



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES™

INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

Action Plan Summary

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

THE ISSUE:

There is a lack of public awareness of the resource issues and threats to our local ocean. Individuals need to be aware of and understand the issues facing the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) in order to be good stewards, or care-takers, of the sanctuary. Interpretive facilities, programs, and signage are instrumental tools in raising public awareness and understanding of resource issues in the sanctuary and in the creation of an informed, and scientifically literate, public.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The overall goal of **interpretation** is to forge an intellectual and emotional connection between the inherent meanings in the resources and the interests of the audience. With this in mind, the MBNMS is developing several **interpretive facilities** along California's central coast and a sanctuary-wide interpretive signage plan. Additionally, the MBNMS is working to create **distance-learning** opportunities and **virtual experiences** for those who may not have an opportunity to physically visit the MBNMS Interpretive Facilities.

The original 1992 management plan for the MBNMS included an expectation that one or more visitor centers would be developed along the sanctuary's shoreline. Comments from the public and advice from the **Sanctuary Advisory Council**, also indicated an interpretive center is needed to help raise public awareness of ocean issues, promote environmental stewardship, foster community support, and give the sanctuary a more tangible presence. The importance of interpretive facilities is outlined in the National Marine Sanctuary System Education Plan, adopted in August of 2000, and more recently, in

the **U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy Report** released in 2004. The MBNMS will place the development of interpretive facilities as a high priority in its new Draft Management Plan.

Although limited information and small exhibits about the MBNMS can be found in several State Parks, Wharves, and at visitor or educational centers, there are currently no visitor or education centers within MBNMS boundaries specifically interpreting the MBNMS. The MBNMS has an extensive coastline and could benefit from having a string of marine-themed, interpretive Visitor Centers to reach visitors equally in the northern, central, and southern portions of the sanctuary. The long term vision, supported by numerous public scoping comments and an extensive consultant's analysis, is to open one large Visitor Center (a waterfront site has been chosen in Santa Cruz) and three smaller, regional interpretive facilities. Two locations have already been identified as potential sites for small "storefront" exhibit centers. A third location will be identified on the Monterey Peninsula.

OUR GOAL

The sanctuary's goal is to guide the development of sanctuary centers and sanctuary signage while exploring new opportunities for reaching constituents.

The MBNMS Visitor Center in Santa Cruz

The Visitor Center in Santa Cruz will function as the MBNMS's premier education center and will encourage visitors to explore the marine environment, the issues impacting the sanctuary, and their personal role in protecting one of the nation's most ecologically significant and stunning water bodies.

The MBNMS is one of five sanctuaries on the west coast and has numerous connections biologically, geologically and socio-politically to each. These connections, along with the many land-sea and human linkages will be explored. Additionally, the Visitor Center function as a guidepost for marine activities, directing people learn more or personally enjoy the ocean by visiting to the nearby Seymour Marine Discovery Center, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, State Beaches and Parks, and numerous other facilities.

The Visitor Center will be located just steps from the ocean in Santa Cruz's famed beach area at the corner of Pacific and Beach Streets. The site was chosen after the MBNMS, working in conjunction with AMS Planning and Research, studied 23 locations around Monterey Bay. The Sanctuary Advisory Council then reviewed the findings and recommended locating the center in Santa Cruz. The City's 3/4-acre "Fun Spot" property was finally selected. This area is home to the world famous Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, world class surfing at Steamers Lane, and Lighthouse Point and is visited each year by an estimated 3.5 million people.

The Visitor Center, which could be up to 12,000 square feet, will meet the criteria for LEED (the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification and will serve as a model for sustainable, environmentally-friendly building design and construction.

The City of Santa Cruz has offered to serve as the project manager for the design and construction of the Visitor Center working closely with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the NMSP. Using federal funds, local funding, and a comprehensive fundraising program, the City will construct the Center to NOAA's standards and provide it for use by the MBNMS. The City of Santa Cruz is requesting federal funding in the fiscal year of 2006 to support the design and construction of the Visitor Center. The pathway and timeline for completion of this project are both subject to funding availability.

