

CONSERVATION SCIENCE

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

GULF OF THE FARALLONES NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Characterization, monitoring, and research assist in the protection of sanctuary resources by promoting understanding of ecosystem structure and function; detecting environmental problems; tracking health and trends of the various habitats and resources in the sanctuary; and contributing to solutions to management issues throughout Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS). An updated long-term conservation science plan has been developed to coordinate current and future characterization, monitoring, and research efforts. The following three specific areas are the focus of the research and monitoring plan: 1) baseline and characterization studies for populations and habitats whose presence were critical in the sanctuary's designation, yet whose distributions and other basic characteristics remain poorly understood; 2) directed monitoring studies focusing on indicator species and representative habitats and undertaken jointly with other sanctuaries and agencies; and 3) analytical studies aimed at determining the cause of a condition or impacts and predictive studies to understand trends and variability.

OUR GOAL

To increase our knowledge and understanding of the estuarine, nearshore, and offshore ecosystems in GFNMS; develop monitoring programs to understand long-term status and trends; detect emerging issues, and guide management decisions; and develop research programs to identify and address specific resource management issues and assess effectiveness of management solutions.



Photo: GFNMS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

GFNMS is a complex region with high biological diversity; nationally significant wildlife breeding and feeding areas; significant commercial and recreational fishing; estuarine habitats; numerous federally, state, and locally protected marine and estuarine waters; watershed influences and impacts from the eight million San Francisco Bay Area residents. Conservation science will help in solving specific management problems, enhancing resource protection efforts, and assisting in the interpretation of the resources for the general public. The Conservation Science program will ensure that science activities address management issues and are effectively integrated into the education and resource protection programs of the sanctuary and those of other resource trustee agencies.

*For more information on Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary please visit our website
<http://farallones.noaa.gov>*

THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW (JMPR)

Conservation Science is one of the action plans in the GFNMS Draft Management Plan (DMP). The DMP includes nine action plans that, once finalized, will guide sanctuary management for the next five years. The plan is a revision of the original management plan, developed when the sanctuary was designated in 1981, and is focused on how best to understand and protect the sanctuary's resources. The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSPP) is updating the management plans for Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay national marine sanctuaries in what is known as the Joint Management Plan Review.



GULF OF THE FARALLONES NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Designated in 1981, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary spans 1,279-square-miles (966 square nautical miles) just north and west of San Francisco Bay, and protects open ocean, near-shore tidal flats, rocky intertidal areas, wetlands, subtidal reefs, and coastal beaches within its boundaries.

Food-rich sanctuary waters teem with life: fish, invertebrates, seabirds and marine mammals thrive here. The sanctuary contains thirty-six marine mammal species, as well as twenty-six federally listed endangered or threatened species. White sharks and endangered blue and humpback whales migrate here seasonally to feed, and the Farallon Islands host the largest concentration of breeding seabirds in the contiguous United States.



ACTION PLAN

The sanctuary's Conservation Science Action Plan was developed jointly with a variety of stakeholders and partners and includes, but is not limited to, the following components:

- Monitor marine life, as well as types and levels of human activities, on sanctuary beaches, and provide baseline information to assist sanctuary management decisions.
- Conduct research to guide permit conditions for white shark viewing and assess effectiveness of new regulations.
- Host a biennial science workshop to facilitate information exchange on research conducted in the sanctuary.
- Develop an annotated bibliography of water quality research and monitoring programs in and adjacent to the sanctuary to evaluate data and determine the overall water quality of the sanctuary's ecosystem.
- Create easily accessible centralized web-based spatial database to house information pertaining to wildlife disturbance.
- Through the use of volunteer monitoring programs, observe and record impacts from human activities on marine resources and key habitats such as the rocky intertidal.
- Coordinate with other agencies, institutions and programs to better understand and address noise, light, and visual impacts on wildlife from vessels and low flying aircraft.
- Develop a native and introduced species inventory and database specifically for the sanctuary and areas adjacent to the sanctuary.
- In coordination with existing monitoring programs, develop a program to detect introduced species in estuarine environments of the sanctuary.
- Develop a monitoring program to detect and monitor introduced species in both the rocky intertidal and pelagic environments of the sanctuary.

TO GET INVOLVED

GFNMS welcomes your ideas about important resource management issues in the sanctuary. A Draft Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement are scheduled for release to the public in 2006. Following their release, hearings will be held in several locations throughout the region to gather public comment. Written comments will be accepted as well. To find out about public hearings, or how to submit written comments, please visit our website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/jointplan>.