

See May 21, 2020 Meeting Highlights for additional account of verbal member reports provided during the meeting.

## **Member Reports 5-21-20**

### **Sarah Bates, Commercial Fishing**

Commercial salmon season is open. Fishing has been slow and the price started extremely low. Seafood markets have traditionally been dominated by the restaurant industry; buyers and processors are scrambling to identify alternative and new markets. Demand appears to remain high, but previous logistic systems have been unable to respond quickly. We've seen lots of whales and sharks this year, which is a good indication of feed abundance.

Recreational salmon season is also open, but charter boats are not permitted to operate due to viral transmission concerns.

Commercial Dungeness crab season closed May 15. The Working Group identified conditions and whale concentrations likely to contribute to whale entanglement. Crab gear should be out of the water by midnight, May 15.

Commercial crabbers in several ports, including Half Moon Bay and San Francisco within the GFNMS, are conducting gear retrieval projects to remove any untended gear from the ocean.

There have been no confirmed entanglements with California commercial Dungeness crab gear during the 2019-20 fishing season. There were 7 confirmed entanglements with unidentified gear in 2020 to date.

Fishing Vessel Blind Faith ran aground on May 10, north of Point Bonita. The boat was a total loss, the captain was rescued by USCG.

### **Nancy Trissel, CAL Sonoma Mendocino**

On 8 May 2020, the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Transportation Commission awarded Redwood Coast Land Conservancy \$845,000 toward the purchase of the 113 acre Mill Bend property, located at the mouth of the Gualala River.

RCLC has applied for a total of \$2.1M in grants and has a private pledge of \$300k to match 1:1 for community fundraising efforts toward the \$600k goal for stewardship, a requirement to qualify for the grants. The grants will be used to repay the Allemall Foundation (the conservation buyer) and to plan for habitat restoration and public access improvements. This project will go a long way to protect these wetlands and estuary and to educate the public.

My husband and I have taken on performing weekly bird surveys to document resident, nesting and migrating visitors. What a treat that has been during this time of Shelter in Place! Our data is recorded in eBird.

## **Francesca Koe, Conservation**

- GFA is doing a lot of contingency planning to respond to COVID.
- Seeking both NOAA approval and GFA Board approval for restarting field work where safe and feasible.
- GFA qualified for a PPP loan and are awaiting Board approval. Very helpful for keeping staff going.
- Deb and staff have really pivoted to online program delivery, developing new curriculum.
- Kelp a project we should support: [www.thelastforestsproject.com](http://www.thelastforestsproject.com)

and the book coming from Smithsonian in October (curated by the NMSF) is: Amazing Ocean: Exploring the National Marine Sanctuaries

## **Richard Charter, Conservation**

*Richard Charter: Member Report to GFSAC May 9, 2020*

In the Sonoma Coast portion of the GFSAC, during the pandemic shelter-in-place order, party-boat sportfishing charters have not been operating until this week, while all public beaches in our State and County Parks and all of their beaches have remained closed throughout the duration of the County of Sonoma “Shelter in Place” Public Health Order. A range of our local wildlife has become less timid during this interval in the absence of human outdoor recreation, with gulls and other seabirds more visible than usual on land-connected coastal rocks and even on beaches. Commercial fishing and crab fishing have continued throughout the pandemic shutdown as essential activities, with lights on boats clearly visible at night and nearshore crab floats apparent during the daytime. Meanwhile, in Washington DC, several federal agencies have been very busy during the shutdown, using the media focus on the pandemic as cover to accelerate the Administration’s ongoing rollback of key environmental policies and regulations and even conducting an Outer Continental Shelf offshore oil and gas drilling lease sale at bargain basement prices in the midst of an oil glut. Under the guise of COVID-19, the Environmental Protection Agency has put in place a blanket policy that states that the agency does not intend to penalize for a number of violations, including compliance monitoring, integrity testing, sampling, and has EPA lifted certain reporting obligations. The Administration has also been rescinding auto emission standards, loosening important controls on toxic coal ash, and relaxing restrictions on mercury emissions. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, NEPA wetlands rules, and the Arctic Refuge all are under increased attack. Pending economic bailouts for the oil and gas industry, which had been requesting lease extensions, royalty forgiveness, and other financial aid, have instead been limited to granting oil companies the ability to store cheaply-acquired oil in the National Strategic Petroleum Reserve to sell back to the public after oil prices recover, arranging favorable loan terms to try to bail out struggling petroleum companies, and “case-by-case” consideration by the Interior Department of other rescue requests from various petroleum industry players. With virtually all oil storage in global markets at capacity in the context of Saudi-Soviet Union overproduction, and amidst diminished demand due to COVID-19, a host of laden oil tankers has backing up in Southern California waters and elsewhere. Related to the GFNMS waters, the USFWS has been seeking an early agenda item from the California Coastal Commission for reconsideration of the necessary federal consistency determination that would grant state approval to their proposed Southeast Farallones Island Brodifacoum poison drop. The unanticipated sudden transition to online hearing formats

