

Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center

Sanctuary Advisory Council Working Group Recommendations For the San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center

Background

The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary plans to develop visitor centers in communities up and down the coast within the Sanctuary management boundary. These centers will help to educate visitors about the Sanctuary and its underwater wilderness. The San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center will specifically highlight the bathymetry, geography and ocean currents that together create the unique biodiversity and special places of the San Mateo Coast. Ano Nuevo, Pescadero Marsh, Mavericks, Deep Reef, Moss Beach, Pillar Point Harbor, Princeton Marsh, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and the old growth redwood forests are just a few of the distinctive spots that collectively provide one of the most scenic and biologically rich coastlines in this country. The Sanctuary's goals for the San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center include integrating:

- ❖ Dynamic stories of real places along the San Mateo County Coast.
- ❖ Visitor services that promote local, real-life, sustainable practices.
- ❖ Collaborations that nurture a coastal "blue-green" economy.
- ❖ Opportunities to learn more about oceans, coasts and watersheds.
- ❖ Forums for community participation in marine stewardship programs.
- ❖ Experiences to build ocean literacy and inspire an ocean conservation ethic.

Sanctuary Advisory Council Working Group Planning Process and Community Outreach

The Coastside Visitor Center planning effort was undertaken in 2009. The Working Group chaired by Bob Breen met five times over the course of the year. The Working Group was comprised of eighteen members representing coastal businesses, local nonprofit groups, government organizations and members of the Sanctuary Advisory Council (*See Appendix A – Working Group Roster*).

During the course of the five meetings, the Working Group identified broad interpretive themes, messages and educational topics to guide the development of the San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center. The Working Group developed criteria to aid in selecting a site and identified minimum building requirements necessary for supporting the educational and outreach functions of the visitor center.

Sanctuary staff and the Working Group hosted a community workshop in the fall to gather additional feedback from coastal residents and business owners. In addition to general publicity about the meeting, Working Group members identified stakeholders who they felt would be particularly interested in the plan and to whom individual notices were delivered (*See Appendix B – Stakeholder Roster*). Each of these reviews provided additional opportunities for refinement of the recommendations for the development of the San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center. Summaries of each meeting were created to capture public input (*See Appendix C – Meeting Outcome Summaries*). The Coastside Visitor Center Recommendations will be forwarded to the Sanctuary Advisory Council for action on December 10, 2009.

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Sanctuary Advisory Council Working Group Recommendations for the San Mateo Coastside Visitor Center:

Main Interpretive Theme:

Mountains to Mavericks & Beyond

Gulf of the Farallones Oceanographic Ecosystem and its Communities

The Coastside Visitor Center theme “Mountains to Mavericks” captures the important land-sea connection that is critical to the health of our ocean. This theme allows the audience to comprehend and appreciate the interconnectedness of the landscape from the Coast Range Mountains to the internationally famous Mavericks surf spot and beyond. Programs and exhibits will provide interpretation of sanctuary habitats and wildlife as well as nurture sustainable fishing, farming, and eco-tourism. Visitors will be encouraged to support Sanctuary and partner stewardship projects and to share conservation messages with family and friends.

Interpretive Messages to be interwoven throughout the exhibits and education programs:

- Conservation & Stewardship
- Climate Change
- Local Sustainable Practices & Communities
- Current Science & Implications

Interpretive Topics:

- Ocean Upwelling, Geography & Weather
 - Mavericks, Fog, etc.
- Coastal and Open Ocean Marine Life
 - Biodiversity, Unique Species, Seasonal Migrations, etc.
- Current Science and Implications
 - Climate Change Impacts including Sea Level Rise, Ocean Acidification, etc.
- Conservation and Stewardship
 - Land Based Impacts on Sea, Watershed Restoration, Marine Debris, Partnership Coastal Sustainability
- Coastal Sustainability and Communities
 - Ocean Habitats, Fishing, Agriculture and Small Businesses
- Recreation and Eco-Tourism
 - Ocean Access, Coastal Exploration, Maritime History
- Seasonal Events
 - Harbor Seal Pupping, Arrival of the Blue Whales
- Special Places
 - Pillar Point Harbor, Moss Beach, Deep Reef, Farallon Islands

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Building Setting, Requirements and Site Selection Criteria:

➤ **Visitor Center Setting**

- Ocean View
- Sanctuary Inspired Setting
- Access to Saltwater for Maintaining Live Exhibits
- Walking Distance to Field Trip Sites – Beach, Marsh or Rocky Shore
- Visitation Creates Synergy with Area Businesses to Support Local Economy
- High Foot Traffic Area
- High Visibility from Roads
- Adjacent to Other Facilities that Attract Visitation
- Access to Coastal Trail
- Available 24 Hours a Day, If Required for Special Programs

➤ **Building Requirements**

- Rooms Suitable Size for Teaching School Groups of 20-30 Students
- Laboratory Space for Teaching
- Office Space for Staff
- Accommodates School and Tourist Bus Access
- Meeting Space for Community Groups
- Adequate Parking
- On-site Restrooms
- Green Construction Methods and Materials
- Exterior Space for Outdoor Exhibits
- Potential for Expansion, If Desired

➤ **Potential Sites Considered for the Visitor Center**

- Pillar Point Harbor
- Other Buildings along the San Mateo Coast such as former Chart House, former Miramar Art Gallery and present day Crab Landing Restaurant
- Downtown Half Moon Bay

➤ **Potential Satellite Exhibit Locations**

- Pillar Point Harbor Site
- Coastal Trail Sites
- Mavericks Area
- Downtown Half Moon Bay Sites
- San Mateo County Beaches
- Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

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Appendices available upon request:

Appendix A – Working Group Roster

Appendix B – Stakeholder Roster

Appendix C – Potential Visitor Center and Satellite Exhibit Ranking Chart

Appendix D – Meeting Outcome Summaries

 April Meeting

 May Meeting

 June Meeting

 September Meeting

 October Meetings

Appendix E – October Public Comments