



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
113 Harbor Way
Santa Barbara, CA 93109

February 8, 2000

Craig Harrison
Vice-chair for Conservation
Pacific Seabird Group
4001 North Ninth Street #1801
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Mr. Harrison:

The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) is currently involved in a 5-year management plan review process that may reshape the goals, objectives, regulations and overall look of how the marine environment is managed. Mandated by the same 1992 Congressional legislation that reauthorized the National Marine Sanctuary Program, management plan reviews offer NOAA and the public a chance to update the way marine resources are protected in the Sanctuaries.

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary is one of the nation's oldest sanctuaries. This area of special significance, a transition zone between two distinct biogeographic coastal provinces where the cold temperate waters of the California counter current flowing from the north meet the warm temperate waters of the California countercurrent, was designated a National Marine Sanctuary in 1980. Because of the major ocean currents that meet in the vicinity of the islands, the flora and fauna of this area represent both cold temperate and warm temperate species; many are endemic to this unique transition zone.

The Sanctuary is a remote offshore site that is easily accessible from the heavily urbanized southern California mainland population of 10 million making management issues both diverse and complex. Many of the core issues addressed in the 1980 draft environmental impact statement and 1982 management plan such as oil and gas development, sea otters, fisheries issues, military activities and vessel traffic are still relevant issues today - although they have taken on a new and different look. Recently, state and federal governments have favored oil and gas development moratoriums. There are new, emerging and revived fisheries including squid, live fish and sardines. Threatened pinniped populations have fully recovered. Blue whales were only "sighted" as of 1980; now the largest known congregations of Blue whales in the world regularly occur in CINMS. The list of changes in the status of the resources, the issues, visitor use, technology and research, is lengthy. With the passage of twenty years, significant changes have occurred in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

To date, the management plan review process has included the development of a Sanctuary Advisory Council, six public scoping meetings from San Luis Obispo to Long Beach, a public follow-up meeting, and briefing and consultation meetings with agencies and constituents. In



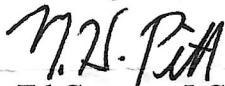
addition, CINMS is involved in a joint state and federal process with the California Department of Fish and Game to embark on a stakeholder-based process to make a recommendation on a system of marine reserves for the Sanctuary.

In preparation for the draft environmental impact statement, the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary contracted with Dr. Michael McGinnis, of the Ocean and Coastal Policy Center at the University of California at Santa Barbara, to evaluate four potential study area scenerios based on ecological linkages with the current Sanctuary. Dr. McGinnis recommended a study area from Pt. Sal in the north to Pt. Mugu in the south, including the Santa Barbara Channel and coastal areas in-between. The Sanctuary staff and headquarters team have received Dr. McGinnis' recommendation and agree with the outcome, thus finalizing the study area for the draft environmental impact statement. Details of the report are available on our web site at www.cinms.nos.noaa.gov.

In addition to the study area determination, Sanctuary staff has completed an evaluation of the issues generated during the formal public comment period. The staff has agreed to examine the following issues in the draft management plan (non-regulatory component of the management plan): water quality, military activity, oil and gas, vessel traffic, emergency response, visitor use (recreational and commercial), research use, and zonation. Although still in the draft stages, Sanctuary staff has recommended that regulatory changes include: looking at alternatives for boundary redefinition, a system of marine reserves, and language changes to all of the six existing regulations. The National Marine Sanctuary Program is reviewing these recommendations, and may possibly add some additional proposed regulations for consistency with the national program and newer sanctuaries.

We welcome your input on the management plan review process and would be pleased to make a presentation to the Pacific Seabird Group. Anne Walton, our Management Plan Specialist, may be contacted at 805-884-1470 to set up a meeting. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,



for Ed Cassano, LCDR, NOAA
Sanctuary Manager