

## Issue 9: Linkages with Elkhorn Slough

### Comment

#### Sanctuary Linkage

The Sanctuary should include all waters in the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (ESNERR), and this relationship should be formalized. It is important to create a link between the MBNMS and the ESNERR, even if this means exempting Moss Landing Harbor. A MOA should be developed between NOAA and the Moss Landing Harbor District to ensure the success of the two programs.

The management plans and objectives of the Sanctuary and the ESNERR should be coordinated.

### NOAA Response

#### Sanctuary Linkage

NOAA agrees it is important to coordinate closely with the ESNERR, especially since both programs are administered by NOAA's Sanctuaries and Reserves Division (SRD). The Sanctuary includes all waters, and submerged lands thereunder, in the Slough up to the Reserve boundaries. NOAA agrees that links should be fostered since missions and goals are similar. The mission of the National Marine Sanctuary Program is to identify, designate and manage areas of the marine environment of special national significance due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, research, educational, or esthetic qualities. The mission of the National Estuarine Reserve Research System (NERRS) is to establish and manage, through Federal-State cooperation, a national system of estuarine research reserves representative of the various regions and estuarine types in the U.S.

Regardless of their similarities, the two programs must remain separate because the NERRS Program regulations prohibit the inclusion of reserves within sanctuaries (15 CFR §921.4(c)). This provision ensures that NERRs are not duplicative of areas already under protected status.

After consultation with the Moss Landing Harbor District, NOAA has determined the most appropriate method of linking the two sites is to exclude Moss Landing Harbor east of the *Colregs* line and west of the Highway 1 bridge, and to include the waters of Elkhorn Slough east of the Highway 1 bridge to the boundary of the ESNERR with overlapping jurisdiction with the Moss Landing Harbor District over this latter area.

NOAA agrees that the ongoing coordination between ESNERR and the Sanctuary should continue and be strengthened as the Sanctuary becomes more established. NOAA supports the exchange of information, research, education, and staff expertise between the two programs. Meeting the objectives of both programs as well as implementing the management plans can be coordinated through the SAC, and the ESNERR Advisory Committee. NOAA will encourage Sanctuary and Reserve staff coordination through the development of joint research, educational and resource protection programs.