Okeanos Explorer*

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' West Coast Regional Office has been assisting NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research in developing exploration targets of mutual interest in sanctuary waters to field test the new NOAA research ship *Okeanos Explorer* as part of a general shakedown of the vessel. This effort culminated in July 2009 with a multi-day multibeam sonar mapping field trial off the central and northern California coast, during which researchers mapped approximately 2,200 square miles of the seafloor at high resolutions. Areas mapped included the deep portions of Cordell Bank and sections of Gulf of the Farallones and northern Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries. In addition, areas adjacent to Cordell Bank and Gulf of the Farallones national marine sanctuaries were mapped. The location of the World War II-era ship *USS Independence* was also confirmed during this mission.

CORDELL BANK SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Officers

Conservation: Lance Morgan (Chair)
Alternate: Todd Steiner

Research: Edmund Smith
Alternate: Jaime Jahncke

U.S. Coast Guard:
LTJG Brittany Steward

Community At-Large – Marin:
George Clyde (Vice Chair)
Alternate: Liza Crosse

NOAA Fisheries Office for Law
Enforcement (non-voting):
Dayna Matthews

Other Non-Governmental Members

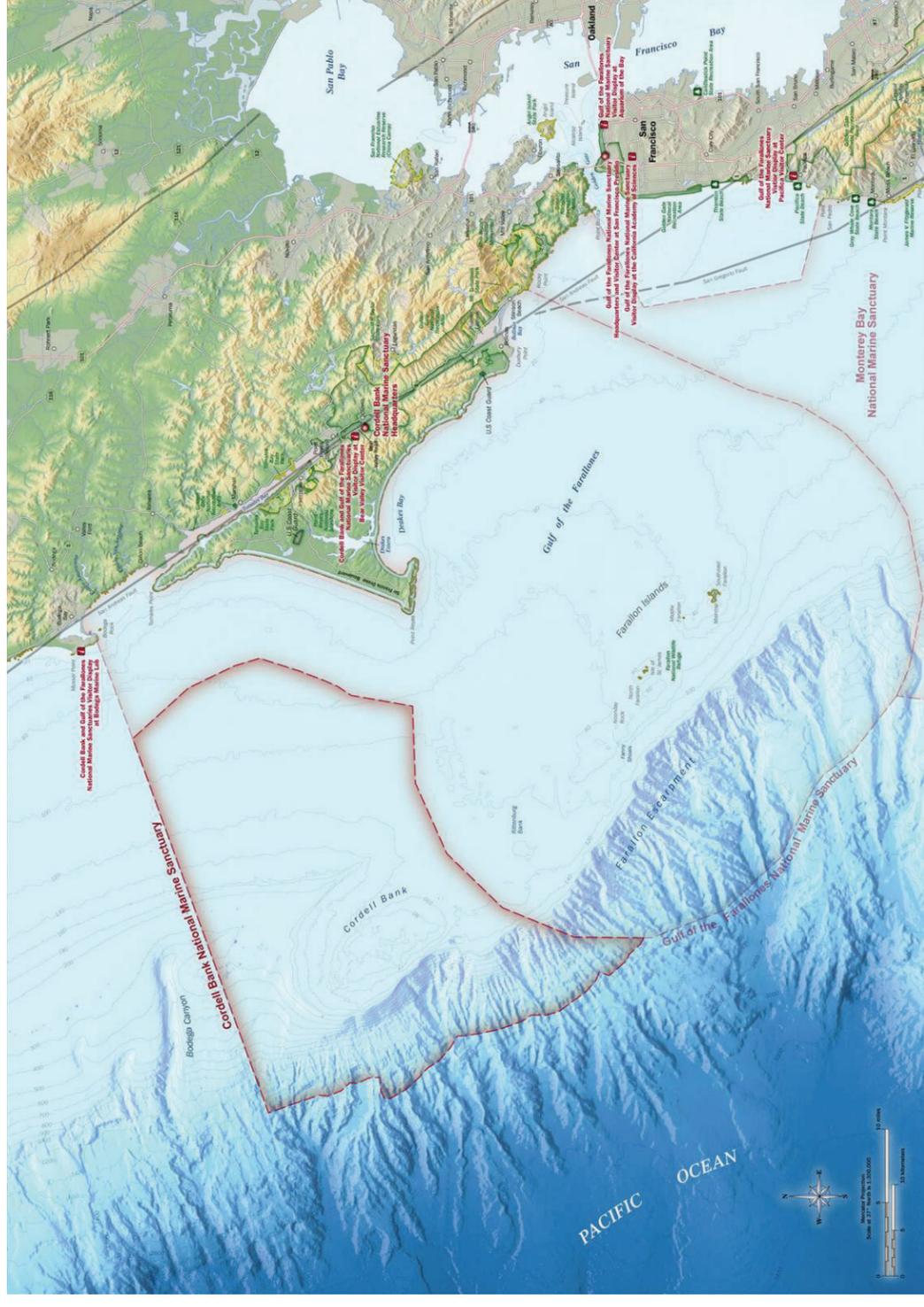
Community At-Large - Sonoma:
Susan Anderson
Alternate: Brian Mulvey

