



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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CHANNEL ISLANDS SANCTUARY SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSALS FOR MARINE RESERVES, MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has released for public comment the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for consideration of marine reserves and marine conservation areas in the NOAA Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. The DEIS is the result of years of study, planning and extensive public input.

"Release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is a significant step towards development of a network of marine reserves to further protect the sanctuary's biodiversity," said Chris Mobley, sanctuary superintendent. "The preferred alternative was developed through a seven year process, supported by the state of California and NOAA, with extensive community involvement and scientific input. We welcome the public's continued involvement through its review and comment on the proposal."

The DEIS contains proposed alternatives for a network of marine zones in the sanctuary. Also included is a description of the affected environment, and an evaluation and comparison of environmental and economic consequences including cumulative impacts. The proposed regulatory changes are aimed at protecting marine habitats and sensitive species and would complement an existing network of marine reserves established by the state of California.

Two types of zones are being considered: marine reserves and marine conservation areas. Under the preferred alternative, all extractive activities (e.g., removal of any sanctuary resource) and injury to sanctuary resources would be prohibited in all zones of the sanctuary designated as marine reserves. Certain lobster fishing and recreational fishing for pelagic species would be allowed within zones of the sanctuary designated as marine conservation areas, while all other extraction and injury would be prohibited. Proposed sanctuary regulatory changes are presented and analyzed in the DEIS.

In October 2002, the California Fish and Game Commission selected a comprehensive marine zoning network of nearshore state water (between the shoreline and three nautical miles) and offshore federal water (between three and six nautical miles) habitats. The state implemented the nearshore state water zones in 2003. In 2005, to provide protection to the seafloor and groundfish, NOAA Fisheries Service designated the federal water portions of the proposed marine zones as essential fish habitat. Thus, the document released by NOAA today proposes to take the final steps to complete the marine zoning network previously adopted by the California Fish and Game Commission and supported by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries Service.

The DEIS was developed with extensive input from the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, relevant federal agencies, Pacific Fishery Management Council, resource departments of the state of California, and representatives of the public and stakeholder groups. The DEIS will undergo extensive public review from Aug. 11, 2006 through Oct. 10, 2006, including public hearings scheduled for Sept. 26, 2006 and Sept. 28, 2006 in Ventura and Santa Barbara, Calif., respectively. All comments must be received or postmarked by Oct. 10, 2006, at the sanctuary office at 113 Harbor Way, Suite 150, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93109, by email at cinmsreserves.deis@noaa.gov, or by fax at (805) 568-1582.

Public hearings will be held at the following dates and times:

Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2006, 6:15–9:00 pm
Sheraton Four Points Hotel
San Buenaventura Ballroom
1050 Schooner Drive
Ventura, Calif.

Thursday, Sept. 28, 2006, 6:15–9:00 pm
Earl Warren Showgrounds
Exhibit Building
3400 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Copies of the DEIS are available at the CINMS office or by calling (805) 884-1472. The DEIS can also be reviewed at the web site channelislands.noaa.gov, or requested by e-mail from cinmsreserves.deis@noaa.gov.

NOAA's Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1980 to protect marine resources surrounding San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, and Santa Barbara Islands. The sanctuary spans 1,658 square miles extending from island shorelines to six miles offshore, encompassing a rich diversity of marine life and habitats, as well as rich historic and cultural resources.

The NOAA National Marine Sanctuary program 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 marine national monument that together encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

In 2007 NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. Starting with the establishment of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA. The agency is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Internet:

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

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

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

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary: <http://channelislands.noaa.gov>