

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 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.

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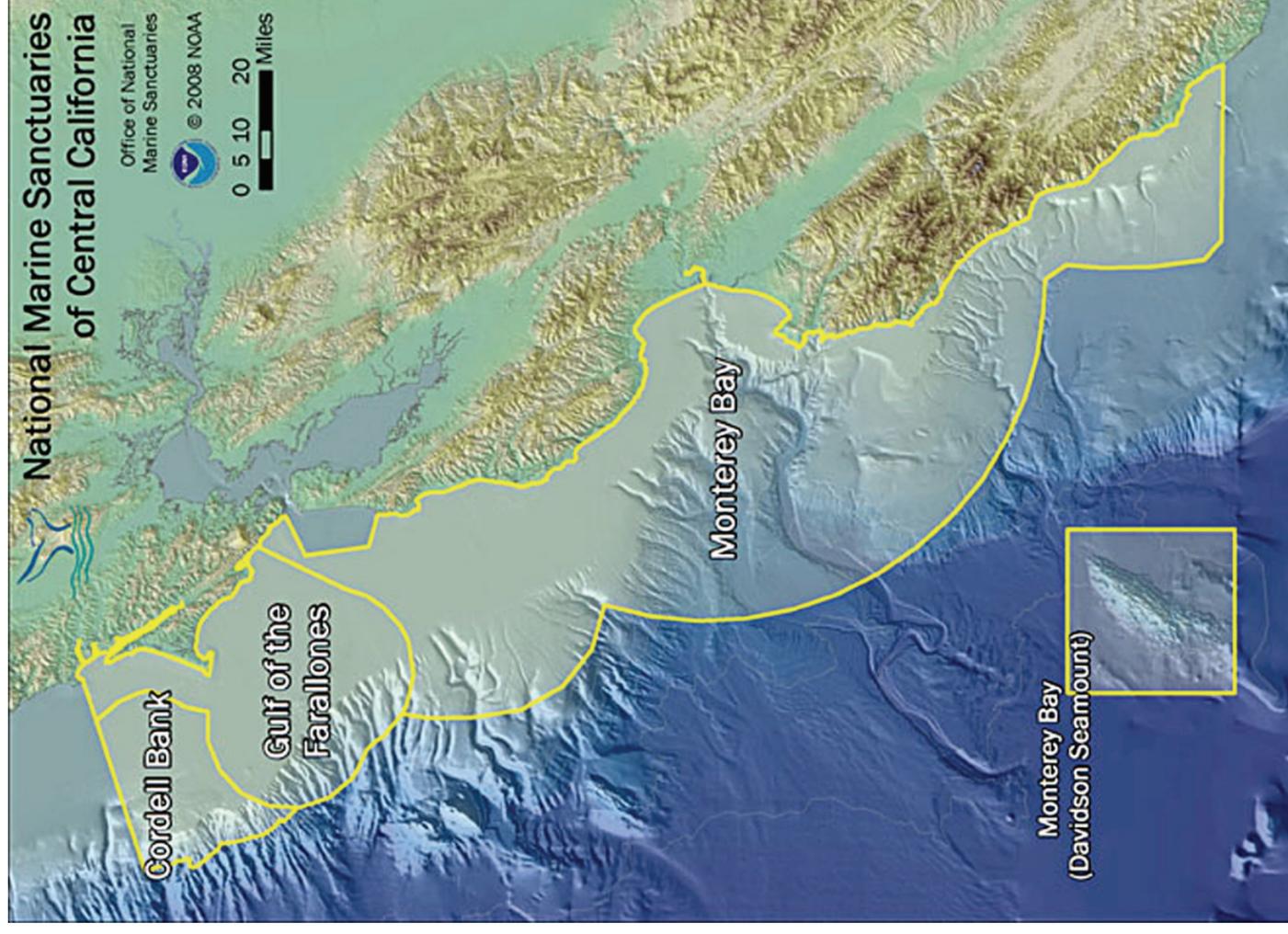
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2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

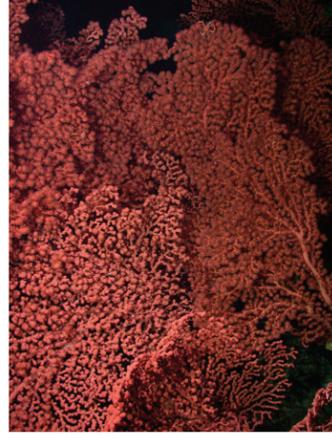


Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is the nation's largest marine sanctuary, spanning more than 6,000 square miles of coastal waters off Central California. Within its boundaries — which were expanded to include the Davidson Seamount in 2009 — are a variety of habitats, from rocky shores and lush kelp forests to an underwater canyon over 10,000 feet deep. The sanctuary's diverse marine life includes 33 species of marine mammals, 94 species of seabirds, 345 species of fish and thousands of invertebrates. Established Sept. 18, 1992.



New Management Plan Released for Monterey Bay Sanctuary

NOAA released final plans for the management of Monterey Bay, Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries in November 2008. These sanctuaries are among the most complex in the National Marine Sanctuary System, sitting adjacent to an urban center of approximately 8 million people. This extensive seven-year process included more than 25 public hearings, 10,000 comments, 20 working groups and over 210 members of the public participating directly in the development of 23 action plans. These action plans cover coastal development issues, ecosystem protection, operations and administration, partnerships and opportunities, water quality, and wildlife disturbance issues. For copies of the three management plans, environmental impact statement, final rule and summary of regulations, visit <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/jointplan>.



