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February 14, 2007

Dr. Holly Price
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, CA 93940

Subject: Structure and Function of the Special MPA Workgroup

Dear Holly,

The six members of the Sanctuary's MPA Workgroup who are signing below, and who also signed the February 2, 2007 letter to you, want to express both our appreciation to you, for discussing some of our concerns about the structure and function of the MBNMS MPA workgroup. At the same time, we also want you to know that if anything, our concerns about this workgroup are deepening.

We fully recognize that nearly the full meeting time on February 8th was dedicated to reviewing some of the issues that we outlined in our February 2nd letter. Additionally, we began discussing the question of the need for additional MPAs, if any, within this Sanctuary Region. As you know, we have been asking for this discussion for literally years. We appreciate the time devoted to this.

At the same time, a number of our concerns remain, and/or have even deepened as a result of the February 8th meeting. First, let us note that although many of our concerns were discussed, very little was resolved. Briefly, to recount our issues:

- We no longer support the MPA Action Plan. This is primarily because of your actions on behalf of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary during the State's MLPA process. It was clear in this State process that even the Sanctuary does not support its own Action Plan, because it didn't follow the scientific or community based process outlined in the Plan when it made recommendations to the State.
- There appears to be nothing really resolved about the makeup of the Work Group; in particular, we still want to direct your attention to the idea of an adaptive management workshop under the general guidelines that we provided. Certainly it would be open to discussion, and someone who is experienced in these types of workshops should provide expert advice as to how it is made up

and how it operates. I believe that Dr. Josh Korman is an expert on this, having done a similar process for a resource management issue in the Grand Canyon, among others.

- We never resolved the issue that the Sanctuary is a stakeholder in this process, yet is also in charge of this process. It seems to be incompatible for a fair process, and particularly to answering the question of the need for additional MPAs, if any.

Our concern about the science meeting that was held at the Southwest Fisheries Lab has deepened. We acknowledge that it was not a secret meeting, in the sense that you notified Workgroup Members who were present at a meeting which fishermen missed. However, from all indications, the directive given to this science team was to come up with some kind of a network of MPAs that are connected biologically, and that include a wide range of habitats. This kind of direction only furthers our concern that despite assurances from you and Bill Douros that having MPAs is not a goal of the Sanctuary Program, in fact it is. It would seem that the correct scientific assessment to be made by such a science team would be the question of whether or not there are indications that the marine ecosystem in the region of the Sanctuary is somehow compromised. Secondly, if problems are identified, are MPAs the best, most cost-effective way of addressing the problems? Third, do existing regulations and other management measures substantially accomplish the conservation goals of the NMSA? Answering these questions would get to the heart of the need question, rather than having the scientists design a system of MPAs.

- It also concerns us that you wanted to start the discussion of the need for additional MPAs with a list of MPAs proposed by the conservation members of the Workgroup. We hope that this was corrected, and that a first task will be a GAP analysis. This would start with a discussion of the same questions cited above for the Science Team. This would include an evaluation of existing MPAs, including those near adoption by the State of California and the Davidson Seamount. It would include the Essential Fish Habitat Areas and the benefits of the Rockfish Conservation Area. It would also include the benefits of the Sanctuary as an MPA with water quality and other resource protection regulations. It is only after fully assessing these questions and existing tools that some sense of a need for additional MPAs will become clear. We also point out that a definition of “marine ecosystem health” is needed. As it stands, between the science team work and the draft needs assessment list, it appears that, in the eyes of the Sanctuary, if you don’t have an MPA in a particular habitat, then you need one. We hope that is not the path that this workgroup is on.

- Another important problem with this workgroup process is the artificial premise being advocated by the MBNMS that there is a distinction between its “Ecosystem Protection Mandate” and “Fishery Management”. This is a false assumption that will skew the results of this process. In fact, any regulation that

changes the behavior of fishermen, whether intended or not, is fishery management.

To conclude, the question was raised as to whether fishing interests on the workgroup want veto power over the process. The response to that was a reminder that the best available science on these MPA processes says that stakeholder and community support is needed or MPAs and MPA efforts invariably fail.

We are willing to keep working in this MPA process unless it becomes evident that making it a fair process is hopeless. If we do feel that it's hopeless, we, like any other member of the workgroup, maintain the right to drop out and either pursue our own MPA assessment and plan, or take other actions.

Sincerely,

Tom Canele

Wilson Quick

Steve Scheiblaue

David Crabbe

Howard Egan