NOAA Channel Islands NMS (non-voting):
Chris Mobley

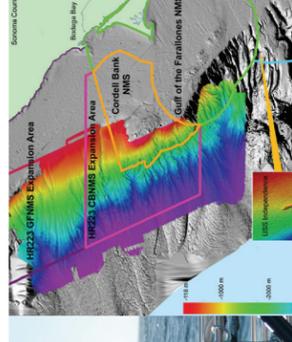
NOAA Gulf of the Farallones NMS
(non-voting): Maria Brown

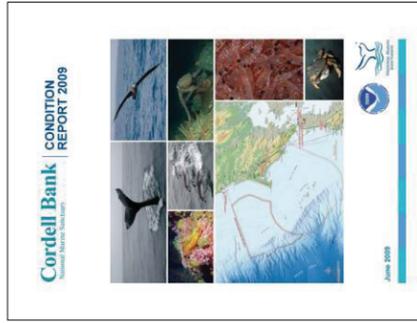
NOAA Monterey Bay NMS (non-voting):
Paul Michel

2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary gets its name from the underwater mountain that rises to within 115 feet of the ocean's surface off Point Reyes, California. Upwelling of nutrient-rich deep water supports a flourishing ecosystem on and around Cordell Bank, making the 529-square-mile sanctuary a productive feeding destination for diverse marine creatures. Common sanctuary inhabitants and migratory visitors include whales, dolphins, sea lions, seabirds, rockfish and Pacific salmon. Established May 24, 1989.





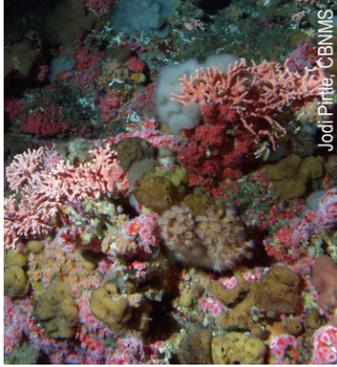
Report Assesses Conditions and Threats to Sanctuary Ecosystem

The Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report was published in 2009, providing critical information on the current conditions of the sanctuary's marine life and habitats, threats to resources, and management actions being taken to alleviate these threats. This report on the health of the sanctuary indicates that water quality in the sanctuary is generally good, while seafloor habitat quality and living resource conditions are considered diminished. Several emerging threats to sanctuary resources were identified, including oil spills, invasive species, climate change, marine debris and underwater noise pollution. In addition, the report highlights areas where more information is needed to properly understand and manage this marine ecosystem. A new management plan for the Cordell Bank sanctuary was released in 2009, and contains a number of management actions that will address current issues and concerns that were raised in the report.



Regional Ecosystem Monitoring Provides Integrated Information

The Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary research team initiated a collaborative regional monitoring program to improve our understanding of the central California marine ecosystem, including three national marine sanctuaries. Working cooperatively with the Gulf of the Farallones sanctuary and PRBO Conservation Science, this project provides vital information on the offshore marine ecosystem of the sanctuaries by collecting information on oceanographic conditions and the zooplankton community, as well as seabird and marine mammal distribution and abundance. These data provide the foundation for understanding changes in the sanctuary environment and can be used to support difficult management decisions. In addition, the program provides a solid baseline for measuring global climate change. Further, the program provides a conduit for various education and outreach activities including the Teacher-at-Sea Program, which offers teachers the opportunity to transport scientific knowledge from the ocean into classrooms.



Celebrating 20 Years of Protection

Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the designation of Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. The sanctuary celebrated this milestone by reuniting and honoring the original members of the Cordell Expeditions dive team. Between 1978 and 1985, this intrepid team braved challenging conditions 20 miles from shore to scuba dive into the unknown, and discovered a biological oasis on Cordell Bank. Their early work was instrumental in highlighting the ecological significance of Cordell Bank, and in 1981, Cordell Expeditions recommended to NOAA that this site be designated a national marine sanctuary. This became a reality when Cordell Bank was designated a marine sanctuary in 1989. A community event celebrated 20 years of sanctuary protection and accomplishments, and Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey recognized the divers for their significant achievement with congressional certificates.