Davidson Seamount Included in Sanctuary Boundaries

As a result of the management plan revision, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's boundaries expanded in 2009 to include the Davidson Seamount. The Davidson Seamount is a pristine undersea mountain habitat off the coast of central California, 80 miles to the southwest of Monterey. The seamount has been called an "oasis in the deep," hosting large coral forests, vast sponge fields, deep-sea fishes, crabs, shrimp, basket stars and high numbers of rare and unidentified benthic species. The Davidson Seamount has special national significance worthy of conservation, including ecological, scientific, educational, aesthetic and historical qualities. Results from two expeditions to the seamount are presented in a new taxonomic guide to the seamount, available at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/conservation>.



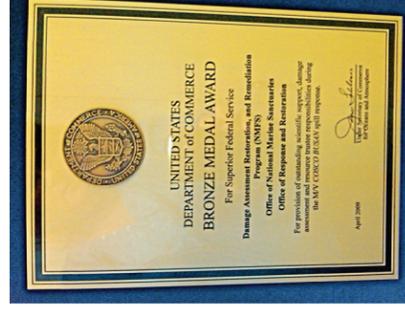
Report Assesses Conditions, Threats to Sanctuary Ecosystems

Condition reports provide a synthesis of the health of each national marine sanctuary and set the stage for reviewing management plans. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report rated the current condition of three marine environments — offshore, nearshore and estuarine. The status and trends for four resource categories — water quality, habitat, living resources and maritime archaeological resources — were determined for each of those environments. The report indicated the overall condition of the sanctuary's marine life and habitats ranges from "good" (highest rating) to "fair" (moderate rating), but identified several threats to sanctuary resources, such as pollution from growing coastal population centers, agriculture and urban runoff, vessel traffic, and marine debris. Offshore and nearshore environments rated as "good" to "fair" while the estuarine environment rated a "fair" to "poor" for water quality, habitat and living resources. The condition report is available at: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition>.



Water Quality Programs Celebrate 10 Years of Conservation

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's Water Quality Protection Program had much to celebrate in 2009. Both the Snapshot Day and First Flush water quality monitoring programs have provided resource managers with data about the health of local streams and the pollutant concentrations in storm water runoff. With the help of thousands of volunteers and partners, these programs have established a baseline of information about water flowing from our watersheds into the sanctuary. In addition, the Agriculture Water Quality Alliance celebrated 10 years of collaborative conservation efforts. This unique regional partnership brings together farmers, ranchers, resource conservation agencies, researchers and environmental organizations to protect the health of sanctuary waters. Farmers and ranchers of the central coast are setting an example for other regions by showing that economically viable agriculture is compatible with environmental protection.



Sanctuary Team Awarded Department of Commerce Medal

In April 2009, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries director accepted a Department of Commerce Bronze Medal on behalf of the staff from Monterey Bay, Gulf of the Farallones, and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries, the Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association, more than 100 Beach Watch program volunteers, and the resource protection team at sanctuary system headquarters for providing outstanding response, damage assessment and public affairs support during and following the M/V *Cosco Busan* oil spill in San Francisco Bay on Nov. 7, 2007. Staff and volunteers offered key support to ensure protection of NOAA's resources. These efforts were vital to minimizing additional economic and environmental harm to Bay Area communities. By providing data to responders and conducting critical shoreline assessments, these workers represented NOAA very well and lent credibility to the response effort.



NOAA's Twin Otter Aircraft Supports West Coast Sanctuaries

In January 2009, the National Marine Sanctuary System's West Coast Region director served as master of ceremonies for the dedication of NOAA's DHC-6 Twin Otter aircraft based in Monterey, Calif. Built by de Havilland Canada, the Twin Otter is a maneuverable, versatile aircraft that can be flown at slow speeds and in tight circles. The aircraft enables personnel to monitor visitor use within the sanctuaries, support enforcement, conduct vessel traffic studies, observe the effects of shoreline runoff, perform damage assessment surveys during oil spill emergencies and collect data on marine mammals, birds and sanctuary habitats. Photography and video are currently being used to record sightings. The Twin Otter supports NOAA programs up and down the West Coast and is flown by NOAA Corps officers.



Sanctuary Launches Voices of the Bay Education Effort

The Monterey Bay sanctuary piloted its Voices of the Bay Fisheries Education Program in 2009, collaborating with area educators, fishermen and scientists. The program's mission is to use local fisheries, fishing communities and their rich maritime history and culture as a focal point to learn about the marine environment, the ecological and human dimensions of marine resource use, and management. Three curriculum modules were created: "Balance in the Bay," which introduces the concepts of sustainable fishing and resource management through a simulated squid fishery; "From Ocean to Table," a socioeconomic study tracking the costs of bringing seafood from the ocean to the dinner plate, and "Capturing the Voices of the Bay," which teaches the skills needed to interview members of the local fishing community and record their unique stories and knowledge. Twenty middle and high school and community college teachers were trained in a three-day workshop, which was aligned with national, California state and ocean literacy standards.



New Exhibit Unveiled at Pacific Grove Natural History Museum

A new temporary exhibit, "Celebrate our Underwater Parks," introducing the public to the California Central Coast network of Marine Protected Areas was on display from March through June 2009 at the Pacific Grove Natural History Museum. Former California assembly member Fred Keeley, author of the California Marine Life Protection Act, gave remarks at the opening reception in March, which was attended by more than 100 community members. Monterey Bay sanctuary education staff were heavily involved in the development of the exhibit and related events, including a docent training class and public lecture and discussion. The exhibit has moved south to another exhibit hall but will eventually relocate to the National Geographic Theater, located at Hearst Castle State Historical Monument's visitor center.