

Sanctuary Advisory Council

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

April 28, 2016

Member/Alternate

Tourism

Andrea Mills / Garrett Kababik

Business

Michael Cohen / Capt. Kip Louttit

Non-Consumptive Recreation

Ben Pitterle / Tony Knight

Commercial Fishing

Stephanie Mutz / John Hoadley

Recreational Fishing

Capt. David Bacon / Merit McCrear

Education

Amanda Allen / Cliff Rodrigues

Research

Dr. Robert Warner / Dr. Mark Steele

Conservation

Kristi Birney / Greg Helms

Public At-Large 1

Phyllis Grifman / Victor Cox

Public At-Large 2

Rich Block / Eric Kett

Chumash Community

Luhui Isha Ward / Mati Waiya

National Marine Fisheries Service

Vacant / Shelby Mendez

National Park Service

Russell Galipeau / Vacant

U.S. Coast Guard

LCDR Casey Hehr / LCDR Joseph Giammanco

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Donna Schroeder / Dr. Ann Bull

U.S. Department of Defense

John Ugoretz / Walter Schobel

California Department of Fish and Game

Dr. Craig Shuman / Julia Coates

California Resources Agency

Vacant / Amy Vierra

California Coastal Commission

Dr. Jonna Engel / Molly Troup

County of Santa Barbara

Dianne Black / Vacant

County of Ventura

Danielle Tarr / Vacant

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

Chris Mobley [non-voting]

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Paul Michel / Karen Grimmer [non-voting]

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

Maria Brown / Brian Johnson [non-voting]

Chair: Dianne Black

Vice Chair: Phyllis Grifman

Secretary: Michael Cohen

Mr. Russell Galipeau, Superintendent
Channel Islands National Park
1901 Spinnaker Drive
Ventura, CA 93001

Dear Mr. Galipeau:

At our March 18th meeting of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, business seat member Michael Cohen provided updated information on the status of the broken pier at Scorpion Anchorage on Santa Cruz Island. Mr. Cohen explained some of the potential impacts associated with the damaged pier, both to local businesses as well as to the overall visitor experience at the park and sanctuary, and he shared a related letter from Alex Brodie with Island Packers (enclosed).

As Mr. Cohen highlighted, approximately 80% of all Channel Islands visitors are typically landed at the pier on Scorpion Anchorage, accounting for more than 65,000 passenger arrivals in 2015. We understand that concessioners are now unloading visitors from their vessels onto small inflatable skiffs that transit the surf line and land passengers on the beach at Scorpion Cove. While this option does allow for continued public access, the process is longer and more arduous for those hoping to maximize time in the park and sanctuary. We also learned that you and your staff have been doing everything possible to seek out expedited repairs to the pier, which we acknowledge and appreciate.

Voting members present at our meeting unanimously approved writing to the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to express our support for their involvement in assisting with expedited contracting of repair work. However, upon subsequently learning that the Corps will not be able to get involved in this way, our council's Executive Committee opted to express support directly to you. We wish to underscore the importance of the pier for safe and efficient public access to the park and as an entry point for sanctuary excursions, encourage those involved to continue to pursue expedited repairs, and respectfully request updates from you as the situation progresses. Further, we stand ready to assist with public messaging to continue encouraging visitation, and to help communicate in ways you feel could be helpful. We hope to continue discussions with you at upcoming advisory council meetings.

Sincerely,



Dianne Black, Chair
Sanctuary Advisory Council¹

Enclosures: Council voting record; Letter from Alex Brodie

¹ *The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this letter do not necessarily reflect the position of the sanctuary and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*

Enclosure 1: Voting Record, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, for approval of a letter of support and concern regarding repair of Scorpion Pier, Santa Cruz Island.
March 18, 2016

<u>Voting Seat</u>	<u>Council Representative</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Tourism	Andrea Mills	Absent
	Garrett Kababik – alternate	
Non-Consumptive Recreation	Ben Pitterle	---
	Tony Knight – alternate	Yes
Business	Michael Cohen [Council Secretary]	Yes
	Capt. Kip Louttit – alternate	---
Conservation	Kristi Birney	Yes
	Greg Helms – alternate	---
Commercial Fishing	Stephanie Mutz	Absent
	John Hoadley – alternate	
Recreational Fishing	Capt. David Bacon	---
	Merit McCrea – alternate	---
Education	Amanda Allen	---
	Cliff Rodrigues – alternate	Yes
Research	Dr. Robert Warner	Yes
	Dr. Mark Steele – alternate	---
Public At Large #1	Phyllis Grifman [Council Vice-Chair]	Yes
	Victor Cox – alternate	---
Public At Large #2	Richard Block	Yes
	Eric Kett – alternate	---
Chumash Community	Luhui Isha Ward	Absent
	Mati Waiya – alternate	
NOAA Fisheries	<i>Vacant</i>	Absent
	Shelby Mendez – alternate	
National Park Service	Russell Galipeau	Absent
	<i>Vacant</i>	
US Coast Guard	CDR Casey Hehr	Absent
	LT CMDR Joseph Giammanco – alt.	
Bureau of Ocean Energy Mgmt (BOEM)	Donna Schroeder	Absent
	Dr. Ann Bull – alternate	
Dept. of Defense	John Ugoretz	Yes
	Walt Schobel – alternate	---
CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Dr. Craig Shuman	---
	Julia Coates - alternate	Yes
CA Natural Resources Agency	<i>Vacant</i>	Absent
	Amy Vierra – alternate	
CA Coastal Commission	Dr. Jonna Engel	---
	Molly Troup	Yes
Santa Barbara County	Dianne Black [Council Chair]	Yes
	<i>Vacant</i>	---
Ventura County	Danielle Tarr	Absent
	<i>Vacant</i>	

