

OUR



Monterey Bay
National Marine
Sanctuary Foundation

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION

REPORT

2023

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Monterey Bay
National Marine
Sanctuary Foundation

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS), a crown jewel of marine conservation, stretches 276 miles along California's coast and encompasses 6,094 square miles of ocean. Since its designation in 1992, it has become a sanctuary not just in name but in action. Home to an astounding array of marine life, including 180 species of seabirds and shorebirds, 36 marine mammal species, and over 525 fish species, MBNMS showcases biodiversity at its finest. The sanctuary features unique environments such as lush kelp forests and the Monterey Canyon, which plunges deeper than the Grand Canyon. Over 31 years, it has become a pivotal center for resource protection, pioneering research, and educational initiatives, striking a crucial balance between the power of preservation and the harmony of human activity.



Photo: Mike Johnson

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, a chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, is the local nonprofit partner of MBNMS and its chief advocate. Formed in 2017, we are the only organization dedicated solely to supporting the MBNMS waters, both through advocacy and by actively raising funds to finance vital sanctuary projects and programs.



MESSAGE FROM CHAPTER DIRECTOR

This summer, we experienced the hottest days ever recorded, and our coastlines were battered by king tides and powerful surges. What does this mean for our marine sanctuary - home to so many special creatures like endangered whales, sea otters, black abalone, and kelp forests? What does it mean for coastal communities who live, recreate, and are sustained by our waters?

Faced with formidable challenges like climate change, pollution, kelp forest degradation, and species extinction, our work at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is more crucial than ever.

This year, in collaboration with our parent Foundation and our NOAA site partners, we have mobilized millions of dollars for critical initiatives. We are tackling large marine debris removal, facilitating whale rescues, and engaging thousands in sanctuary stewardship through STEM education and outdoor activities. Our innovative approaches include developing new fishing gear to prevent whale entanglements, preventing ship strikes, and expanding educational outreach, particularly to underserved communities.

Strategic partnerships, such as with Santa Cruz METRO's "One Ride at a Time" and "Regenerative Monterey," underscore our dedication to sustainable ocean solutions. This report showcases our combined efforts and the strength of our partnerships in safeguarding our sanctuary.

Your support is indispensable in these efforts. Together, we're creating a future where our oceans and all who depend on them thrive.

Thank you,

Ginaia Kelly

Chapter Director, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation



Photo: Kevin Painchaud

OUR IMPACT: PROTECTING WILDLIFE



26

whale disentanglement responders trained



6094

square miles of MBNMS added to Vessel Speed Reduction Zones



11

volunteer naturalists trained



36+

shipping lines enrolled in the "Protecting Blue Whales, Blue Skies," program

SAVING OCEAN GIANTS

In the waters of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, more than twelve species of whales and porpoises play a pivotal role in our marine ecosystem. Each whale, an essential apex predator, contributes significantly to our environment by sequestering over 33 tons of CO₂ in their lifetime and nurturing healthy plankton populations. Despite their importance, these majestic creatures face daily threats from fishing gear entanglement, marine debris, ship strikes, noise pollution, and climate change. In 2022 alone, we recorded 12 whale entanglements.

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is dedicated to safeguarding these ocean giants. We actively support whale disentanglement initiatives, funding rescue vessels and providing training for rescuers. Collaborating with community organizations and governmental agencies, we invest in research, promote safer shipping practices, and pioneer gear innovations to prevent whale entanglements, ensuring both marine life protection and the vitality of local fisheries. Our commitment is unwavering in protecting these vital members of our marine sanctuary.

WILDLIFE GUARDIANS

Our on-going support of the Team OCEAN program plays a crucial role in protecting wildlife. This innovative program deploys trained volunteer docents directly within sanctuary's waters, where they interact with visitors and ocean-goers. These volunteers embark on kayaks, educating the public on responsible practices to safeguard sensitive wildlife, effectively preventing disturbances, and fostering a culture of respect and stewardship.



Trained rescuers disentangling a whale Photo: D. Goley under MMHSRP Permit #18786



Team OCEAN in action Photo: Amity Wood

OUR IMPACT: PROTECTING HABITATS

MARINE DEBRIS REMOVAL

Action: This year, the Foundation kicked off a multi-year campaign to remove hundreds of tons of large debris, such as abandoned and derelict vessels, a wrecked airplane, and derelict fishing gear in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and four other national marine sanctuaries. This work requires highly coordinated teamwork, technical expertise, and community support to remove items that have been plaguing our ocean, in some cases, for decades. We are ready to work with NOAA and our on-the-ground partners to tackle the problem head-on and clean up these treasured waters.

