

4.15 MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The information contained in this section comes from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Final EIS/Management Plan prepared for the U.S. Department of Commerce by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in June 1992 and from discussions with NOAA staff.

The Monterey Bay is located along the central California coast about 80 kilometers south of San Francisco (Figure 4.15-1). The bay possesses the deepest and largest submarine canyon on the coast of North America, equivalent in size to the Grand Canyon.

The sanctuary area encompasses both Monterey Bay and the adjacent coastline to the north and south, approximately 4,024 square nautical miles. The northern terminus of the boundary is located along the southern boundary of the Gulf of Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and runs westward to approximately 123°07'W. The boundary then extends south in an arc that generally follows the 500-fathom isobath. At approximately 37°03'N, the boundary arcs south to 122°25'W, 36°10'N, due west of Partington Point. The boundary again follows the 500-fathom isobath south to 121°41'W, 35°33'N, due west of Cambria. The boundary then extends shoreward toward the mean high-water line. The landward boundary is defined by the mean high-water line between Cambria and the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, exclusive of a small area off the coast of San Mateo County and the City and County of San Francisco between Point San Pedro and Point Bonita. The harbors of Monterey (excluding Elkhorn Slough), Moss Landing, Pillar Point, and Santa Cruz are excluded.

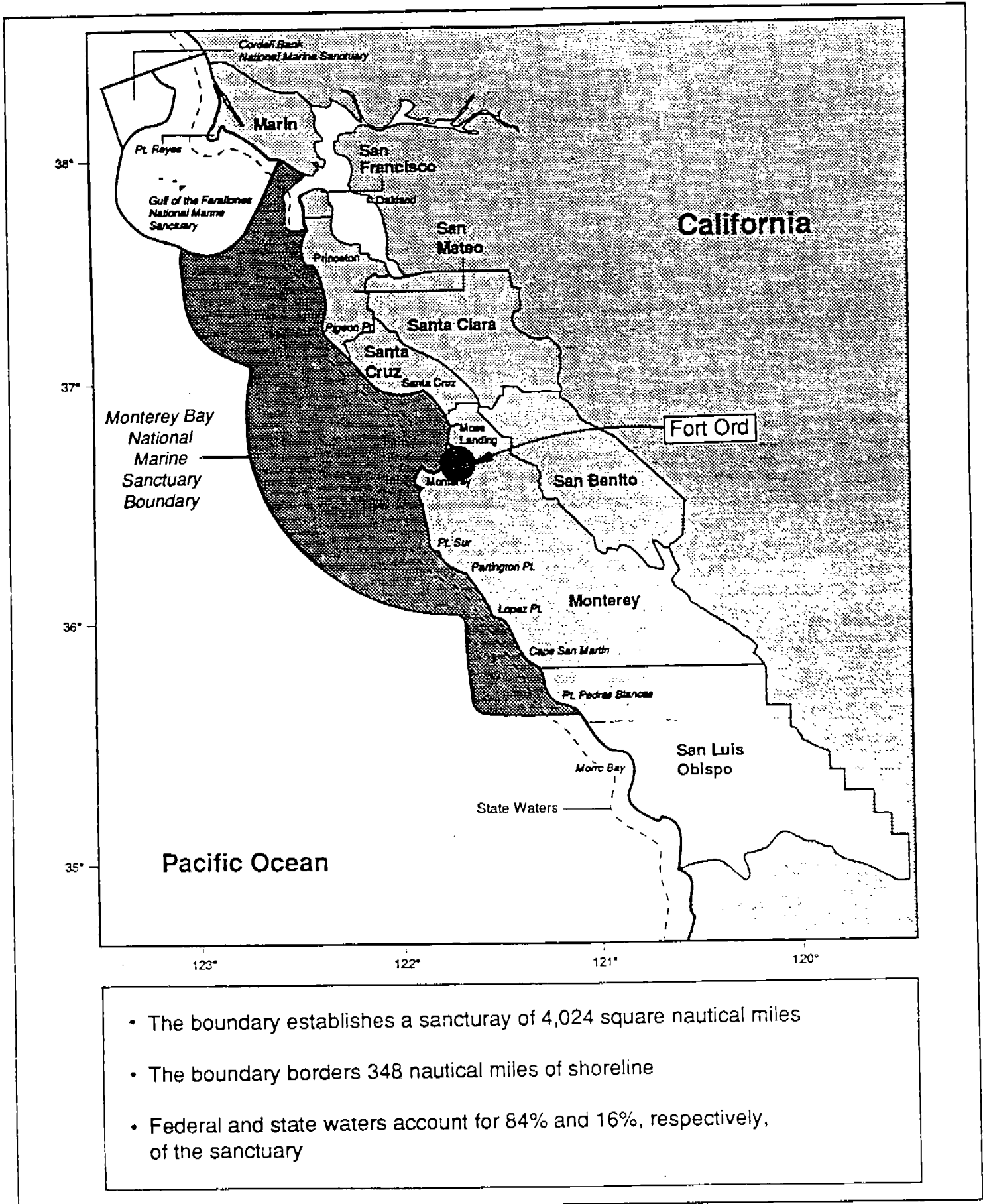
Under the 1988 reauthorization of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (MPRSA), NOAA was directed to designate Monterey Bay as a national marine sanctuary. The NOAA conducted scoping meetings in the Monterey area in January 1989 and received favorable response. In August 1990, the NOAA released a draft EIS and draft management plan for the sanctuary. In June 1992, NOAA officially designated the Monterey Bay as a marine sanctuary and released the final EIS/management plan. This was followed by an official declaration from the U.S. Congress in September 1992. The regulations of the management plan for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary took effect on January 1, 1993.

