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**Sanctuary Advisory Council**  
**Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary**  
299 Foam Street  
Monterey, CA 93940  
(831) 647-4201

February 11, 2003

Daniel Basta,  
Director, National Marine Sanctuary Program  
1305 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Basta,

At its February 7, 2003 meeting, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) voted to send this letter with me to deliver to you at the national SAC Chairs and Coordinators meeting in Santa Barbara, February 18-20, 2003.

We are very concerned about the lack of government, general schedule (GS) positions available at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and the high number of contractors currently staffing the office. We strongly urge you to move as quickly as possible to: 1) allocate more GS positions to the MBNMS so that the Sanctuary can convert some of its current contract employees to GS positions, and 2) increase the funding of the MBNMS to better support the remaining contract employees by providing them with benefits.

The MBNMS only has eleven GS positions out of a current staff of 30 people to support the important and considerable mission and work of the Sanctuary program. Because GS slots have not been made available the MBNMS has had to seek out other ways of hiring staff, including retaining many contract workers with few or no benefits. These individuals are not paid when they are sick, when they take vacations, or when they are injured on the job, nor do they have support to pay their health or retirement costs. These positions include the Water Quality Protection Program Director, the Joint Management Plan Review staff, the MERITO staff, the SAC Coordinator, the Community and Public Relations Coordinator, the Network Manager, and other environmental policy and education staff. These positions are absolutely essential to the functioning of the office and its programs, yet these staff are not compensated the same as their GS counterparts and afforded no job security. We believe that this puts both them and the program at risk. The Sanctuary is at risk of losing some of its very knowledgeable and experienced staff if they are offered more secure positions elsewhere that include benefits.



Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

The Advisory Council is composed of 19 federally appointed representatives from government agencies, local institutions, and user groups concerned with the resources of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The Council advises the Sanctuary Superintendent on matters of policy and provides a link between the community and Sanctuary management.

It also has the potential to undercut morale at a time when the program is engaged in critical issues like the management plan review.

An additional reason to hire staff as GS rather than as contractors with benefits is that GS positions cost the Sanctuary, and the taxpayers, less. Your program must pay a premium when staff are hired with benefits through contracting firms or complex cooperative agreements. Regardless, if you can only hire them as contractors, because allocation of new GS positions is limited, we would urge you to allocate more funds to the site so contractors can be offered benefits.

We feel that this is an issue where the national program can and should be proactive in ensuring that field sites like the MBNMS are as strong as they can be and have as strong a staff as possible.

We look forward to your response and action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie Harlan".

Stephanie Harlan  
Chair, Sanctuary Advisory Council

cc: VADM Conrad Lautenbacher, Administrator, NOAA  
Jamison Hawkins, Acting Assistant Administrator, NOS