Yes: 11 No: 0 Abstain: 0

Enclosure 2: Letter from Alex Brodie to Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
March 18, 2016

Dear Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary Counsel members, Superintendent, and Staff:

On behalf of the tourism industry that works within the boundaries of the Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary, I would like to inform you about some of issues that we are currently facing. Last year was one of the most successful in many years. A combination of a strong economy and an ever increasing awareness of the Channel Islands led to a record number of visitors to the Marine Sanctuary.

Unfortunately, we have a much bleaker outlook for this year. A combination of weather, bureaucracy, and deferred maintenance has had a major impact on visitors to the marine sanctuary. Of the six landing sites that are regularly used by Island Packers, only two are currently usable, two offer limited access, and two are completely closed.

In December, large swells generated by El Nino fueled storms caused significant damage to all of the island piers with the exception of the one at Becher's Bay, Santa Rosa. The pier at Prisoner's Harbor, Santa Cruz was damaged, but repaired within 24 hours. Some of the piles at the East Anacapa landing were loosened resulting in limited use. The pier at Scorpion Anchorage, Santa Cruz suffered enough damage that it had to be closed. The landing at Santa Barbara Island has been essentially destroyed.

In addition, the Navy closed San Miguel Island to the public in April 2014 to look for unexploded ordinance. Although the island was declared safe over a year ago, it remains off limits.

The biggest impact to visitors is the pier closure at Scorpion Anchorage. Historically, 80% of the visitors that go ashore at the Channel Islands National Park, land at Scorpion. It is the site of the largest campground in the park, offers miles of hiking, and some of the best sea kayaking. Last year over 65,000 visitors landed there.

The pier at Scorpion Anchorage is actually a used railroad car that was repurposed as a bridge between an offshore rock, and the shore. It was installed as a temporary solution in 2000 with the idea that a proper pier could be built within five years. Currently the replacement pier is undergoing final approval and construction is scheduled to begin in 2018.

Without a usable pier, the only way to put visitors ashore is by using small shore boats or skiffs. This is very labor intensive, time consuming, and has a higher potential for injury than using a pier. We have had to limit the number of visitors that we take to Scorpion to just a fraction of what we usually carry. The limited loads means disappointment for many visitors, as the available spots go quickly. This is especially difficult for those that have traveled long distances to visit the islands. As you may know the Channel Islands are one of the most popular destinations in California for European tourists.

Another group that has been affected is the schools. Each year Island Packers takes approximately 8500 students to the Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary. Because of the difficulty in landing and scheduling that number will be less than half that this year.



In the meantime, the operational costs have doubled. We have had to invest in new skiffs, outboards and associated maintenance. Additional crew is needed, and because of the time involved, our vessels have very limited schedules.

Needless to say the financial impact to the local tourism industry has been significant. Our company is not alone in suffering big losses. Three kayak outfitters operate out of Scorpion, and have seen a large decline in business. Local hotels, shops and restaurants are also being affected.

On a positive note, the personnel at the Channel Islands National Park have been getting creative to come up with a solution to this dilemma. Issues of funding, contracting, regulation, and approval have created a maze that they are slowly but surely navigating with an end goal of having a usable (albeit temporary) pier by summer. As a business owner in the private sector that has to face a formidable amount of regulation and red tape, I have a new found respect for the patience and fortitude it takes to get something done within a government agency.

If you happen to represent one of the many governmental agencies that have jurisdictional authority, please think of the public that is counting on you before tabling a project. If each individual with authorizing ability takes a week to look at an issue, it can delay a project for months, years, or as with the pier replacement project at Scorpion, more than a decade. Also, consider interagency cooperative agreements, or Public-Private Partnerships. Private industry is often much more nimble when it comes to procuring funds, and mobilizing a work force.

As an eternal optimist I am hoping that this issue will help make the public aware of the challenges facing the National Park System. There is currently \$11.93 billion in deferred maintenance projects in the National Park System. These are not improvements for the parks, just necessary, but unfunded maintenance projects. Ironically this is the 100th anniversary of the National Park System, yet funding issues continue to negatively affect the parks, the companies and employees that depend on parks, and of course park visitors. We need to all tell our law makers to support "Americas best idea."

Island Packers has been taking visitors to the Channel Islands long before the National Park or Marine Sanctuary were created. We have seen our share of challenges along the way, and I am sure that we will get through this one. We may have taken a few steps back toward the days when we packed small groups across the channel, but we are still here. There is an advertising slogan currently asking us to "find your park". If your park happens to be surrounded by the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, I hope to see you soon.

Alex Brodie
Island Packers

