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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 23, 2009

NOAA Announces Revised Regulations for California National Marine Sanctuaries

New regulations for NOAA's four national marine sanctuaries in California are now in effect, providing greater protection for the sanctuaries' valuable marine resources and habitats.

The changes became effective on March 9 for Gulf of the Farallones, Monterey Bay and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries, and on March 19 for Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

NOAA developed the regulatory changes as part of the revised management plans for each of the four California sanctuaries. The revised management plan for Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary was released in January 2009, while the management plans for the other three sanctuaries were released as a coordinated effort in November 2008. The effective date of the regulations is different from the management plan release as the National Marine Sanctuaries Act requires a review period of 45 days of continuous session of Congress before regulations are considered final.

The revised management plans and regulations are the product of years of study, planning, and extensive public input, and provide a framework for future management and activities at each of the sanctuaries. Highlights of the revised regulations include the addition of the Davidson Seamount to Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, new protections for white sharks in Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, and the implementation of no-anchoring zones in Tomales Bay in the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.

Full summaries of the regulatory changes are available online for the three northern central California sanctuaries at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/jointplan> and for Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary at <http://channelislands.noaa.gov/manplan/overview.html>. The management plan documents are also available upon request from the sanctuary offices.

Managed by the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the four marine sanctuaries located along the shores of northern and central California share many of the same resources and issues.

The 1,279-square mile Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is located west of the San Francisco Bay area. Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 529 square miles of ocean off Point Reyes, north of San Francisco. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary stretches along 276 miles of the central coast and covers 6,094 square miles of coastal and ocean waters, including the newly added Davidson Seamount. Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary spans approximately 1,470 square miles surrounding San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, and Santa Barbara islands.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web:

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Regulations:
<http://channelislands.noaa.gov/manplan/overview.html>

Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Regulations: <http://cordellbank.noaa.gov/management>
Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Regulations:
<http://farallones.noaa.gov/manage/plan.html>
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Regulations:
http://montereybay.noaa.gov/resourcepro/resource_pro.html