

May 2, 2016, oc050216.mp3
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Update
Jennifer Stock, Mary Jane Schramm

Jennifer Stock: This is Jennifer Stock. So we're going to transition here to talk a bit with Mary Jane Schramm. Thanks for calling in today to Ocean Currents. We have about 10 minutes or so, but I know there's lots to talk about. Mary Jane Schramm is the media liaison with the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, which is the sanctuary right off the coast of here at Point Reyes, right along the coast all the way up from Marin County to Point Arena. And Mary Jane there is a lot going on, why don't we start off with the public comment period that is going on right now with both the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

Mary Jane Schramm: Okay. Well, what is happening is, scoping is starting. Scoping is a process of opinion from citizens who think of an issue. And in this particular case, the coast guard has requested NOAA which is the national oceanic administration which we refer to as NOAA, that they be exempted from discharge regulations that the sanctuary has put in place. It's just for two vessels that ordinarily are patrolling within the sanctuary and carrying out exercises. The exemption would apply to all US Coast Guard vessels in the areas of Farallones and Cordell National Marine Sanctuary. But, it's mainly the two vessels that are here all times. So what we wanted to do is to hold public meetings, in addition to taking comments enlightening the people who have concerns around the issue of discharge and what would be going into the water. And what activities the Coast Guard is already carrying out in order to maintain their work as well as do exercises and trainings to maintain mission preparedness. So they're asking permission to discharge untreated vessel sewage and that the grey water that does not meet the definition of clean as defined by the federal water pollution control act. And then also, revenue from ammunition and pyrotechnics, which are flares, materials used in trainings and exercises for the use of force, if that should be necessary for search and rescue activities. To see if this is a core for the Coast Guard mission with all the activities going on within the sanctuary and the adjacent waters as well. And we should note that in addition to the traditional coast guard activities, they also assist the sanctuaries in enforcement of sanctuary regulations. So there is a direct tie in to the sanctuary's mission resource protection here.

Jennifer Stock: We were just talking about two vessels in the sanctuaries of the coast that were looking at giving comments on it.

May 2, 2016, oc050216.mp3
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Jennifer Stock, Mary Jane Schramm

Mary Jane Schramm: Yes, on a regular basis. There could be other coast guard vessels in the area and the exception would also apply to them. But what we're looking at a regular basis would be a 200-foot buoy tender and a smaller vessel, much smaller vessel. And um, there aren't going to be that many personnel aboard. Technically it is illegal to discharge into the marine sanctuary without bringing the discharge up to a certain rate of maturity. But currently, they don't have the facilities on the vessels to fully treat the sewage and such, and they also don't have tank-holding capacities in which they can get to shore pumping station. Eventually these vessels will be replaced with other vessels, which have the treatment capabilities or larger holding capacities. But, for the time being, this discharge exemption is being sought after.

Jennifer Stock: Okay. So what, the public scoping meetings are coming up, actually next week. What can you tell us about the ones happening, in Marin specifically, and how to comment online.

Mary Jane Schramm: Okay. First of all, you have to get the locations and the dates. There will be three consecutive days of meetings in the evenings. And all these meetings will run from 6 to 7 pm. So the first one coming up is Tuesday, May 10th, and that will be at the San Francisco Bay Model which some people know it as the Army Corps of Engineers Building which is at 2100 Bridgeway in Sausalito. Then on Wednesday, May 11th, it will be at the Bodega Fire Department at 510 Highway 1 in Bodega Bay. And then on Thursday, May 12th, we'll be heading further north and we'll be meeting at the Gualala Community Center at 47950 Center Street in Gualala.

Jennifer Stock: Excellent. And for the format of the meetings, will there be an overview at the beginning of the meeting at 6 o'clock before opening up the comments?

Mary Jane Schramm: Mhmm, yes sanctuary superintendent Dan Howard of Cordell Bank and Maria Brown of Greater Farallones will present in greater detail with what we're going over here, what the meetings are about, and what the objectives are. Really, what we want to do here is, that the people will give their concerns, suggestions, or other comments either in writing and hand it to us at the meeting or send them a hard copy through mail or comment verbally at the meeting. So due time limitations because it is 6 to 7pm verbal comments are limited in length depending on how the verbal comments go at the meetings. So what we do request is if several people have the same questions or concerns, it's a very useful time

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Jennifer Stock, Mary Jane Schramm

and opportunity to get your opinion out there, to combine your statements with other statements. If you know of other people with the same concerns and remember it is not a voting meeting where a greater emphasis will be shown through numbers. But actually it is a reach out to the community for idea. So what we want to see is that at the end of the scoping period and the public scoping goes to May 31st this year is a range of pros and cons and possible alternatives.

