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November 3, 2007  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Fisheries Wildlife and Oceans  
Field Hearing on Reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act

### *Introduction*

Honorable Chairwoman Bordallo and members of the Subcommittee, I am Dianne Black and I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you and provide this written testimony.

I am the Director of Development Services in the Planning and Development Department for the County of Santa Barbara. I have worked for the County for 23 years and have lived in Santa Barbara County for over 30 years.

I have served as a member of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) Advisory Council (Advisory Council) since its inception in 1998, representing Santa Barbara County. Currently I serve as the Advisory Council Chairperson, an elected position I've held for five years, in addition to two years as Vice-Chair.

I am familiar with how the NMSA has been implemented since its last reauthorization in 2000, especially at the CINMS but also nationally through meeting with other Advisory Council Chairpersons.

I am providing this written testimony in my capacity as a representative of local government (Santa Barbara County), and drawing on my experience as Chairperson of the CINMS Advisory Council. I am not providing this testimony on behalf of the full Sanctuary Advisory Council, as the Advisory Council has not met since I received the invitation to testify before this subcommittee.

### *Overview*

I strongly support reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act in a form as strong or stronger than the current Act. My support for reauthorization is based on positive experiences with respect to the Program's relationship with local government, as well as the Program's interaction with community members and stakeholders through Sanctuary Advisory Councils.

### *Local Governments and the Sanctuary Program*

The National Marine Sanctuary Program has worked very closely with local governments to implement a variety of education, outreach, volunteer, research, and resource protection programs. I would characterize these working relationships as strong, respectful and inclusive. These relationships extend to the counties, cities, area associations of government, and local ports and harbors adjacent to sanctuaries. This is important because, although the NMSP is a national program, sanctuary communities are local in nature and feel a strong sense of ownership for these special places. Sanctuary program staff and management have always seemed to understand the feelings of the local communities. As a result, they have proactively sought out and been responsive to local needs and advice. For example, when some local jurisdictions expressed concern about the idea of a boundary expansion at CINMS, the NMSP heard those concerns and did not rush ahead to make a decision to change the boundary. In fact, my experience tells me that decisions like that will be based on extensive consultation with local jurisdictions, with the Sanctuary Program always looking for ways to meet their mandate in a way that is complimentary to local needs and interests. As another example, CINMS management appointed two local government seats to their Sanctuary Advisory Council, one for Santa Barbara County and one for Ventura County. Still another example is found in how the Sanctuary Program helps protect and facilitate visitation to these special areas (such as providing trained naturalists on all of our local whale watch vessels) in a way that is complimentary to local government efforts to build and sustain coastal tourism.

### *Sanctuary Advisory Councils*

After being a Sanctuary Advisory Council member for nine years, I can tell you that Sanctuary Advisory Councils provide a fundamental link between the public and our national marine sanctuaries, and between NOAA and local communities. Advisory Councils represent a broad spectrum of local interests, as well as provide a gathering place where the community can be heard, learn about our sanctuaries, and truly influence how they are managed. At the same time, Advisory Councils provide Sanctuary Program managers with invaluable local expertise and input from the community, which they take to heart. I know this to be true because I have seen the high level of responsiveness CINMS staff and management give to advice and input provided by the Sanctuary Advisory Council. In my profession I attend a lot of public meetings convened by a variety of agencies, and participate in an endless number of public processes that are conducted prior to local government decisions. From that perspective, the Sanctuary management process, as integrated with Sanctuary Advisory Councils, is unique in its level of transparency and inclusiveness with the community. I feel this openness and extent of public participation adds important value for having special places like the waters around the Channel Islands managed as part of the National Marine Sanctuary Program.

Another aspect of note with regard to the value of Sanctuary Advisory Councils, which are made possible pursuant to the NMSA, is that often the deliberations of the Council

and the statements of advice are generated through consensus processes. In this regard, what the NMSP is facilitating is an open and honest community dialogue about good management of our shared marine resources, in a manner where all voices are heard and respected. By seeking consensus, Advisory Council members listen to and learn from each other, and I feel that NOAA and the NMSP benefit from that deliberative process.

I can also say that the Program has been wise to annually convene all of the Chairpersons of Sanctuary Advisory Councils, and I've had the good fortune of participating on four such occasions. At these meetings, connections are made between local leaders from each of the 14 sanctuary communities. I and the other Chairpersons have been able to speak directly to the Program on a national level, and I've been able to see how the National Program is operating as a system of sanctuaries on a strategic basis. For example, I've learned about the Programs' unique partnership with non-profit organizations such as the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, and the Program's serious attention to measuring performance on a programmatic level. In addition, through my involvement in these national meetings, I've seen how the Sanctuary Program is actively pulling community leaders into very influential roles that help the sanctuaries meet their goals, and that inspire local government officials and community members to maximize the value of having national marine sanctuaries in their communities.

#### *Involving Stakeholders in Decision-Making Processes*

Based on my experience with the Sanctuary Advisory Council at the CINMS, and in learning about other sanctuaries from the Chairpersons of other Advisory Councils, it is clear to me that the NMSP goes to great lengths to assure that affected stakeholders are extensively consulted prior to the finalization of management decisions. Perhaps the most striking example of this would be the multi-year process undertaken at the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, in partnership with the state of California, to consider, then develop, and now implement the largest network of marine reserves (no-take areas) within the continental U.S. This process, in which I was closely involved, provided fishermen with the opportunity to say exactly where they could and could not live with a marine reserve zoning scheme, literally letting them draw the maps, while also enlisting their help in building consensus on how to create such a network that could truly provide lasting protection and resource sustainability. I don't think the outcome could have been achieved without the Sanctuary Program's commitment to working so closely with stakeholders.

At the same time, the inclusive nature of these sorts of processes seems to be responsible, in part, for why many of these endeavors, such as management plan revisions and regulation updates, take so long to complete. I've also seen that that the Program's high standards and expectations for handling public processes is very labor intensive, often seeming to exceed the sanctuary's planning resources, and yet they remain committed to the task and ultimately get the job done despite the limited financial resources they have been appropriated. A slow pace is to be expected when you're talking about one of the

more publicly inclusive processes in government – I would say on par with the way local governments develop their general plans.

*Changes since last NMSA Reauthorization*

When I first attended a national meeting of SAC Chairpersons in 1999, there were Sanctuary Advisory Councils established at eight of the sites. Now, we see the Program has attained one of its goals: 100% of the 14 sites now have Advisory Councils up and running. This is important progress. Also, I've noticed that the Program has made strides on its charge to operate more as a national system, and point to the annual Chairpersons meeting as one indication of this evolution, as well as the more recent development of regional offices throughout the program.

*Summary*

In summary, I would underscore the positive working relationship that the National Marine Sanctuary Program has fostered with local governments, such as Santa Barbara County, as well as the great lengths the Program goes to enlist the active involvement of local community members, and stakeholders, in helping to manage our national marine sanctuaries. All of these community-level benefits are made possible because of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Thus, I would advocate for the Act to be reauthorized, and in a manner that would not weaken or limit National Marine Sanctuary Program's ability to fully address its Congressional mandates. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.