

Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries
JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW
Community Outreach Cross-Cutting Working Group

Background:

Under the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), each sanctuary in the system conducts education and outreach activities to build broad public awareness about the existence and purpose of our nation's marine sanctuaries. The NMSP recognizes that a well-informed local, regional, and national constituency greatly enhances the ability of the sanctuaries to protect their cultural and natural resources. Therefore, outreach activities should provide local and state governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations, constituents, and the general public with the information necessary to be effective partners in the stewardship of sanctuary resources.

How is education and outreach currently conducted by these sites?

The current education/outreach programs at each of the three sites are very different in terms of their involvement with the public and the staff resources to carry out those activities. Each site develops an annual plan, with varying emphasis on schools, constituents and/or specific resource issues, community events and fairs, publications, and volunteer efforts. Each site also uses a mix of staff, volunteers, constituent groups, and friends groups to develop and implement these programs.

Outreach Needs:

Because of limited resources generally, each site has primarily focused on a limited number of audiences within a limited geographic area. As a result, there are several areas where a broad-based public understanding needs to be enhanced. For example, there appears to be a lack of understanding and/or confusion about:

- The National Marine Sanctuary Program,
- The benefits of having sanctuary status,
- The unique situation of having three sanctuaries contiguously located in north-central California,
- How to engage effectively with the sanctuary program and best protect sanctuary resources, and
- How businesses, constituents, agencies, elected officials and others can provide informed input into decisions regarding sanctuary management.

Moreover, the contiguous nature of these three sites and differences in regulations and programs presents the potential for confusion on the part of the public, constituents, and elected/government officials about the sanctuaries, the regulations applicable in a given area, and who to contact when emergencies arise.

How is a site's ability to effectively manage resources impacted?

The general public and constituent groups in north-central California are important partners in achieving the resource protection, research and education goals of the three

sanctuaries and coordinated outreach is a critical tool for providing information they need. For example, if a constituent is unclear on the applicable sanctuary regulations, it may result in lower compliance and ultimately may harm the site's resources. Each site may communicate messages which are different, thereby creating confusion among the public and the impression that the "right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing". Even slight variations in messages may harm the credibility of the individual sites, the national program, and NOAA.

A regional outreach plan may help address these issues by:

- Minimizing the development of similar, duplicate or overlapping products that reduce the staff/monetary resources available for outreach. This could provide each site with a greater repertoire of programs and materials to use than could be produced individually.
- Providing for more effective distribution of staff and resources for outreach activities throughout the north-central California region
- Ensuring consistent messages about the sanctuary program across all three sanctuaries
- Improving relationships with constituents through shared approaches

Proposed Goal:

A coordinated, collaborative regional community outreach strategy will build awareness throughout north-central California about: the existence and purpose of the three sanctuaries and the national program; how the sanctuaries are working with constituent groups; and how individuals and groups can be engaged in helping the sanctuaries accomplish their resource protection, research, and education goals.

This plan will identify appropriate regional audiences and topics, develop regional outreach strategies, and marketing and media exposure efforts that effectively highlight specific program activities across all three sites as well as the national system. It will also complement each site-specific program and be flexible enough to incorporate new strategies and topics over time.

Outcomes and Products:

Develop a regional strategic community outreach plan that includes:

- Outreach needs assessment, as appropriate
- Identification of topics to be covered and the associated program objectives
- Identification of target audiences and time frames for implementation
- Strategies to communicate key messages including media opportunities
- Strategies to ensure coordination across all three sites

Timeline for development:

Start: January

Complete: April

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