

NOAA 04-R420
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 3, 2004

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**NOAA EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR APPLICANTS FOR
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is seeking applicants to fill seats on its sanctuary advisory council, including a primary and alternate member for business, and alternates for agriculture, recreation and education. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The deadline for completed applications has been extended to Friday, March 12, 2004. Sanctuary advisory council member application packages are available at the sanctuary Web site, <http://montereybay.noaa.gov>, or can be obtained by calling (831) 647-4206. Completed applications should be submitted to Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, 299 Foam St., Monterey, CA 93940.

Applicants are chosen based upon their expertise and experience in relation to the seat for which they are applying. Considerations include community and professional affiliations, philosophy regarding the conservation and management of marine resources, and the length of residence in the area affected by the sanctuary.

Applicants chosen for the business, recreation and agriculture seats will each serve a three-year term. The education alternate will serve for one year to replace a previously appointed representative who resigned before their term had expired. The advisory council meets bi-monthly in daytime public sessions located throughout the 276-mile stretch of coast bordering the sanctuary.

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in March 1994 to assure continued public participation in the management of the sanctuary. Serving in a volunteer capacity, the advisory council's 20 voting members represent a variety of local user groups, as well as the general public, plus seven local, state and federal government jurisdictions. Since its establishment, the advisory council has played a vital role in advising the sanctuary and NOAA on critical issues and is currently focused on the sanctuary's development of a new five-year management plan.

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Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary stretches along 276 miles of central California coast and encompasses more than 5,300 square miles of ocean area. Renowned for its scenic beauty and remarkable productivity, the sanctuary supports one of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems, including 33 species of marine mammals, 94 species of seabirds, 345 species of fishes and thousands of marine invertebrates and plants.

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) seeks to increase the public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, the sanctuary program manages 13 national marine sanctuaries and one coral reef ecosystem reserve that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

NOAA's National Ocean Service manages the NMSP and is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. The National Ocean Service balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

The Commerce Department's NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Ocean Service - <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

National Marine Sanctuary Program - <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary - <http://montereybay.noaa.gov>