

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Sanctuary Advisory Council

2003 Annual Report

Sanctuary Advisory Council Profile

The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC or Council) was established in 1998 to enhance opportunities for public involvement in Sanctuary management and to support the process of management plan revision. The Council has twenty voting members, ten representing various local, state, and federal government partners and ten representing a variety of community interests (conservation, education, research, fishing, tourism, recreation, business, industry, and the public at-large). The Council meets bi-monthly and has formed a number of active working groups, including those focused on conservation, fishing, education and business.

Major Achievements and Milestones

In April of 2003, a network of ten marine reserves (no take zones) and two marine conservation areas (limited take zones) went into legal effect within 175 square miles of state waters within the Sanctuary. This milestone capped a long history of involvement and work by the SAC and their working groups. From 1999-2002, the Council was instrumental in the creation, participation, and oversight of a community-based process to consider the designation of marine reserves within the Sanctuary. The Council and its former Marine Reserve Working Group, Marine Reserve Science Advisory Panel, and Marine Reserve Socio-Economic Panel combined efforts for nearly three years to provide a scientifically robust, open, public process that enabled stakeholders to help shape final recommendations. This work informed and supported a final regulatory decision made by the California Fish and Game Commission in October 2002. Throughout 2003, the Council remained closely involved with the implementation of the marine reserves, assisting in the development of new educational and monitoring strategies. Additionally, the SAC has been closely involved with a second phase (Phase 2) of the marine reserves process, in which a possible expansion of the initial state marine reserves is being considered (as originally envisioned by the SAC and its working groups).

Regarding the state network of marine reserves, a milestone for the SAC was realized in 2003 by shifting from the previous multiple-year planning and design efforts, which came with a high degree of controversy and pressure, into a new mode of advising on reserve implementation, education and monitoring. This shift has placed the SAC in a new role, one focused largely on helping to raise awareness of the marine reserves, providing a public forum for understanding how the reserves are being implemented (e.g., enforcement), and offering more limited input into the technical aspects of developing biological and socioeconomic monitoring programs. In this capacity many members of the Council have played a direct role in the implementation of the marine reserves network, while the SAC as a whole has received regular updates on reserve management that have been very educational for all.

The SAC's Ad Hoc Group on Enforcement met several times throughout 2003 to provide advice on the development of a new brochure aimed at increasing awareness about the rules and regulations in place within the Sanctuary and at the Channel Islands National Park. This advice was incorporated into the final brochure, "Protecting Your Channel Islands," which was printed in December.

Council Recommendations and Sanctuary Decisions

This year the Council made a number of important recommendations that helped shape the Sanctuary's role in implementation of the state marine reserves within the Sanctuary and the Phase 2 process to

consider additional marine reserves. Additionally, discussions were held and educational presentations were provided on a number of other important issues that did not result in Council recommendations.

Items discussed but not resulting in recommendations

In addition to marine reserves, several topics were explored in 2003 through a series of presentations, discussions, and focused attention by working groups. These issues included clean boating practices, marine acoustics, large vessel traffic, proposed offshore liquid natural gas terminal development, and an ongoing NOAA study of regional marine biogeography. The discussions on these issues have either not yet progressed beyond information gathering stages or have otherwise not yet resulted in Council recommendations. The Council also received regular updates on the management plan revision process, which was characterized in 2003 by staff work to finalize draft documents in preparation for agency clearance and public release. The SAC awaits their next opportunity to provide recommendations on the management plan in early 2004.

Recommendations on Review Processes for Management Plan and Marine Reserves

In January, upon learning that NOAA was considering merging environmental review (NEPA) processes for management plan revision and the marine reserves process, the Council discussed the pros and cons of such an approach. The SAC then voted 14-2-0 (two abstained) to write a letter to Dan Basta advising that the management plan revision and the phase two marine reserves processes be kept separated. The SAC advised that this was preferable for the following reasons: to honor previous commitments of this nature made by CINMS staff to the SAC and community; in recognition that information for the marine reserves decision is already available and information for reserves in State waters is documented; to avoid delaying the marine reserves process; to avoid confusion as to whether marine reserves would be considered beyond the current Sanctuary boundaries; for CINMS to maintain credibility; due to the priority status of marine reserves to the SAC; and due to the difficulty of establishing monitoring protocols for the entire marine reserves network when only the State portion is in place.