Prevention: We also prioritize prevention, recognizing the importance of intercepting debris before it impacts the ocean. Our beach cleanups, in collaboration with groups like the Santa Cruz Warriors and the Women's CLUB of Silicon Valley, go beyond mere cleaning. They are educational and empowering experiences, fostering a sense of responsibility and proactive conservation.

KELP FOREST PROTECTION

In 2023, the Foundation made strides in kelp habitat conservation and restoration, focusing on awareness and strategic planning. Central to these efforts was our investment in an intern to gather data and conduct educational outreach. Additionally, partnerships with organizations like Above-Below and our sponsorship of events like the "kelp!" art exhibit at Post Ranch Inn, helped make kelp conservation science engaging and accessible, highlighting the ecological significance of kelp forests. These initiatives, combined with our work alongside NOAA and the Sanctuary Advisory Council, are creating a solid foundation for a comprehensive strategy to tackle kelp forest challenges to come.



Sea Anemone under kelp forest Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Photo: Chad King



31

wildlife disturbances
prevented by Team OCEAN



69

disturbances observed
(sea otters & harbor seals)



4,182

Team OCAEN
on-the-water contacts



OUR

"I'm so glad we could come back, this was my favorite field trip last year!"

ALEXANDRIA POORE,
Teacher at Watsonville
Charter School of the Arts

EDUCATION: CULTIVATING OCEAN STEWARDS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

At the core of our educational mission, the Foundation actively nurtures a new generation of ocean guardians through our elementary school programs. We focus on sparking curiosity and understanding in young minds, particularly reaching out to underserved children in inland communities like Watsonville and Salinas. Our efforts include funding educators who bring the wonders of the ocean into the classroom, creating a vivid and engaging learning environment.

The journey of discovery extends beyond classroom walls. We facilitate field trips to the Sanctuary Exploration Center (SEC) in Santa Cruz, where students dive into hands-on, immersive experiences. Here, they explore the sanctuary's edge, conduct water and mussel sampling, and tour the SEC exhibits, gaining a first-hand understanding of the ocean's ecosystems.

Post-visit, our educators revisit classrooms to reinforce and integrate the field experiences with the curriculum. Through these initiatives, we're not just teaching about the ocean; we're inspiring a lifelong connection to and stewardship of our marine world.



2,100

elementary school
students reached



12

schools visited in Santa
Cruz and Monterey Counties



1,550

students participating in
field trips to SEC



Hands-on learning during Sanctuary field trips Photo: Amity Wood/NOAA

EDUCATION: **ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT & EMPOWERING FUTURE SCHOLARS**

SANCTUARY EXPLORATION CENTER UPGRADES

The Sanctuary Exploration Center in Santa Cruz, a beacon of marine education, attracts up to 150,000 visitors annually with its state-of-the-art exhibits and interactive displays. In 2023, with the Foundation's support, the Center introduced a new watershed exhibit and tidepool corner, along with advanced media players for existing displays. Additionally, we funded a comprehensive workshop to plan future enhancements addressing marine issues, showcasing changing ocean conditions, and suggesting ways visitors can contribute to sanctuary preservation.

COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Our Foundation recognizes the importance of nurturing the next generation of marine conservationists. In 2023, we provided stipends for college interns in fields like Communications, Habitat Data Analysis, Marketing, and ADA Website Compliance. These internships offered invaluable, hands-on experience in sanctuary conservation and science, welcoming a diverse group of young adults into the world of marine stewardship. Through these opportunities, we're cultivating a skilled and passionate community committed to the future of our oceans.

"This internship provided me with the skills and knowledge... to feel more confident in my pursuit of a career in science communication with a focus on marine life."



LILA LUTHY,
Kelp Research Intern with
NOAA MBNMS



Sanctuary Exploration Center presentation Photo: NOAA



Foundation interns Photo: Mason Kelly

OUR

"I pledge to recycle
to protect the
animals in the sea
and their habitats,"



DEVIN SWEETNEY,
Assistant Coach
Santa Cruz Warriors
Basketball Organization,
inspired by his Sanctuary
Warriors Day.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT **CELEBRATING ACTION & CREATING EXPERIENCES**

FUNDRAISING EVENTS AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

The Foundation hosted several events that highlight our commitment to engaging the community in meaningful and educational experiences, fostering a collective spirit of marine stewardship.

