



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

299 Foam Street
Monterey, California 93940

February 27, 2009

California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth St.
Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Letter of Support for California Fisheries Challenge 2009 Grant Proposals

Dear Council Members:

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary would like to express our support for the package of proposals submitted by the City of Monterey and the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries (ACSF). We believe that these kinds of projects can help our fishing communities along the Central California coast in building a foundation for long-term, regionally-based sustainable fisheries. The Sanctuary sees the growing interest and emerging efforts to transition to more sustainable and community-focused fisheries management planning as closely aligned and consistent with our congressional mandate to promote and facilitate coordinated and comprehensive place-based approaches to marine ecosystem protection, conservation and resource utilization.

We offer the following supportive comments about the proposals:

- The Sanctuary is committed to help support and maintain an economically viable commercial and recreational fishing industry in the region. Collectively, we all need to better understand how to effectively safeguard such a significant part of the region's historical and cultural heritage. Furthermore, we believe that an economically and ecologically sustainable fishing industry is an important metric for successful, comprehensive integrated management of the region's marine resources.
- Central Coast residents are likely to be an especially receptive market for a "Buy Fresh-Buy Local" seafood campaign. The flourishing network of farmers' markets, many held year round throughout the region, as well as the unmet consumer demand indicated by waiting lists of families seeking to purchase prepaid subscription contracts from local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms to meet their food needs, all indicate a strong potential interest in also buying fresh seafood from locally-based fishermen. Community Supported Fisheries (CSF) initiatives, adapted from the successful Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, are just getting started in several New England fishing communities.



- A critical element for a successful “Buy Fresh-Buy Local” campaign, which is highlighted in the study referenced in the proposal, is that the consuming public wants to have confidence that the fish they are eating or purchasing is being caught sustainably. The Sanctuary would urge the Ocean Protection Council and others to lend their support to an effort to develop a scientifically credible and broadly supported “local sustainable fishery” certification label so that consumers can confidently make informed and locally supportive purchasing decisions.
- The proposed strategic planning efforts may benefit in getting started by conducting a shared community assessment of the current and historical condition of commercial fisheries in the region. A consultant-developed assessment, even if done thoroughly and accurately, will likely not have the same impact and carry the same impetus for action as an assessment developed by the community. Such an assessment could then be used to help inform and inspire the development of a broadly supported vision for the long-term sustainability of our community-based fisheries. That vision could then guide the participatory development of a Strategic Plan designed to commit and align the efforts of multiple partners all seeking to support the achievement of sustainable community-based fisheries for our region.
- In order for this series of proposed projects to ultimately be successful in achieving “enhanced economically and biologically sustainable fisheries which can support community infrastructure and which meet the needs of the public,” they will likely need to be expanded and integrated into a regional approach and strategy. This will be especially necessary to ensure that the regional fish processing and marketing infrastructure is matched appropriately with the fishery resource opportunities, the fisheries and ecosystem protection management regime, types of fish products produced from ecologically sustainable fishing methods, and the composition of the fishing fleet structure, including their multi-gear capabilities.
- We fully support informed and empowered engagement of commercial and recreational fishermen in the Sanctuary’s upcoming MPA planning process. We also understand and are supportive of the desire by stakeholders to have access to their own trusted experts to provide technical advice in formulating proposals for consideration during the process and in evaluating the impacts of different alternatives. Hopefully, the active participation of fishing community representatives in the MPA planning process will help us explore, develop and analyze options that are supportive of our shared goal of ecologically and economically sustainable fisheries in the region.

- The region cannot make progress on implementing less impactful yet still economically viable fishing methods unless new creative approaches are developed and adopted. Unfortunately, the observer requirement for Exempted Fishing Permits creates a significant obstacle to scientifically testing and evaluating a potentially promising fishery that is expected to have little by-catch. Assistance in funding the required observer would allow this potential new fishery to be evaluated.

We urge the Council's thoughtful consideration and support for these proposals. We would also welcome and recommend your suggested improvements, especially for possible integration with other efforts along the Central Coast aimed at transitioning to community-focused and ecosystem-based fisheries management.

Sincerely,



Paul Michel, Superintendent

cc:

Steve Scheiblaue, Harbormaster, City of Monterey
Kathy Fosmark, Committee Chair, Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries
Frank Emerson, Committee Chair, Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries
Mike Ricketts, President, Monterey Commercial Fishermen's Association
Chuck Della Sala, Mayor, City of Monterey
William J. Douros, Regional Director, West Coast Regional Office, NMSP