



NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARIES™

# MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR RESOURCE ISSUES THREATENING OCEANS (MERITO)

## MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

### THE ISSUE:

*There is a need to provide our constituent base with an understanding of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and the issues facing the sanctuary. The Hispanic community represents the fastest growing population in the California central coast region and currently comprises 32% of California's population and 47% of Monterey County's population.*

### OUR GOAL

**T**he sanctuary's goal is to increase protection of sanctuary resources by building a greater understanding of ocean-related threats within our diverse communities and by providing opportunities to engage in marine protection.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**M**erito is a Spanish word meaning "merit" or "worth." The MERITO (Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans) program is committed to providing programs and materials geared for diverse multicultural communities. Prior to implementation of this program, a limited number of bilingual programs and resources were available to Spanish-language citizens within the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), and its 13 sanctuaries. The initial focus of the effort, launched in 2001, was to identify target audiences within our Hispanic community, and to work collaboratively to develop effective

bilingual outreach and education programs addressing priority MBNMS resource management issues.

Based on needs identified through an assessment process, the MBNMS seeks to develop and deliver bilingual outreach programs and materials that will successfully inform Hispanic citizens about threats to marine and coastal environments. The programs that presently comprise the MERITO plan were developed in direct response to the issues and needs identified by our Hispanic communities. An overview of current programs follows.



Community field experience at Elkhorn Slough

MBNMS

# AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROGRAMS:

## ***Bilingual Outreach Programs and Materials:***

MERITO collaborates with schools and community-centered education groups to build upon and foster community ownership and stewardship of our marine and coastal resources among culturally diverse audiences. Through partnerships with schools districts, adult school organizations, middle schools, migrant parent groups, local cities, and non-profit groups, MERITO provides bilingual outreach programs and materials. These include youth afterschool programs, educational presentations for adults, community field experiences, event support and curriculum and outreach materials.

## ***Bilingual Programs on Partner Sites:***

MERITO collaborates with other natural resource management agencies such as California State Parks and the National Estuarine Research Reserves to provide outreach for culturally diverse youth, adults, and migrant families. By attending and supporting community events and providing bilingual outreach resources, MERITO hopes to increase visitation and stewardship by Hispanic community members at

partner and natural resource management sites. Encouraging visitation to partner sites that provide information on the MBNMS will help engage our community in appreciation of coastal resources while increasing awareness of the MBNMS.

## ***Teacher Professional Development and Internship Programs:***

MERITO collaborates with minority-serving institutions to develop and provide professional development opportunities for Hispanic-serving teachers as well as paid internships and job training opportunities for Hispanic undergraduate and graduate level students.

In addition to the development of an activity guide and provision of field experience support to public school and private youth programs, MERITO hosts a Watershed/Ocean teacher and youth leader training each year. The workshop provides participants with guidance in developing program calendars, facilitates communication with field experts, and trains and supports teachers and youth leaders in the integration of MERITO curriculum into their own extended learning programs.

## ***Expansion to Other Sanctuaries:***

The MBNMS MERITO program has been identified as a model for multicultural education in sanctuaries nationwide. MERITO program expansion will continue to build new capacity in NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program for broadening the geographic scope of this multicultural education programming and will strengthen program cohesion.

With expansion to the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, MERITO developed a process and model for expanding the program to other sanctuary sites throughout the nation, such as Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank in California, Flower Garden Banks in Texas and Florida Keys off the southeast United States. The fact that all four California sanctuaries are ecologically linked through the California current and countercurrent allows us to focus on some of the same issues, such as water quality and runoff issues affecting near shore systems.

***MERITO's outreach programs are made possible through collaborations and partnerships with non-profit organizations, government agencies, schools, academic institutions, and our local and national marine sanctuary foundations.***



## THE SANCTUARY'S MERITO PROGRAM

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

- Developing and implementing community-based bilingual education and outreach programs
- Developing and implementing site-based bilingual outreach programs
- Developing and implementing teacher training and internship programs
- Developing a comprehensive communications plan to effectively engage Spanish and other media groups, including print, radio, TV, and internet in delivering bilingual messages related to marine and coastal watershed protection
- Working with partners to develop a regional planning approach to address multicultural outreach
- Integrating multicultural elements to existing MBNMS programs and materials
- Expanding the MERITO program into other national marine sanctuaries

### MERITO COMMUNITY QUOTE

*“Me sirve esta experiencia para ir y decirles a otros de cómo conservar todo esto natural, la tierra, el océano todo lo que nos dio, para dejarles algo a nuestros hijos, nuestro futuro. Nosotros estamos gastando a todo y necesitamos aprender mas de jente como ustedes que estan enseñando la importancia de toda esta conservación.”*

*(MERITO participant)*

*“This experience inspires me to go home and teach others how to conserve our natural places, the earth, the ocean, all that we are given, to leave something for our children, our future. We are exhausting everything and we need to learn more from people like you who are teaching the importance of protection”*

*(MERITO participant)*



Watershed Academy students share their knowledge with parents and peers.

MBNMS

# The Joint Management Plan Review (JMPR)

"Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans" (MERITO) 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 a process 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>.



MERITO staff with students.

## 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 thirty 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.

## Resources

MERITO <http://montereybay.noaa.gov/educate/merito/about-index.htm>

MERITO Program Report <http://montereybay.noaa.gov/educate/merito/resources-index.html>

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