The major benefit of the sanctuary designation is the integration of many important nearshore and oceanic marine resource zones and their corresponding human uses into one management regime. Other benefits of designation include the following:

- support of research on and monitoring of the resources,
- enhancement of public awareness of the value of this area,
- aid in coordinating actions by existing authorities,
- formulation of long-range plans and ability to respond to currently unforeseen threats that might arise, and
- regulation of activities that either pose a current risk of causing significant damage or may have greater impacts as use of the area increases.

This unique, biologically diverse, and relatively undeveloped natural setting provides an ecologically diverse haven for many significant concentrations of living resources, and the waters support a number of socially beneficial human activities. These activities range from fishing to nature observation, education, scientific research, national defense, and law enforcement. To date, such activities have been pursued at low intensity levels. However, these and other potential human activities (e.g., oil and gas development,

Figure 4.15-1
 Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary



dredge spoil disposal) are clearly capable of generating conflicts that could harm the resources of this marine area.

The marine ecosystem's diverse resources and rich productivity make it an area of regional and national significance. With sanctuary designation, the area receives long-term protection and enhancement to complement the protection already provided for some of its resources onshore and for sections of the extreme nearshore zone. Sanctuary designation provides a unique opportunity for coordinated coastal zone management and research efforts through the integration of the facilities, resources, and programs of the reserve and the sanctuary. This type of program emphasizes land-sea interactions and serves as an innovative model for other coastal areas of the United States where local land issues and coastal zone problems have traditionally been separated from offshore marine issues in terms of jurisdiction and research effort.

The designation will improve resource protection by instituting new regulatory measures and by supplementing present surveillance and enforcement actions. The NOAA works within the constraints of Title III of the MPRSA when promulgating regulations. Specifically, Section 304(c) provides that NOAA cannot terminate valid leases, permits, licenses, or rights of subsistence use or of access existing as of the date of sanctuary designation but can regulate the exercise of such authorizations and rights consistent with the purposes for which the sanctuary was designated.

Sanctuary regulations govern hydrocarbon and mineral activities; discharges and deposits (both from within and outside of sanctuary boundaries; overflights; alteration of or construction on the seabed; historical resources; marine mammals, turtles, and seabirds; personal water craft; prohibitions on possession of resources and on interference with enforcement operations; vessel traffic; and aquaculture/kelp harvesting.