The MBNMS Coastal Discovery Center at San Simeon Bay

In 2004, the MBNMS and the San Luis Obispo Coast District of California State Parks (CDPR) began development of an interpretive plan for a cooperatively operated interpretive facility located in an existing building at Hearst State Beach at San Simeon Bay. The mandates of both MBNMS and CDPR reflect the agencies' commitment to the protection of natural and cultural resources.

San Simeon Point and San Simeon Cove have a rich history of human use, including 5,000 years of use by local tribes of American Indians, use of San Simeon Point as a Portuguese whaling station, use of the cove as a harbor for import and export, commercial and recreational fishing, and other recreational activities including yachting, kayaking, surfing, and diving.

The San Simeon Center is small (approximately 1,400 square feet), and will serve as the MBNMS Southern Region Office as well as housing approximately 800 square feet of interpretive area. The surrounding park offers abundant opportunities for signage and outdoor exhibitry. The facility's primary function will be interpretation, education, and outreach about natural and cultural resources in coastal California, from Cambria to Big Sur. Secondary goals include providing information to the public about local venues and coastal activities.

The MBNMS Visitor Center at Pigeon Point Lighthouse

The Pigeon Point Lighthouse, located in southern San Mateo County, has recently been transferred from the United States Coast Guard to California State Parks. In partnership with State Parks and the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, the MBNMS is planning a maritime heritage-themed interpretive center, located in the station's Fog Signal Building.

Pigeon Point Lighthouse is one of tallest lighthouses in America standing 115 feet high. It is also home to an international youth hostel and a seasonal environmental camp, adding to its appeal as an interpretive site.

The Center at Pigeon Point will provide visitors with information on the rich history of the lighthouse, the lighthouse keepers, regional shipwrecks, whaling, and pertinent local natural history, as well as information about the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the three sanctuaries of the region, and the California State Park System.

"The sanctuary's Visitor Center will enhance public awareness and lead to a personal connection with the ocean environment and our national marine sanctuary."

-William Douros, Sanctuary Superintendent

THE SANCTUARY'S ACTION PLAN

Sanctuary-wide Signage

With over 276 miles of coastline, and almost as many access points, the MBNMS has a wealth of opportunities to reach visitors to its shores with interpretive signage or kiosks. A comprehensive interpretive signage program, implemented with partners having land-based jurisdiction over the coastline, is a key piece of the overall Interpretive Facilities Plan.

In its first ten years, the MBNMS focused on general signage with the basic MBNMS message. The Sanctuary will now focus on creating tailored, more site-specific messages to maximize resource protection and personal enjoyment of the sanctuary while also highlighting the features of each location.

Additionally, the MBNMS recognizes the valuable contribution to public education and awareness that an integrated system of "sanctuary scenic trails" along the coastline could bring. Since these coastal trails provide additional interpretive opportunities, it is our goal to provide support to other agencies and organizations involved in coastal trail development when there is a formal commitment to sanctuary-related interpretation along the trail. MBNMS support may be provided to these partners through staff time and/or financial contributions for trail planning or implementation, resources allowing. Interpretive trail projects currently underway or on the horizon include the Santa Cruz County Sanctuary Scenic Trail, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, the Half Moon Bay Coastal Trail, and Moonstone State Beach Trail.

Distance Learning Opportunities

In addition to the millions of people who physically visit the MBNMS each year, the sanctuary would like to reach those people who do not or cannot make a trip to the MBNMS. The technology to reach these potential visitors exists in the form of programs and products made available via the Internet, at Visitor Centers located far away from the MBNMS, and as marketable products at museums and aquaria throughout the world. These types of "virtual experiences" invite millions of people who may never come to Monterey to visit the MBNMS.

