

March 1, 2013



Maria Brown, Sanctuary Superintendent
Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
991 Marine Drive
The Presidio
San Francisco, CA 94129



Re: Docket Number NOAA-NOS-2012-0228, Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries Boundary Modification

Dear Superintendent Brown,

Our organizations strongly support the expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary northward to Pt. Arena, and believe it should be further expanded to the Oregon border to encompass the coastal waters of Humboldt, Mendocino, and Del Norte Counties.



Our North Coast region is characterized by broad support for ocean protection. These three counties comprise the only region in California where conservation, fishing, tribal, and recreational interests all supported a single, unified proposal for Marine Protected Areas. Due to our reliance on coastal ecosystems for a healthy, vibrant, environment and economy, North Coast communities are also unified in their desire to protect our coastal ecosystems from the potential impacts of offshore oil drilling.



The northern California coast has four submarine canyons: Trinity, Eel, Mendocino, and Gorda. These areas of consistent upwelling result in extraordinarily high productivity, supporting a tremendous diversity of marine species, including endangered salmon and steelhead, sturgeon, gray whales, great white sharks, orcas, and leatherback turtles, to name a few.

All of California's coastal waters are interconnected and interdependent. Many marine mammals, fishes, and seabirds migrate along the California coast and beyond. The region's plankton and invertebrates upon which all marine life depends are similarly not confined to small regions. Any pollution in ocean waters north of the existing sanctuaries is carried south to within the sanctuaries by the prevailing surface currents.



Unfortunately, individual and cumulative threats to the health of this ocean ecosystem continue to grow. Major threats include sediment contamination, releases of captive-bred salmon, low-level and chronic pollution from multiple sources, conversion of coastal wetlands, fish contamination, and benthic community degradation. Anadromous species are further impacted by habitat degradation, dams, logging, agriculture, urbanization, and polluted runoff.

We the undersigned support expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary to the Oregon border to protect against gas, oil, and mineral development; and maintain water quality, wildlife, and important seafloor habitat. This expansion will ensure our local coast and ocean is protected against pollution, harm to wildlife, and destruction of habitat, while allowing people to enjoy the sanctuary.

Expansion of the National Marine Sanctuary would offer comprehensive and permanent protection for marine resources, large-scale ecosystem management, and submerged cultural resources while allowing tribal, recreational, and fishing activities vital to the North Coast's environment, local economy, and cultural identity.

This region supports important commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism and recreation, and coastal economies that must be protected from oil spills and other forms of water pollution. Strengthening the protections of these critical ecosystems will help to ensure a clean and safe environment for healthy fish stocks to thrive, keeping fisherman and tour operators on the water. The federal oil drilling moratoria of the 1980s have not been renewed, increasing the potential threat of oil spills from oil exploration and development.

We look forward to helping ensure the expansion of these National Marine Sanctuaries to include the coastal waters of Humboldt, Mendocino, and Del Norte Counties.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Rep. Jared Huffman, Second District, California