

**CINMS CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP  
7/16/14 REPORT  
Environmental Defense Center Conference Room,  
906 Garden Street, Santa Barbara**

**Present:** Kristi Birney (EDC), Michael Smith (Gray Whale Count), Greg Helms (Ocean Conservancy), Ben Pitterle (SBCK), Debra Herring (SAC Non-Consumptive Seat), Vic Cox (SAC Public at Large Alternate)

**Staff:** Sean Hasting (phone)

**I. INTRODUCTIONS**

**II. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

A. MPA implementation activities:

- a. Kristi reported on the Santa Barbara Channel Marine Protected Area Collaborative work at World Ocean Day/Santa Barbara Ocean Festival. There was general agreement from attendees that there was a great showing of collaborative members, good Chumash representation. There was a lot of good effort/energy. The booths were built in well, not too far from the main stage, and there were many opportunities for groups to talk on stage. However turnout was low. Suggestions were made about improving signage, festival layout, marketing/promotion of the event.

As part of the MPA Awareness Campaign, other Collaborative sponsored events such as fishing trips, kayak trip, condor express trip were all successful with positive response from participants and associated recreational businesses.

Of special note: SBCK also took the lead subsidizing a dive trip, fishing trip, and several boat trips for underserved (low income) youth. These activities were also well received by participants and collaborating businesses.

Sean mentioned that discussions during the technical enforcement meeting have focused on MPA infractions. Unfortunately, these infractions continue to happen and several hotspots continue to be problem areas. It seems that current existing outreach efforts may not be enough to detour poaching. There was conversation about exploring opportunities to raise fines in the hopes of detouring illegal activity and motivating behavior change.

**III. WHALES & SHIPPING**

- A. Marine Shipping Working Group: Kristi reported that she will be presenting and providing an update at Friday's SAC meeting on the funding status for the Working Group and announcing the addition of new Working Group Members.

- a. Funding: We have been applying for funding to fill the 50K funding gap for the Working Group. We applied to three foundations in the last month. Foundations will notify us in the fall if we are a grant funding recipient. We are also in conversations with International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), who are in discussions about an idea to provide i-pads (pre-loaded with the Whale Spotter App) to some commercial ships transiting the west coast. Whale Spotter is an App that helps identify whales.
  - b. Working Group Participation: Kristi has confirmed participation by Margaret Cooney and April Wobst, two staff from the IFAW, who will participate on the new SAC Working Group. They both bring NGO experience and lessons learned from many years of working with the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary on right whale protection on the east coast. Margaret will be the main representative with April serving as an alternate.
- B. Michael gave a Gray Whale Count update. This was a fantastic year for counting gray whales! The Gray Whale Count actually extended the season because grays were still present and migrating thorough the area beyond the time when counting typically ends. Counts this year were very high for mother/calf pairs. Calf production was 2<sup>nd</sup> highest for all years on record. They counted a total of 100 juvenile (also higher than average). This year the total count was 750 whales (typically the count ranges from 500 to 600). Michael noted that approx. 75-90% of the mother/calf pairs are captured in the Gray Whale Counts from shore.
- a. Michael also noted that he is increasing UCSB student participation in the Gray Whale Count with a new program called “My MPA.” As part of this program students will be monitoring the campus point MPAs and monitoring vessel traffic. Michael is working with MPA Enterprise to determine best approach for integrating his citizen science data into the monitoring effort.
- C. Sean noted that the Whale Alert App will be released in September 2014. Whale Alert App is designed for citizen science and for the general public to use. This same App is also used on the east coast for whale sightings and has been shared with the whale watching and shipping industry. It will be available to the public with a similar target audience on the West Coast. He noted that this App is different from Whale Spotter App which is currently in use by Naturalist Corp. members and is for professional and trained whale observers.
- D. Sean gave a Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) Trial update. He noted that the Sanctuary, Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District and EDC launched registration for the VSR Trial last month. During the registration period there was an overwhelming response from shipping companies. We received more requests than we are currently able to reward during this Trial. The significant interest in the project has propelled the partners to seek additional funds to incentivize more ships.

#### IV. SAC AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Tourism Panel Discussion: Sean mentioned that this SAC Working Group is trying to find ways to make the Sanctuary more marketable and find ways to encourage the community to get out and visit the Sanctuary. This is similar approach that the SB

Channel MPA Collaborative is taking by encouraging responsible ocean recreation and stewardship.

- B. SAC Summit Report & Call to Action Letter: We discussed the Call to Action Letter. This letter expresses a commitment by SAC Advisory Bodies and the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee to ensure well planned and sustainable management of recreational activities in MPAs. The letter acknowledges the growing number of recreational users in our special places and emphasizes the following: 1. Inviting people to play responsibly in MPAs; 2. Building lasting ocean constituencies by understating the drivers of how humans recreate in these special places; 3. Managing recreation activities in a sustainable manner that supports ecosystem values; 4. Engaging recreational users as ocean stewards; and 5. Making all this happen through collaboration, sharing resources, and building partnerships. The group was supportive of the spirit of the letter and appreciates the SAC Chairs for taking the lead on this effort.

Debra also mentioned that the Federal Advisory Committee also hosted a webinar providing more information about the letter.

## **VI. OTHER SAC ISSUES**

Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) Report: Kristi reported that she attended CHOW this year. A very impressive line-up of key-note speakers included John Podesta (Counselor to the President of the USA), Sally Jewell (United States Secretary of the Interior), and Sheldon Whitehouse (U.S. Senate, Rhode Island). John started the meeting by announcing that NOAA is now accepting nominations for new National Marine Sanctuaries. NOAA and partners have developed an informative website ([here](#)) providing more information about the nomination process.

## **ADJOURN**