Three primary mechanisms have been identified to visit the MBNMS from a distance:

- 1) the MBNMS website and web cams,
- 2) **telepresence** technology allowing viewing of local underwater habitats, organisms, and programs or interacting with educators, researchers, or computerized equipment in **real-time**, and
- 3) videotapes and CDs containing the best images and footage of MBNMS habitats and wildlife.

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

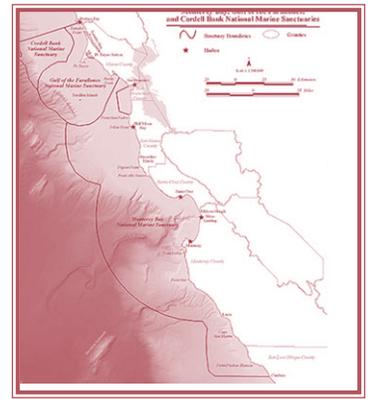
- Developing, for the MBNMS Visitor Center, an interpretive plan, an exhibits plan, an education plan, a facilities plan, and a business plan
- Constructing and outfitting the Santa Cruz Visitor Center
- Implementing a successful fundraising strategy for the Santa Cruz Visitor Center
- Completing two smaller regional interpretive facilities to include the San Simeon Coastal Discovery Center, the Pigeon Point Lighthouse Visitor Center
- Developing a third regional facility on the Monterey Peninsula
- Developing and maintaining a comprehensive Central Coast signage inventory
- Working with partners to identify additional signage needs and to develop, install and maintain signs
- Prioritizing signage needs and working with partners to fund and install signs
- Working with partners to identify and prioritize resources for interpretive trail projects
- Expanding programs and products allowing visitors to experience the Sanctuary from afar.

For a complete listing of the sanctuary's "Interpretive Facilities Action Plan" please visit http://sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/jointplan/m_reptoad.html and scroll down the page.

The Joint Management Plan Review (JMPR)

"Interpretive Facilities" is one of the action plans in the MBNMS Draft Management Plan. The MBNMS Draft Management Plan includes twenty-eight plans that, once finalized, will guide sanctuary management for the next five years. The plan is a revision of the original management plan, adopted with sanctuary designation in 1992, and is focused on how to best understand and protect the sanctuary's resources.

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) is updating the management plans for the Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries in what is known as the Joint Management Plan Review (JMPR).



How You Can Get Involved in the MBNMS Management Plan Process

The MBNMS 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://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/jointplan>.

GLOSSARY

Distance learning: Remote learning or teaching occurring using electronic communication.

Interpretation: Communication forging an intellectual and emotional connection between the inherent meanings in the resources and the interests of the audience.

Interpretive facilities: Buildings or structures dedicated to interpretation.

Real time: The actual time during which something takes place.

Sanctuary Advisory Council: A group of stakeholders and partners who provide guidance on sanctuary management.

Telepresence: Technology enabling people to view something at another location or to interact with someone or something at another location.

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy: A federal panel, established by Congress and appointed by the President, to report on ocean health and develop recommendations for a new and comprehensive national ocean policy.

Virtual experience: A real or imagined environment that can an interactive visual, auditory, or tactile experience.

Resources

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
<http://montereybay.noaa.gov/resourcepro/resmanissues/coastal.html>
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Interpretive Facilities
<http://montereybay.noaa.gov/educate/interpvis.html>



THE MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Stretching from Marin to Cambria, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 276 miles of shoreline and 5,322 square miles (4,625 nautical miles) of ocean, extending an average distance of 30 miles from shore. At its deepest point, the sanctuary reaches down 10,663 feet (more than two miles). The sanctuary was established for the purposes of resource protection, research, education, and public use. Its natural resources include one of our nation's largest kelp forests and one of North America's largest underwater canyons. It is home to one of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the world, including 33 marine mammal species, 94 seabird species, 345 fish species, and numerous invertebrates and plants. This remarkably productive marine environment is fringed by spectacular coastal scenery, including sandy beaches, rocky cliffs, rolling hills, and steep mountains.