by the Coastal Commission necessitated by the pandemic has sensitized the Commission to the uncertainties of taking up controversial items in a virtual online meeting format. This concern over what will almost certainly be a very controversial agenda item has delayed the calendaring of this topic from what had been originally planned for the Commission's now-cancelled "in-person" June 2020 meeting in Rohnert Park, pushing consideration of this item back to what will likely be a "virtual" meeting, still to be scheduled later in the summer or fall of this year, at the earliest. At same time, a major national controversy has arisen over whether or not the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) can legally limit testimony to only online public comments about their pending controversial hydrocarbon lease sales in various states, so the conduct of "virtual" meetings on issues of public interest is presently coming under increasing scrutiny amidst a push for congressional intervention in the use of online-only public comment formats.

### **Bruce Bowser, Conservation**

- **Bolinas Beach Closed. Agate Beach Closed. Palo Marin Beaches Closed.**

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, Marin County office of Health & Human Services ordered all parks closed and therefore parking around parks were barricaded and taped off. Brick 'n Mortar bathrooms were locked and porta-potties brought in. Highway electronic signs along the Lagoon informing that BEACHES CLOSED. Agate Beach County Park was closed and therefore I personally did not do 3 tidepool excursions during low tide events in March, April and May. Education lost, trampling prevented.

- **Environmental Action Committee, Waters Committee Meeting.**

May 13 First Virtual meeting. 5 in attendance. Attendees from Santa Cruz to Inverness.

Items of discussion were Climate change and impacts to Freshwater. A groundwater report. A discussion on what is going on in a Healthy Tomales Bay Watershed. An update on Tomales Bay aquaculture activities. EAC staff virtually attend Fish & Game Commission Marine Resources meetings that were held March 17 and April 29. A Coastal Development Permit (CDP) Guidance Draft is in the works. Tomales Bay Oyster Co. CDP lease 430-05 is being monitored.

There was discussion of SB 1093 and AB 2370. There is ongoing monitoring of a lease proposal by Brodsky for increased aqua-culture use of tidal land holdings.

There was broad discussion of vast numbers of tourists coming to the coast and encountering restrictive parking, locked restrooms, restaurants closed and generally nowhere to relieve their biological needs. This is a huge concern!!

- **It has been a year since the State of the Bolinas Lagoon**, a public symposium which was held May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 in Stinson Beach. An annual report to coastal residents about projects affecting the Lagoon. The best attended meeting to date. Presently, there are many projects around the lagoon that have peaked local interest. My constituents eagerly await the next informative meeting.

- **West Marin Whale Watch**

A Stinson Beach couple with a birds eye view, started a warning system for whale sightings in Bolinas Bay. If you are in the neighborhood 1 415 868 6264 to register, just text “subscribe” A offer to both report and be informed.

### Gerry McChesney, USFWS

- Staff from Point Blue Conservation Science are remaining on Southeast Farallon Island, Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, although in reduced capacity, as essential personnel for island stewardship. They also are still conducting certain monitoring and research activities.
- Seabird monitoring on the Farallon Islands is showing this to be an early breeding season. Two species, the Cassin’s Auklet and Pigeon Guillemot, set record early egg-lay dates. Early breeding is typically indicative of favorable ocean conditions for raising young. The auklet mainly feeds on krill, while the guillemot feeds mainly on small rocky reef fish such as juvenile rockfish and juvenile sculpin. Interestingly, sea surface temperatures at the island were near normal for April (mean of 12.08 °C, 0.4°C above average). In most early and highly productive breeding seasons, SSTs are colder.
- Two new moorings were deployed off SE Farallon Island on April 7 by the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *George Cobb*. These moorings are co-owned by USFWS and GFNMS, and are only for official work servicing the Refuge and Sanctuary. One old mooring was retrieved. The other mooring buoy was lost in heavy seas last year. The moorings were deployed under the Sanctuary Manager’s permit.
- The coastal consistency determination proceedings for the South Farallon Islands house mouse eradication project has been postponed while the California Coastal Commission works out details of conducting upcoming meetings virtually.
- USFWS and Humboldt State University (HSU) conduct the monitoring/surveillance component of the Seabird Protection Network, of which the GFNMS conducts the outreach/education component. The start of 2020 monitoring/surveillance work has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, HSU is now preparing to resume work at the Devil’s Slide site near Pacifica.
- In other matters, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council is increasing allowable incidental bycatch of shortbelly rockfish (*Sebastes jordani*) in commercial trawl fisheries north of 40°10’ N. latitude (near Punta Gorda, Humboldt County, California). The core of this species range is within GFNMS and MBNMS, where it (especially the juveniles) is an incredibly important prey species for seabirds, salmon, and other predators. In just the last few years, large numbers of shortbelly rockfish have been caught as bycatch in trawl fisheries, especially for Pacific whiting, north of 40°10’ N. latitude as far north as Washington. As described in their Draft EA titled Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery 2021-2022 Harvest Specifications and Management Measures (March 2020), this change is likely a “result of a climate change-driven distributional shift and/or the effect of large recruitments.”  
See <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2020/04/april-2020-decision-document.pdf/>

If a distributional shift of shortbelly rockfish results in this species moving out of central California waters, it could have dramatic impacts on the local marine ecosystem. This should be watched closely.

