
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

Contact: Bridget Hoover
(831) 883-9303
Rachel Saunders
(831) 647-4237
Tamara Doan, Coastal Watershed Council
(831) 464-9200
Jennifer Gonzalez, City of Monterey
(831) 646-3920
Steve Leiker, City of Pacific Grove
(831) 648-5722
Suzann Healy, City of Santa Cruz
(831) 420-5131

NOAA 04-R423
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 5, 2004

**RESULTS FROM MONITORING HELP HIGHLIGHT WATER
QUALITY ISSUES IN MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

Recently released results from two annual water quality events are providing valuable information on water quality trends within Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and its watersheds. Summary reports for "First Flush 2003" and "Snapshot Day 2003," made available today, show that much of the water flowing into the sanctuary is generally of good quality, although there are pollution hot spots needing attention. The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) manages the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.

"These exciting volunteer-based monitoring programs have been very effective in producing solid quantitative results and are helping us and our partners uncover patterns of pollution, which we can then work to correct," said Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network Coordinator Bridget Hoover. "Our partners, the Coastal Watershed Council, The Ocean Conservancy and California Coastal Commission, as well as the cities of Monterey, Pacific Grove and Santa Cruz, are key to the success of these programs."

Reports summarizing the results from the 2003 events will be available at the sanctuary symposium "Clean Waters, Healthy Oceans" March 6 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Monterey Bay's University Center, California State University in Seaside. The symposium will focus on a range of water quality issues. The reports may also be found online at: <http://montereybay.nos.noaa.gov/monitoringnetwork/events.html>

-more-

First Flush and Snapshot Day are single-day events that involve an extensive network of trained volunteers collecting water samples in urban watersheds, streams and storm drains that flow into the sanctuary. The samples are analyzed to detect the presence of contaminants.

First Flush monitoring began in 2000 and occurs in the fall during the first big rain of the season when storm-water washes months of accumulated litter, oil and other pollutants from the city into storm drains and out into the ocean. Storm water samples are taken and analyzed for oil and grease, metals, nutrients, bacteria, sediment and toxicity.

Last year's First Flush was Oct. 31 in the Monterey Bay area and Nov. 3 in the Half Moon Bay area. Trained volunteers took samples at 17 sites in Pacific Grove, Monterey, Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay during the storms. Monitoring results indicate there are sites that consistently have higher concentration of pollutants.

The Steinbeck Plaza site in Monterey had the highest average orthophosphate (a form of phosphorus commonly found in detergents) concentration for all four years. The site's concentration this year was 28 times higher than the state action level and had the highest zinc and copper concentrations of all the sites.

The sites located at Bay Street and Woodrow in the City of Santa Cruz had the highest reported *E. coli* (bacteria) concentrations, far exceeding the state's water quality objective. Woodrow had the highest lead concentration - seven times higher than state water quality objectives and five times higher than all other sites.

At five of the 17 sites the volunteers conducted toxicity analysis of two different test marine organisms. Water quality samples collected at all five sites were found toxic to mussels while just one site tested was toxic to top smelt. Preliminary findings indicate high metal concentrations as possibly contributing to the toxicity.

Last year's fifth annual Snapshot Day, conducted May 17, was expanded statewide. Within the Monterey Bay Sanctuary, 155 volunteers monitored 155 coastal rivers and streams for temperature, pH, conductivity, turbidity and dissolved oxygen. Collected samples were also analyzed for nutrients and bacteria levels. Monitoring results indicate that the majority of streams flowing to the coast appear healthy. However, water quality objectives for bacteria were exceeded at 27 percent of the sites, orthophosphate at 24 percent and turbidity at 18 percent.

Fourteen sites between Watsonville and Salinas were identified in 2003 as "areas of concern" because they exceeded three or more of the seven parameters with state water quality objectives. Three of these have qualified as areas of concern for the past three years because of high bacteria and nutrient concentrations and high turbidity.

"Clearly, we need to get a handle on what these water quality monitoring results might mean for the sanctuary," said Sanctuary Superintendent William J. Douros. "We need to target upstream investigations at the sites that exceeded water quality objectives so we can better pinpoint the sources of contamination."

The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network is a consortium of approximately 20 citizen monitoring groups that monitor the health of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The network was established in 1997 and has since provided support, training, and a central forum and database for citizen monitoring programs.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary stretches along 276 miles of central California coast and encompasses more than 5,300 square-miles of ocean area. Renowned for its scenic beauty and remarkable productivity, the sanctuary supports one of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems, including 33 species of marine mammals, 94 species of seabirds, 345 species of fishes and thousands of marine invertebrates and plants.

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) 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 coral reef ecosystem reserve that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

NOAA's National Ocean Service manages the NMSP and is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. The National Ocean Service balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

The Commerce Department's NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

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

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

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

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary - <http://montereybay.noaa.gov>