



Media Contact:
Mary Jane Schramm
415/ 561-6622 x205, Cell 415/ 517-83551

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Sarah Marquis
949/ 222-2212

Bay Area Marine Sanctuaries Release Climate Change Impacts Report

Sanctuary advisory councils from NOAA Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries have released a climate change impacts report as the first step of planned sanctuary climate change action plans. "Climate Change Impacts: Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries" was released to the public at California Academy of Sciences Planetarium on June 3, followed by panel discussion with some of the report's authors.

The report, authored by a working group of the Farallones and Cordell Bank marine sanctuary advisory councils, provides a foundation of information for climate change action plans that will be developed for these sanctuaries. It is the outcome of a year and a half of intensive collaboration among local experts representing 16 agencies, organizations, and academic institutions. Existing observations and science-based expectations were used to identify an extensive suite of potential climate change impacts to habitats, plants, and animals within the San Francisco Bay Area's unique ocean and coastal zones.

Key issues identified include an observed increase in sea level as recorded at the mouth of San Francisco Bay; extreme weather events (winds, waves, storms) and resultant coastal erosion; an increase in ocean acidity and more extreme weather patterns. Bay area roadways and sewage systems have been flooded by unusually heavy rainfall. It is noted that some animals, such as Humboldt squid, gray whales, and bottlenose dolphins have experienced a northward shift, which can affect other species in their changing range. In the case of the gray whales, they now must travel much farther north and longer to find food.

The authors also made recommendations for future action for sanctuary management, including focus on public education, information gathering, policy and management strategies. Scientists, educators, public relations specialists, and natural resource managers will continue to work together to outline regional next steps forward from the release of the Climate Change Impacts Report.

The Climate Change Impacts Report is available at <http://farallones.noaa.gov/eco/climate/climate.html>. Kelley Higgason is Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Climate Initiative Coordinator (Kelley.higgason@noaa.gov.)

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