
Issue 7: Kelp Harvesting and Aquaculture**Comment****NOAA Response****Operation and Regulation****Operation and Regulation**

The regulatory regime for aquaculture and kelp harvesting activities within the Sanctuary remains unclear. Currently, aquaculture development is the responsibility of the CDF&G, and because of this, aquaculture operations requiring seabed alterations should be excluded from Sanctuary regulations, and allowed to continue.

While identified as subject to regulation in the Sanctuary Designation Document, neither aquaculture nor kelp harvesting will be regulated upon designation. The CDF&G is responsible for managing kelp harvesting and aquaculture operations and is adequately overseeing these activities to ensure coordinated and comprehensive conservation and management of these resources within the Sanctuary. If NOAA determines that aquaculture and kelp harvesting regulation is necessary for the protection of Sanctuary resources and qualities in the future, changes to the Sanctuary regulations would be undertaken pursuant to the APA's notice-and-comment rulemaking process and the requirements of NEPA.

There are a number of aquaculture facilities operating within the Sanctuary, yet the DEIS/MP gives little consideration to their future operations. Why are only aquaculture facilities existing at the time of designation excluded from prohibitions concerning seabed alterations?

The exemption in the proposed regulation has been changed to delete the limitation to existing operations. If aquaculture begins to pose a threat to Sanctuary resources and qualities, NOAA has the authority to promulgate Sanctuary regulations to address it (see above response).

Is kelp harvesting included in the discussions on commercial fishing and aquaculture operations?

Kelp harvesting is included in the discussion of fishing and aquaculture.

Ecological Effects of Kelp Harvesting**Ecological Effects of Kelp Harvesting**

The ecological effects of mechanical kelp harvesting techniques were not explained in the DEIS/MP. Research should be conducted to examine the ecological effects of kelp harvesting and the impacts of non-point pollution on kelp beds.

NOAA has included a discussion of kelp harvesting in the FEIS/MP. Consultation with the CDF&G indicates that little research has been conducted as to the ecological effects of mechanical harvesting techniques on kelp beds. Yearly harvests of perennial giant kelp do not appear to deplete the resource and the effects, if any, of non-point pollution remain unclear. NOAA may consider focusing research efforts on the study of kelp ecology and impacts on its distribution and abundance in the Sanctuary.