In response to this recommendation, the NMSP met with senior policy advisors at NOAA and Congressional committee staffers interested in this matter. The SAC's advice was shared with all parties involved in the discussions. In the end, a NOAA decision was made to keep the review processes separate, as the SAC had recommended.

Scoping Comments for Phase 2 Marine Reserves Process

In the summer of 2003, the SAC was a key participant in the public scoping comment period for the environmental review process to consider marine reserves establishment within the Sanctuary. After an orientation presentation provided at the May SAC meeting, two of the Council's working groups (Business and Conservation) organized meetings to collect scoping comments. Many SAC members also attended some of the public scoping hearings that were held at locations throughout Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. At the July SAC meeting, the entire SAC provided input to CINMS in an exercise that generated a lengthy list of substantive scoping comments that were agreed to by a consensus of all seats in attendance. These important comments were focused mainly on process-related suggestions. Upon receipt of these written comments, CINMS management and staff shared them with NMSP leadership and the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. The Council's comments have helped shape the environmental review process and documentation, and the SAC is updated on this progress at every meeting.

Advice on Marine Reserves Education and Outreach

In May the Council's Sanctuary Education Team (SET) provided recommendations to the SAC on how CINMS should communicate with various constituencies about the science and rationale behind the marine reserves network. This advice was a "long term strategy" compliment to short term recommendations the SET provided in November of 2003. The SAC unanimously approved the long-

term educational strategies, which provide a matrix of prioritized rankings for a variety of Sanctuary audiences and mechanisms for providing educational information about the scientific rationale for establishment of the Channel Islands marine reserves. CINMS education staff reported back to the SAC in September on progress that has been made with regard to implementing many of the SET's suggested outreach strategies, and will continue to provide periodic progress reports to the Council.

Recommendation for State Support of Marine Reserves

In November the SAC voted to write a letter to the new California Governor's office requesting that resources be maintained for Department of Fish and Game personnel and programs needed to support monitoring and management the state marine reserves within the Sanctuary. A response to the letter is expected in early 2004.

National Marine Sanctuaries Act Reauthorization

The SAC discussed the reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA) and produced a list of requests that were sent to the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) headquarters office. The list of requests for NMSA changes was agreed to by a consensus of the Council. A response from the NMSP headquarters office is expected in 2004.

Major Administrative Changes

Several important administrative changes were made in 2003. Three appointments to non-governmental seats were made throughout the year (business, tourism, education) and the representation was changed for five government seats (National Park Service, NOAA Fisheries, Minerals Management Service, US Coast Guard, and California Department of Fish and Game). The Council commented twice on the configuration of seats on the SAC, and in response some changes were made by the Sanctuary Manager and approved by the NMSP. In 2004, these changes will introduce members appointed to a new recreational fishing seat and a Chumash culture seat, and the number of public at-large seats will be reduced from three to two, resulting in a SAC consisting of 21 voting seats. Additionally, after Council review and input, the SAC Charter was renewed in 2003, reflecting the seat changes and providing a number of small modifications aimed at providing consistency with NMSP guidelines.

A new Business Working Group was established in 2003 and met twice. The Business Working Group was formed with a core goal to encourage and achieve stronger communication between Sanctuary management and the business community that utilizes and benefits from Sanctuary waters. Toward this goal, the Business Working Group focuses on: 1) examining how businesses are affected by issues relating to the Sanctuary, 2) examining how businesses rely on the health of Sanctuary resources, 3) developing potential marketing appeal for the Sanctuary and business activities that occur within Sanctuary waters.

Several Council discussions were held in 2003 that focused on improving the operations of the SAC. A subcommittee was formed in March to consider input from the SAC and develop a set of recommendations aimed at clarifying specific procedural matters. The end result was a SAC-adopted set of protocols that compliment the SAC Charter. These general operational guidelines cover eight areas: 1) preference for use of a consensus approach; 2) limited role of Robert's Rules of Order; 3) advance noticing of SAC meeting action items; 4) preference for avoiding day-of-the-meeting surprise votes and actions; 5) voting and absentee clarifications; 6) importance of including minority views in SAC advice; 7) clarifications about SAC letter writing; 8) the role of alternates.