October 3, 2023

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to provide your review of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary's Condition Report. Our staff has identified you as an expert who could provide substantive comments that would improve the document prior to dissemination. We request your written comments by November 1, which provides about a month for review.

Specific Instructions

We ask that your review focus on the body of the report, Chapters 1–11. We are particularly interested in your expert opinion of our judgments of resource status and trends, the rationales for judgment, and the data used to support the ratings of status and trends. We welcome any recommendations you may have regarding additional data or information sources that may significantly improve assessments of resource conditions, keeping in mind our desire for conciseness.

The document is available on google drive here. Links to individual chapters are as follows:

1. Introductory Material
2. Sanctuary Setting
3. Drivers and Pressures
4. State of Drivers and Pressures
5. Introduction to State of Resources Chapters
6. State of Water Quality
7. State of Habitat
8. State of Living Marine Resources
9. State of Maritime Heritage Resources
10. State of Ecosystem Services
11. Response
12. Appendix A - Questions and Rating Schemes for State of Sanctuary Resources
13. Appendix B - Definitions and Rating Scheme for State of Ecosystem Services
14. Appendix C - Methods
15. Appendix D - Additional State of the Resources Information

If you are unable to access the report in Google, or wish to review the report as a Word document, please contact Katie Lohr (Kathryn.Lohr@noaa.gov) who is serving as the Point of Contact for this project. Please make your edits and comments in **SUGGESTING mode**. Click on the 'editing' drop down box located at the far upper right corner of your navigation menu and select 'suggesting' from the options. Additional directions for using suggesting mode may be found here. To Comment in Google Docs, select the items you wish to comment on, click the Comment Box and click "Comment" to save your comment. Please note that this is a draft report and should not be distributed.

Below you will find basic background information about the report, things to keep in mind as you review, a statement regarding public posting of reviewers' comments, and a conflict of interest statement.

Background

Condition Reports are tools employed periodically by NOAA in an effort to consistently assess the condition and trends of sanctuary resources and ecosystem services within national marine sanctuaries. The report helps identify gaps in current monitoring efforts, as well as factors that may require additional focus and effort in the years to come. The data presented in the report is not meant to be encyclopedic, but rather to help illustrate the state of knowledge and summarize important scientific information currently available to characterize the region in order to inform an upcoming review of the sanctuary's Management Plan, which is projected to begin in Summer Fall.

This condition report provides a summary of the current status and trends of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary resources and ecosystem services. Status is rated on a scale from good to poor. Trends in the status of resources are also reported, and are based on the time period of 2010 to 2022. Evaluations of status and trends were made during virtual workshops in May – July 2022 by sanctuary staff, in consultation with subject matter experts, based on interpretation of quantitative and, when necessary, non-quantitative assessments and observations of scientists, managers and users. Therefore, ratings reflect the collective opinion among experts based on their knowledge and perceptions of local problems.

The resource questions and definitions of ecosystem services rated in the report are consistent across all sanctuaries in the system, as described in Appendices A and B. We are not requesting your review of this appendix, as these standards were established by the original panel of experts who designed our system-wide monitoring program.

More information about the condition report process is available in this video.

Keep in mind as you review

- Condition reports are meant to be concise descriptions of the status and trends of sanctuary resources and ecosystem services. Dozens of indicators and associated data are presented and it is not possible to provide extensive detail on any one indicator or data set. Therefore, as you review the document, please do so recognizing that the report is much like a summary that is based on data that may not be presented in detail within the report. To the extent possible, references and links to existing data are given, and appropriate summary graphics or data are shown, but original sources are likely to contain much more information than the condition report.
- In a few instances there are outstanding comments inserted into the documents where authors have noted the need for additional information.
- All responses to the resource questions and ecosystem services begin with green-font text. This information will be converted into a graphic when the report is finalized. The intent is to serve as a "quick look" summary of each assessment. Remember that the

status description statements are standardized condition report language that can not be edited and the rationale statements are unique to the Greater Farallones condition report.

- Literature cited and appendix figures currently follow each response, but will eventually be moved into their own, separate section. All citations still need to be formatted per APA guidelines.
- Following Peer Review an Executive Summary and Concluding Remarks section will be drafted.
- At the final stage of report development professional copy editing and formatting will occur, so please do not spend time on these smaller details (including formatting of literature citations). Instead, please focus on content.

Due to the size and complexity of the sanctuary, the report is quite lengthy. We encourage you to help us trim the document, suggesting areas where material could be removed without compromising the report. While we are able to add material that supports the rationale and rankings determined by workshop participants, we are hesitant to swell the length of the report unless absolutely necessary.

Peer Review and Posting of Review Comments

In December 2004, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review (OMB Bulletin) establishing peer review standards that would enhance the quality and credibility of the federal government's scientific information. Among other information, these standards apply to Influential Scientific Information (ISI), which is information that can reasonably be determined to have a "clear and substantial impact on important public policies or private sector decisions."

Current OMB Bulletin guidelines require that reviewer comments, identities, and affiliations be posted on the Department of Commerce (DOC)
website: http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/PRsummaries.html.

Reviewer comments, however, will not be attributed to specific individuals. As you know, this is not consistent with traditional scientific peer review standards, which generally call for anonymity. This issue has been raised with OMB, and guidance may change in the future. Until then, we will comply with the published guidelines.

Therefore, by agreeing to be a reviewer for this report, you must agree to allow your comments to be posted on the web, along with those of other reviewers, and have your name and affiliation posted, though the names will not be linked to specific comments.

Conflict of Interest

For this review process, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) adapted the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) policy for committee selection with respect to evaluating conflicts of interest when selecting peer reviewers who are not federal government

employees. Please read the conflict of interest policy (available here) and complete and return the attached Conflict of Interest form by email to Kathryn.Lohr@noaa.gov.

On behalf of the staff of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, we thank you for taking the time to review this report. I am confident that your assistance will improve the quality of the document so that our management decisions can rely on the best available science and dependable judgments of knowledgeable experts.

Sincerely,