

Conservation Working Group Meeting Minutes- August 28, 2001

There were 11 people in attendance at the meeting.

Announcements:

Holly Price and Pat Matejcek gave a brief update on the Pajaro River Flood Control Project. The CWG agreed to draft a letter on this issue to the SAC for their consideration, raising concerns about the potential impacts of the project on the riparian habitat values and endangered salmonid species and urging Monterey and Santa Cruz counties to consider upstream flood reduction and non-structural alternatives. Kaitilin agreed to draft this letter.

The Monterey City Council will hold a meeting on Wednesday, August 30 from 4-5 pm to consider the MBNMS management plan review.

Jodi Frediani (Marine Fish Conservation Network) made an announcement about the Fisheries Recovery Act sponsored by Rep. Farr and the need for support for this bill.

Holly noted that the public comment period regarding the Fiber Optic Cables Fair Market Value policy was re-opened. The CWG agreed to draft a letter to the SAC with recommendations on this issue (following comments from earlier CWG discussion on this issue). Kaitilin agreed to work on this letter.

Management Plan Topics:

Scott Benson of MLML and NMFS gave a presentation on bycatch in the gillnet fishery off the Central Coast and provided copies of Karin Forney's published papers on this issue. In brief, discovery of a large number of beach cast birds lead to reinstating observer coverage in the fishery, which in turn demonstrated high level of bird bycatch as well as significant marine mammal bycatch. As a result, the Dept. of Fish and Game instituted regulations pushing the fishery further offshore, into deeper water where bird and marine mammal interactions are expected to be reduced. Scott's made the following recommendations regarding Sanctuary involvement in bycatch: (1) The MBNMS could serve as a central repository for data on fishing effort/location, marine mammals and birds, and bycatch; (2) the Sanctuary could use GIS to map resources, fishing activity and potential interaction sites; (3) the Sanctuary should continue BEACHCOMBER monitoring program.

Rick Starr of CA Seagrant gave a presentation on his current project updating the Fisheries Resources of the MBNMS publication. Rick noted that poor logbook reporting in CA makes fishblock catch data virtually useless. He discussed status and trends for several different species and habitat associations. Rick noted that in spite of the fact that various factors influence fishstocks (such as climate, El Nino, etc) and the complexity and inherent uncertainty in fisheries assessment, we do know enough to conclude that overfishing is affecting some species.

The CWG reviewed the draft matrix of conservation priorities to present to the SAC at the Oct. 5th SAC meeting. Several changes were suggested mostly emphasizing stronger protection of sanctuary resources. Finalizing the matrix will be the subject of the next CWG meeting.

The next CWG meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 18th from 9:30-12:30 at the Moss Landing Harbor District meeting room.