



July 26, 2017

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

RE: E.O. 13795

- Coyote Point Marina
- Coyote Point Recreation Area
- Crystal Springs Regional Trail
- Devil's Slide Trail
- Edgewood Park & Preserve
- Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- Flood Park
- Friendship Park
- Heritage Grove
- Huddart Park
- Junipero Serra Park
- Memorial Park
- Mirada Surf
- Moss Beach Park
- Pescadero Creek Park
- Pillar Point Marsh
- Quarry Park
- Sam McDonald Park
- San Bruno Mountain Park
- Sanchez Adobe
- San Pedro Valley Park
- Sawyer Camp Trail
- Woodside Store
- Wunderlich Park

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To Whom it may concern:

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation (SMCP Foundation), in San Mateo, California, submits the following comments in response to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Notice of Public Comment on the 'Review of National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine National Monuments Designated or Expanded since April 28, 2007'.

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation's mission is to inspire people to care for, learn about and enjoy San Mateo County Parks. Our park system has 20 parks and regional trails encompassing 17,000 acres. It contains some of the most ecologically-sensitive resources on the Peninsula, as well as many urban recreation areas, and receives over 2.5 million visitors annually.

The coastal parks in the county system are particularly cherished for their inherent beauty, offering guests the opportunity to explore and rekindle their connection to the natural world. In this regard, the SMCP Foundation has grown increasingly concerned over the plans announced last April to potentially reduce the size of the marine sanctuaries in California and elsewhere with the spoken intent of increasing the exposure of offshore areas to oil exploration activities.

The Presidential Executive Order intends to implement an 'America-First Offshore Energy Strategy', and states,

"Increased domestic energy production on Federal lands and waters strengthens the Nation's security and reduces reliance on imported energy. Moreover, low energy prices, driven by an increased American energy supply, will benefit American families and help reinvigorate American manufacturing and job growth."

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation strongly advocates against eliminating or shrinking any marine sanctuary or marine national monument for the following reasons.

Lack of appetite for offshore oil exploration

California has a long history with oil exploration onshore and in the coastal environment. Starting with the Santa Barbara oil disaster in the 1960s, residents have grown leery about both the safety and overall economic feasibility of such efforts. No new offshore oil leases have been granted over several decades and even the few that were

previously outstanding in federal waters have not been acted upon. Given current challenges and economic conditions the possibility of opening up more areas for exploration has not been received with great enthusiasm from the industry. As stated by the president of the Western States Petroleum Association, "I am not aware of any of our members chomping at the bit to pursue the opportunity in California."

National Marine Sanctuary Program a global model

Sixty-five percent of the people living in California reside in coastal counties. Many collectively cheered the past two administrations' efforts to actively expand eleven marine sanctuaries and monuments including four along the California coast. The current proposal reducing these sanctuaries back to 2007 levels in order to foster oil exploration simply goes against what had been a very positive trend. A trend that has helped foster a collective mission around the world resulting in over 13,000 marine protected areas. A trend at the centerpiece of the recently celebrated World's Ocean Day. And a trend highlighted internationally just last month at a major UN conference seeking common ground to further ocean conservation and to create a sustainable relationship with human populations worldwide. The marine sanctuary program developed by the United States has been a powerful role model supporting all of these trends and one that should be allowed to expand, not contract.

Boon to coastal economies

The benefits of the California coastal environment go well beyond the local communities. A NOAA report entitled "The National Significance of California's Coastal Economy" provides many statistical conclusions on the importance of the coast on many levels including the significantly high percentage of jobs tied to the activities along the coast. In one example, another NOAA report states, "In the Monterey Bay area alone, the sanctuaries contribute to a \$3.5-billion tourism economy and more than 35,000 jobs." The NOAA Office of Coastal Management provides similar information and concludes, "Tourism and recreation is the largest employer among California's ocean-dependent economic sectors."

Green energy solutions

Offshore oil exploration also flies in the face of all the progress being made with renewable energy. California has invested heavily in renewables, such as wind and solar power, and is on track to achieve its 50% clean energy target by 2030. Other states and cities are following suit. Massachusetts and Hawaii plan to be 100% renewables-powered by 2035 and 2045 respectively.

Renewable energy provides substantial benefits to our climate, health and economy. It reduces carbon emissions which cause the planet to warm and our weather to change. It also reduces the air and water pollution emitted by coal and natural gas plants that is linked to breathing problems, neurological damage and cancer. And the Department of Energy's [2017 U.S. Energy and Employment Report](#) shows that investing in clean energy is good for the economy, stating impressive figures such as,

"More than 350,000 people last year worked on solar energy production...This is more than 40% of the overall electrical generation workforce and exceeds the combined employment of coal, gas, and oil workers connected with producing electricity that reached just under 200,000."

All of this points to another positive trend that must be allowed to continue: investing in clean energy. There is no need to reduce the size of any marine sanctuary in order to ensure energy security. States and cities throughout the United States are already making progress towards a clean energy future.

Final Words

Congress specifically stated that the purpose of the National Marine Sanctuary System is to conserve areas of the marine environment which are of special national significance and preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures.

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is committed to stewarding our parks for current and future generations to enjoy. This is precisely why the SMCP Foundation is diligent in its efforts to support the highest possible standard for our county parks. And it is why we sincerely support not only the retention of the marine sanctuaries as currently configured, but urge administrators to diligently seek opportunities to expand them further in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Beasley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michele Beasley
Executive Director