## Research Activities – GFNMS Advisory Council – 21 May 2020

John Largier & Jaime Jahncke

### General comments

Most field research has been dormant since March 2020.

### ACCESS cruises

May cruise canceled.

July and September cruises still in the works, waiting for NOAA guidance.

### Farallon Islands

Operations on the island continue with a reduced crew focused on priority datasets due to COVID-19. Earliest year on record for [Cassin's auklets](#) and [pigeon guillemot](#) breeding.

### CeNCOOS activities

Ongoing shore stations (Bodega Head, Fort Point, Santa Cruz Wharf) and offshore moored sensors (Bodega Head, Tomales Bay Hog Island & Inverness, Cordell Bank, Monterey Bay).

Ongoing surface current mapping (HF Radar).

Glider deployed on Stewarts Point line in December – new development.

But recovered in March and not yet replaced (waiting until COVID allows operations).

### Specific studies

- Helen Killeen at BML on nearshore fronts and plankton/larvae: on hold.
- Coastal Oceanography Group at BML on wave energy at beaches in Tomales Bay.

### Reports & papers published

Need to reach out and list papers/reports by others as well!

- Krause, J.W., M.A. Brzezinski, J.L. Largier, H.M. McNair, M. Maniscalco, K.D. Bidle, A.E. Allen, K. Thamatrakoln, 2020. The interaction of physical and biological factors drives phytoplankton spatial distribution in the northern California Current. *Limnology & Oceanography*, doi.org/10.1002/lno.11431
- Largier, J.L. 2020. Upwelling bays: How coastal upwelling controls circulation, habitat and productivity in bays. *Annual Review of Marine Science*, 12, doi.org/10.1146/annurev-marine-010419-011020
- Largier, J., D. Behrens, K. Hewett, M. Koohafkan, M. Robart, D. Dann, R. Roettger, 2020. Managing the mouth of the Russian River Estuary, California. In: *Complex Coastal Systems – Transdisciplinary Learning on International Case Studies*. J.Slinger, S. Taljaard, F. d'Hont (eds), Delft Academic Press, pp 71-86

### Workshops/conferences past

- OSM Ocean Sciences Meeting, San Diego, February 2020 – major biennial meeting. See <https://www.agu.org/Ocean-Sciences-Meeting>

### Workshops/conferences in the future

Summer meetings have been cancelled, and fall/winter meetings on hold pending COVID.

- EPOC Eastern Pacific Oceanography Conference, September 2020 – planning contingent on COVID matters. See <http://www.easternpacificoceanconference.org>
- Anticipate convening a Beyond Golden Gate Symposium in 2021 (Jan Roletto et al)

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Anticipate convening a Beyond Golden Gate Symposium in 2021 (Jan Roletto et al)



## MEMORANDUM

16004  
22 May 2020

From: L.K. Crusius, LCDR  
District Eleven Living Marine Resources

Reply to: [Lee.k.Crusius@uscg.mil](mailto:Lee.k.Crusius@uscg.mil)  
Attn of: LMR Analyst

To: M. Brown  
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent

Subj: US Coast Guard Member Report 21 May 2020

Ref: (a) Coast Guard Operations and Federal Marine Protected Area Programs,  
COMDTINST 16004.4A  
(b) US Coast Guard Operation Ocean Steward  
(c) National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Implementation Handbook

1. This memorandum is the US Coast Guard report to the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary for the period of 18 February to 21 May 2020. The following are items of significance:

- a. Operational Hours: In Q2 of FY20, the US Coast Guard executed 54 dedicated ONMS overflight hours with an additional 36 ancillary flights in GFNMS. To date in Q3, 40 dedicated ONMS overflight hours with an additional 62 ancillary hours.
- b. COVID-19 Restrictions: As of the date of this memorandum, the US Coast Guard is not restricting access for commercial fishing or recreational boaters in California. The Coast Guard currently has no stance on restriction of access to Sanctuary or navigable waters regarding COVID-19.
- c. Memorandum of Agreement (MOU): On 15 April 2020, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Coast Guard entered into an enforcement agreement that expands partnership capability under *state assistance* for state Marine Protected Areas.

2. The May virtual council meeting was attended by LCDR Lee Crusius and LT Jacob Joseph.

3. The contents of this memorandum are authorized for release by the Greater Farallones Sanctuary Council.

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