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 a part of 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.

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary encompasses the waters surrounding San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa and Santa Barbara islands off the coast of California. The combination of warm and cold water currents around the Channel Islands results in a great variety of plants and animals, including large forests of giant kelp, flourishing populations of fish and invertebrates, and abundant and diverse populations of whales, dolphins, sea lions, harbor seals and seabirds. Established Sept. 22, 1980.

http://channelislands.noaa.gov
New Sanctuary Management Plan and Revised Regulations

The National Marine Sanctuary Program released a new management plan for the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary in 2009. This plan provides a framework to expand research, education, outreach and enforcement programs, create and enhance partnerships, enhance wildlife protections, develop a water quality program, and enhance protections for marine habitats, sensitive species, water quality and submerged cultural resources. The plan was developed following a thorough review of the sanctuary's condition and trends of water quality, habitat, living resources and marine archaeological resources. The report finds that water quality is in generally good condition due to the sanctuary's isolation from the coast, and that living resource conditions have deteriorated somewhat due to a variety of human activities, as well as changing ocean conditions and disease. Many management and regulatory efforts are already in place to help counter these effects, and development of the plan has helped to identify areas where more monitoring and research is needed.

Ocean Acidification Report Earns Award

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council adopted a comprehensive report on ocean acidification in 2008, calling out the importance of prioritizing research, protecting sensitive species, and enhancing educational efforts. Scientists expect changes in seawater acidity to harm many calcifying organisms such as corals, mussels, algae and plankton that support marine mammals and make several hundred successful photo identifications, primarily of endangered marine mammals and humpback whales. Data is shared with research partners and managers in the region to help improve ship traffic maps. The 2008 Ocean Acidification Report Earns Award from the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Multicultural Program Continues to Engage Under-served Youth

During the 2008-2009 school year, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary's Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans (MERITO) Academy trained and supported 23 minority-serving educators and 700 students from Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. The MERITO Academy is a marine science and conservation education program for under-served students funded by the NOAA Bay Watershed Councils throughout the National Marine Sanctuary System, and earned the working group the 2009 Partner of the Year Award from the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Volunteers Making a Difference in the Naturalist Corps

The Channel Islands Naturalist Corps had another very productive year in 2009, with 135 volunteers making a difference in the Naturalist Corps. The volunteers collected thousands of digital photos of marine mammals and made several hundred successful photo identifications, primarily of endangered marine mammals and humpback whales. Data is shared with research partners and managers in the region to help improve ship traffic maps.

Protecting Whales from Ship Strikes

Sanctuary staff continued work on measures to reduce the risk of ship collisions with whales in and around the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. An issue that has received significant attention in recent years is the risk of ship strikes on endangered blue and humpback whales. The data is shared with research partners and managers in the region to help improve ship traffic maps.

Monitoring Project Observes Healthy Eelgrass Beds

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and National Park took part in an ongoing project to monitor sanctuary eelgrass beds and associated invertebrate and fish communities. These partners conducted 95 dives at eight sites from the sanctuary's research vessel, Channel Islander. Eelgrass is an important but relatively rare sanctuary habitat, and is listed by NOAA as an Essential Fish Habitat. A restoration site at Anacapa Island now contains a high diversity of native eelgrass, which is a key habitat for many marine species. The recommendations include conservation of research and monitoring, education and outreach, ship speed reduction, changes in vessel patterns, and engagement of agency partners and industry. Looting and vandalism at staff with OCA agency partners and industry. Looting and vandalism at staff with OCA and the sanctuary advisory council's recommendations.

Barbara Channel. A natural science and historical survey that has been described as the most comprehensive marine mammal survey in the world. The survey is conducted by the Marine Science Institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara, with partners from the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, National Park, and the California Coastal Commission. The survey is funded by the National Marine Sanctuaries program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The survey is conducted by the Marine Science Institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara, with partners from the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, National Park, and the California Coastal Commission. The survey is funded by the National Marine Sanctuaries program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).