



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
University of California Santa Barbara
Ocean Science Education Building 514, MC 6155
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-6155

DATE: February 10, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: John Armor, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

FROM: Chris Mobley, Superintendent
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary *Chris Mobley*

THROUGH: William J. Douros, Regional Director
West Coast Region *WJ Douros*

SUBJECT: Completion of Sanctuary Management Plan Evaluation

Pursuant to section 304(e) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA; 16 U.S.C. § 1434(e)), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of National Marine Sanctuary (ONMS) Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) staff conducted an evaluation of the progress made toward implementing the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Final Management Plan published in January 2009. CINMS also considered the prioritization of management goals. Based on this review, ONMS has determined that no immediate or urgent revisions to the management plan or the regulations are needed at this time. This evaluation demonstrates the sustained relevance of the goals, objectives, and priorities of the existing management plan.

Background

The January 2009 CINMS management plan represents the culmination of a multi-year process that included extensive public involvement. The management plan is comprised of action plans, and identifies a series of management strategies and activities under each action plan. The management plan was developed with a 5-10 year implementation horizon. NMSA section 304(e) requires NOAA to conduct a periodic review of the sanctuary management plans and goals (16 U.S.C. § 1434(e)). Specifically, NOAA must (1) evaluate the substantive progress toward implementing the management plan and goals for the sanctuary including an evaluation of the effectiveness of site-specific management techniques and strategies; 2) include a prioritization of management objectives; and (3) revise the management plan and regulations as necessary to fulfill the purposes and policies of the NMSA.

Result of Management Plan Evaluation

In the summer and fall of 2017, CINMS staff reviewed the progress it made towards implementing the eight action plans identified in the 2009 CINMS management plan, especially the effectiveness of site-specific management techniques and strategies. Groups of staff discussed, assessed, and rated the level of completion for each of the 138 activities listed in the eight action plans. Each activity was also assessed with regard to the status of supportive funding, the role of the sanctuary, the relevancy for continued action, and the priority level.

Details of the results of this management plan evaluation can be found in the spreadsheet accompanying this memorandum. A summary is provided below.

The current management plan is organized around eight action plan topics:

1. Public Awareness and Understanding
2. Conservation Science
3. Boundary Evaluation
4. Water Quality
5. Emergency Response and Enforcement
6. Maritime Heritage
7. Resource Protection
8. Operations

CINMS has made significant progress towards implementing these action plans. Major accomplishments include, but are not limited to:

Public Awareness and Understanding Action Plan

- Steady operation and program growth of the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps, progressing from 25,000 hours of volunteer service time in 2009, provided by 135 volunteers, to 33,810 hours of volunteer service time in 2017, provided by 150 volunteers.
- Completion of the Channel Islands Boating Center in 2013 at Channel Islands Harbor, opening up a new space filled with interactive sanctuary kiosks and exhibits that have become a hub for education and outreach activities in Ventura County.
- In 2016 and 2017, using live-streaming and real-time interactions with deep sea science and exploration operations through the *Nautilus Live* program, enhanced sanctuary educational programming, and set the stage for future excursions.

Conservation Science Action Plan

- Completion of the sanctuary's first Condition Report in September 2009, and completion of a draft of the second Condition Report in November 2017, with completion of a final draft scheduled for spring 2018. Condition reports provide a summary of sanctuary resources and pressures on those resources, and assess the current condition and trends of sanctuary water quality, habitats, living resources, maritime archaeological resources, and the human activities that affect them.
- Consistent support of ecological monitoring activities of the network of marine reserves established within the sanctuary, showing enhanced populations of fished and unfished marine species.
- Significant increases in the extent of high-resolution benthic mapping data (from 50% to 76% in coverage), and the discovery of rare and fragile deep sea coral colonies important to understanding the effects of ocean acidification, by attracting and supporting an increasing number of large NOAA research ships and exploration vessels into the sanctuary.