Expanded Partnerships Translate into Increased Enforcement

With support from other agencies, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has increased surveillance of the central California sanctuaries through both vessels and planes. In 2009, Cordell Bank sanctuary staff began routine aerial patrols of the sanctuary in partnership with the NOAA Fisheries Service using the NOAA Twin Otter aircraft. In addition, the sanctuary has received aerial support from the U.S. Coast Guard and has provided Coast Guard pilots with aerial enforcement guides to use during routine flights. On-the-water enforcement patrols have also increased as a result of close collaboration between sanctuary personnel and California Department of Fish and Game wardens. In 2010, the sanctuary will provide the patrol vessel crew with enforcement guides that detail sanctuary regulations.



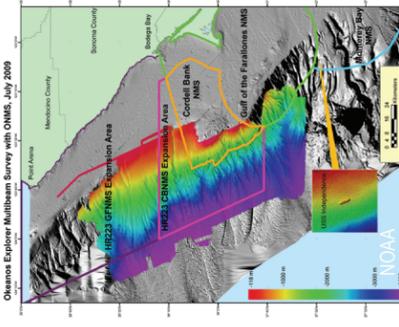
Sanctuary Completes Management Plan

After an extensive public process, Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries completed a joint revision of their respective management plans in 2009. These plans will serve as the blueprint that will guide sanctuary activities for the next five to seven years. The final piece was the completion of updated regulations that will increase protection for sanctuary habitats and marine life. The Cordell Bank plan includes five action plans addressing education and outreach, ecosystem protection, partnership with community groups, conservation science, and administration. Each action plan features strategies and activities that engage community partners and will help the sanctuary accomplish its resource protection goals.



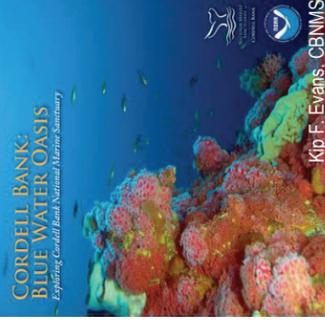
Sanctuary Taps into Early Explorers of Cordell Bank

Between 1978 and 1985, a nonprofit group called Cordell Expeditions pioneered exploration of Cordell Bank using scuba to collect samples and photographs of this spectacular location for the first time. Following on the heels of this important work, the sanctuary was designated in 1989. Twenty years later, Cordell Expeditions has donated its entire collection of specimens to the California Academy of Sciences to be catalogued and housed in the museum's permanent collections. In 2009, the sanctuary provided support for species identification and archiving historical data that provide an important baseline for marine life populations on Cordell Bank from the late 1970s. In addition, to collect the human history of these pioneers, the sanctuary started an oral history project to capture the remarkable experiences and stories of the divers for posterity. Sanctuary staff are working to preserve our maritime heritage by recording these interviews and documenting this work that was instrumental to the designation of the Cordell Bank sanctuary.



NOAA Partnership Provides Seafloor Maps and Baseline Data for Protecting Deep-Sea Coral Communities

Staff from the sanctuaries' West Coast Regional Office worked with the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research to map a large swath (2,200 square miles) of seafloor in Cordell Bank and Gulf of the Farallones national marine sanctuaries aboard the new NOAA exploration vessel *Okeanos Explorer*. Focusing on deepwater environments of the continental slope, a large portion of the potential expansion areas for Cordell Bank and Gulf of the Farallones sanctuaries was surveyed, including prominent seafloor features such as Bodega Canyon. Data from the *Okeanos Explorer* will be used to create habitat maps that will allow scientists to predict the seafloor communities that might inhabit specific areas, and will help guide resource protection and research efforts including our understanding and protection of sensitive and unique deep sea coral communities.



Sanctuary Film Premieres at San Francisco Ocean Film Festival

In 2009, the sanctuary film "Cordell Bank: Blue Water Oasis" made its debut at the San Francisco Ocean Film Festival. This annual event highlights films from around the world to increase ocean awareness and promote conservation. Cordell Bank is inaccessible to most people due to its depth and remote location 20 miles from shore, but the film unveils the sanctuary's secrets and allows viewers an opportunity to see and understand the importance of this rich offshore ecosystem. The film can be viewed at the Point Reyes National Seashore Visitor Center. A teacher guide to accompany the film is available on the sanctuary's Web site.