Jennifer Stock: Excellent. And is it easy to find online? I'm assuming that there's a link on the Greater Farallones website at this point.

Mary Jane Schramm: You can go to the Greater Farallones website at www.farallones.noaa.gov and Farallones is spelled f-a-r-a-l-l-o-n-e-s.g-o-v as in victor. And from there you can click on the details and other details regarding the discharge issue.

Jennifer Stock: Excellent. So folks can go to farallone.noaa.gov to get information about these scoping meetings and important background information on the federal register notice and the link to actually comment using the regulations .gov website. Okay, so that's coming up next week folks, so if you're interested in this please get on that issue right now to learn more about it. So what else is going on? We have crab season opening up, um, just a bit of a late start due to the domoic acid outbreak. I understand that there has already been some co-mingling with humpback whales, which haven't been so good for the whales.

Mary Jane Schramm: No, nor for the crabbers. It means they are losing valuable gear. The crab season, because of the acid outbreak crab season has started 4 to 5 months later than usual, which is truly tragic, and it has been a big blow economically to the fishing community. So now there is quite a bit of effort in to make up as much as possible for those lost months. And unfortunately, this is coinciding with the time we had humpback whales and grey whales, both species in the area. And I'm part of the largest whale disentanglement network that is part of NOAA. And I've been getting the regular reports on the rescue attempts and just the entanglement sightings. And unfortunately, we have not been able to disentangle more than the one whale just recently. But we've had as many as 7 reports of whale entanglement sightings within a 10-day period. And in a few weeks, the whale entangled was already dead and one of the sightings was part of the dead whale. It's pretty sad. But we want people to keep in mind is that we want the whales to be in this area but when there is human activity collocated at the same time with

May 2, 2016, oc050216.mp3
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Jennifer Stock, Mary Jane Schramm

wildlife there are always going to be some interaction and tragic interactions with whales primarily. But there is a whale rescue line and there are specific people who are authorized and trained to respond to whale entanglement ports. And we want people to keep in mind especially if you're on the water, you must be acting under this federal permit order to do anything. You still have a role by standing by before doing any disentanglement of a whale. Call 1-877-SOS-WHALE and that translates to 1-877-767-9425. And that will take you directly to a 24-hour hotline and that will get you in touch with the folks who are licensed and trained in whale disentanglement. It could be a dangerous procedure for the people and the whale. Sometimes the whale manages to disentangle them-self. Thank goodness for that.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, well, for the folks who are out here maybe out at the light house or on the beach or getting out on their boat, that is good information to pass along to report if you see a whale entangled 877-SOS-WHALE and hopefully at the conclusion of the season those crab pots could come out so we can minimize exposure, that's always been a little of an issue going on. We just have about 1 minute left. Any other pieces you want to share with us about what's happening in the sanctuary?

Mary Jane Schramm: Okay, well because it is spring time is it is harbor seal breeding season. We want folks to be aware, if they find what appears to look like an abandoned seal pup on the beach, please don't undertake to rescue it yourself. Call the Marine Mammal Center at 289-SEAL and report it to them, they'll send someone out to scope out the situation and potentially respond. That mom might be fishing just a short distance away and they're very good at being hidden, so you might never see the mom, so the pup might just be there while the mom is out feeding herself and be ready to come back and nurse it as soon as the people go away. And others, humpback whales, we had a humpback whale stray in the San Francisco Bay just last Thursday, and I was just watching it from my office, believe it or not. So, this is a time when we have gray whales but we get humpback whales occasionally that wander into the San Francisco Bay and Tomales Bay. And, so if that's the case, please stay a distance of 300-feet away, never get in between a female and her young calf, this is the season where you see the females with their young calf. They need their space.

Jennifer Stock: Alright, thank you MJ. We are out of time and the number for the Marine Mammal Center if they are concerned...

May 2, 2016, oc050216.mp3
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Update
Jennifer Stock, Mary Jane Schramm

Mary Jane Schramm: Okay. That is 289-7325 or 289-SEAL

Jennifer Stock: 289-SEAL and that is the area code 415. Excellent. Well, Mary Jane, thank you for calling in and giving us an update.

Mary Jane Schramm: Well, it was great to be on the air with you today.

Jennifer Stock: Alright. You've been listening to Ocean Currents today on KWMR. Thanks for tuning in. Ocean Currents is always the first Monday of every month. And I love hearing from listeners so you can email me at cordellbank@noaa.gov for any topic, questions, comments, or things you want to hear in the future. But we are out of time here; this has been Ocean Currents from Community Radio on KWMR. Have a great afternoon.

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