- **Sea Star Celebration:** The 5th annual "Sea Stars" fundraising event recognized five extraordinary people doing extraordinary things in sanctuary research, conservation and protection while also raising nearly \$150,000 for sanctuary programs. Hosted by Clint Eastwood and Board Member Christina Sandera, this sold-out gala brought together community leaders, celebrities, and conservationists for an unforgettable evening.
- **Movie Night:** Our Valentine's Day free movie event at the Sanctuary Exploration Center was a family-friendly affair. Visitors enjoyed the Monterey Bay episode of "Our Great National Parks," and "Finding Dory," gaining a fun and educational insight into California's coast and marine biodiversity.
- **Sanctuary Warriors Scavenger Hunt:** The Foundation hosted our partners, the Santa Cruz Warriors Basketball organization, in an interactive scavenger hunt, sanctuary tour, program, and lunch. Basketball players from around the country got hands-on experience with the local marine ecosystem, including encounters with a blue whale skeleton and marine life like otters, sea anemones, and leopard sharks. It was an opportunity for them to understand and commit to being "sanctuary warriors," using their platform to promote sanctuary conservation.



The 2023 Sea Star Honorees from left: Chris Scholin, Dionne Ybarra, Dave Feliz, Henry Ruhl, Pieter Folkens Photo: Clara Mokri



Sanctuary Warriors basketball players Photo: Seymour Marine Discovery Center

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT **STRENGTHENING IMPACT**

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND SPONSORSHIPS

- Our commitment to enhancing marine conservation was amplified through strategic partnerships and sponsorships. We proudly sponsored key events like “Whalefest Monterey” and the “kelp!” art exhibit at Post Ranch Inn. “Whalefest” brings together a symposium of world-renowned marine experts, music, dance, photography, and fun activities like the Abalone Races every year during this free two-day festival.
- Our collaboration extended to forging new initiatives with partners such as Santa Cruz METRO, Regenerative Monterey, RangeRover, Calif Water Services, and Bay Federal Credit Union. A highlight was the “One Ride at a Time” program with METRO, transforming every bus ride in Santa Cruz County into a contribution towards protecting our unique marine and terrestrial biodiversity. This innovative campaign, which began in January 2023, leverages METRO’s rider loyalty program to provide donations for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and other nonprofit organizations, illustrating how everyday actions can have a profound impact on environmental conservation.

“Partnering with the MBNMS Foundation on METRO’s ‘One Ride at a Time’ program has given our riders the opportunity to protect the place they call home. Each ride on our buses contributes to saving our ocean, one ride at a time. It’s a powerful reminder that collective, everyday actions can have a profound impact on marine conservation, from protecting a single whale to preserving entire ecosystems.”



MICHAEL TREE,
CEO/General Manager,
Santa Cruz METRO



OUR

Our mission is to leave a thriving Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to future generations by protecting wildlife and biodiversity, raising sanctuary visibility and awareness, and inspiring the public to be its stewards.

MISSION STATEMENT
Monterey Bay National
Marine Sanctuary
Foundation

OUTREACH **SPREADING THE SANCTUARY MESSAGE**

RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH MEDIA

In 2023, the Foundation's outreach focused on raising awareness about Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. We combined traditional and digital platforms to explain the sanctuary's significance and encourage community support and protection. Our communication modes included a regular blog series, articles in newspapers like the Santa Cruz Sentinel and Monterey Herald, and features in magazines such as Newsweek and Carmel Magazine. We also reached audiences through television and radio interviews, sharing compelling stories about the sanctuary.

Additionally, our presence in film festivals and panel discussions facilitated in-depth conversations about marine conservation. We extended our outreach through tabling events, engaging directly with the community, and offering personal interactions to educate and inspire sanctuary stewardship. These varied channels enabled us to connect with diverse audiences, effectively spreading the message of conservation and nurturing a broad-based commitment to this invaluable marine environment.



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2023 Foundation Board of Trustees (not pictured Gordon Eubanks) Photo: Clara Mokri



Foundation Co-Chair, Leon Panetta with Clint Eastwood at 2023 Sea Stars Celebration Photo: David Poznic



Haben Girma and J. Nichols at the 2023 Sea Stars Celebration Photo: Clara Mokri



Photo credit: Claire Fackler

SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION AND YOUR LOCAL MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

At the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, we believe that protecting our local sanctuary is not just a responsibility but a collective privilege.

By donating today, you become integral to our commitment to safeguarding species and their habitats to ensure a thriving and resilient Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary for future generations. With your generosity, we can protect one of the biologically most diverse ecosystems on the planet, which by extension, improves the health of our planet. Together, we can build a future where marine life thrives, our coast flourishes, and our ocean remains a source of wonder and inspiration for all.

Make a lasting impact on the future of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

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to 44-321

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Monterey Bay
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
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For more information or for assistance in making a donation, please email Ginaia@MarineSanctuary.org.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, a chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.



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