

# WILDLIFE DISTURBANCE ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

## GULF OF THE FARALLONES NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

### ISSUE STATEMENT

The pressure on marine resources continues to grow as the human population increases around coastal areas and access to nearshore and offshore environments becomes easier. Of specific concern to Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) are wildlife disturbances associated with: trampling of the intertidal zone; hikers, beach users, dogs, boaters, and kayakers disturbing resting and breeding birds and marine mammals; entanglements; marine debris and fishing gear; overflights; acoustics; and the use of attractants or chumming.

### OUR GOAL

To significantly reduce or eliminate human disturbance to wildlife and their habitats by fostering responsible behavior.



Photo: GFNMS

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nature tourism activities in the sanctuary include: wildlife viewing from shore or boat, photographing wildlife and scenery, wildlife viewing from aircraft, beach visitation, and paddling. California and Florida are the top two states for nature tourism and wildlife viewing. Wildlife can also be unintentionally disturbed from recreational and commercial fishermen, media helicopters, and the military. Humans can impact wildlife through observing, attracting, and feeding wild animals; trampling intertidal habitats; and flushing birds and marine mammals from breeding, feeding, and resting habitats.

# THE JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW (JMPR)

Wildlife Disturbance is one of the action plans in the GFNMS Draft Management Plan (DMP). The DMP includes five 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 Wildlife Disturbance Action Plan was developed jointly with a variety of stakeholders and partners and includes, but is not limited to, the following components:

- Create an easily accessible centralized web-based spatial database to house information pertaining to wildlife disturbance, incidents, and impacts.
- Through the use of volunteer monitoring programs, observe and record impacts from human activities on marine resources and key habitats of the sanctuary, 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.
- Through interpretive enforcement and law enforcement efforts, address human behavior that may adversely impact wildlife.
- Develop wildlife viewing guidelines to reduce disturbance to wildlife from human interactions.
- Maximize media venues to augment directed outreach efforts and increase public awareness of wildlife disturbance issues.

## 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>.