Emergency Response and Enforcement Action Plan

- Development and deployment of tools to enhance law enforcement efforts within the sanctuary, including the eFINS app and an advanced shore-based marine radar system.
- Staff oil spill and emergency response training and preparedness drills were conducted, and staff assisted with a multi-agency response to the 2015 Refugio Beach Oil Spill.

Water Quality Action Plan

- Completion in 2010 of a comprehensive water quality characterization for CINMS.
- Partnership with the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) to ensure continued periodic water quality sampling and analysis within CINMS.

Maritime Heritage Action Plan

- Discovery of the long lost shipwreck of the *George E. Billings* near Santa Barbara Island in 2012 as a result of sanctuary maritime heritage program efforts.

Resource Protection Action Plan

- Significant progress towards addressing the threat of ship strikes to whales, including adjusting shipping lanes, convening and receiving recommendations from an advisory council Marine Shipping Working Group, and testing an incentive-based “Blue Whales and Blue Skies” Vessel Speed Reduction program that has successfully slowed ships in the Santa Barbara Channel.
- Development and launch of two apps (Spotter Pro and Whale Alert) that have digitized and streamlined whale sightings data collection efforts, and have been opened to public participation.

Operations Action Plan

- Successful move in 2013 of the sanctuary’s main office into the Ocean Science Education Building on the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, boosting partnerships and collaborations with on-campus partners, and enhancing university student interactions and involvement with sanctuary programs.

CINMS continues to direct its efforts towards these action plans because all but one action plan¹ are still relevant to the sanctuary’s goals and objectives. CINMS has partially or fully completed twenty-six percent of all management plan activities (36 of 138 activities) since 2009. Sixty-three percent of the management plan activities (87 of 138) are designed to be ongoing functions (e.g., monitoring programs, collaborative management programs, education programs, etc.), so the sanctuary is already implementing them, but they are not considered “completed.”

The human and environmental setting has not changed significantly since 2009, so most site-specific management techniques and strategies can continue to be employed as described in the 2009 management plan. During the management plan evaluation, CINMS staff evaluated the effectiveness of management techniques and strategies in order to assign a current level of priority to each activity. Staff also conducted a self-assessment of the effort expended for each reported activity through FY 2017. The criteria for assessing the level of effort were related to the effectiveness and complexity of the technique and strategy, and included:

- The amount of staff time and/or funding that was dedicated to each activity;
- The thoroughness of implementation of the listed activities;
- The consistency in completing planned actions; and
- The activity level of complexity.

Using the above criteria, CINMS subject matter experts reflected on the relative effort level dedicated to each activity and assigned an implementation status rating for the period from 2009

¹ The exception to that is the boundary evaluation action plan, which was not pursued in part because the spatial area contemplated in this action plan was subsequently included in a nomination for a new national marine sanctuary (see Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary at <https://nominate.noaa.gov/nominations/>).

through 2017 to each activity. Subsequently, staff suggested levels of ongoing priority for each activity.

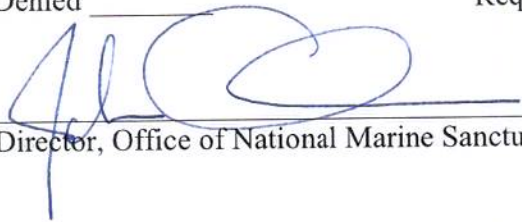
As noted above, the management plan evaluation showed that all but one of the action plans in the 2009 management plan accurately reflect current management priorities and resource protection issues for CINMS, and are adequate to continue guiding CINMS operations and programs at this time.

Conclusion

The completion of this evaluation of the 2009 CINMS management plan satisfies the requirements of NMSA section 304(e). Based upon this review, no immediate or urgent revisions to the management plan or to the regulations are needed at this time. NOAA will use this evaluation and an updated condition report as the management and scientific information basis to undertake the next periodic management plan review following the completion of a site condition report. The results of this evaluation will be shared with the Sanctuary Advisory Council at its public meeting on May 18, 2018.

Approved as written Approved with modifications (*See below*)

Denied Request for additional information



Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

2/23/2018
Date