



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, California 93940

June 7, 2011

Mayor Della Sala
City of Monterey
580 Pacific Street
City Hall
Monterey, CA 93940

Dear Mayor Della Sala,

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) is a federally protected marine area offshore of California's central coast. Stretching from Marin to Cambria, the National Marine Sanctuary encompasses a shoreline length of 276 miles and 6,094 square miles of ocean. The MBNMS supports one of the world's most diverse marine ecosystems, and is home to numerous mammals, seabirds, fishes, invertebrates and plants in a remarkably productive coastal environment. It is for this reason that I am writing in support of the City of Monterey's efforts to reduce litter generated by the use of disposable single-use plastic bags.

The City of Monterey is currently evaluating a prohibition eliminating the use of single-use plastic bags. As you are already aware, the proliferation of plastic bags is of particular concern in the marine environment, due to the negative impacts they levy upon marine wildlife.

The negative effects of plastic pollution in the world's oceans are well documented. Many marine animals are susceptible to impacts from litter and other types of plastic pollution, and several organizations have documented the adverse effect that ocean pollution can wield. Marine pollution has been shown to be harmful to animals commonly seen in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary such as: California sea lions, Common murre, Brandt's cormorants, Common loons, and endangered Leatherback sea turtles. Given that, the MBNMS asks that you also encourage reduction of land-based littering in general, to reduce the amount of garbage entering our nation's waterways.

MBNMS is concerned with the proliferation of plastic bags in the ocean environment, and specifically concerned with negative impacts to federally protected species. The federally endangered Leatherback Sea Turtle, protected under the Endangered Species Act, (ESA) seems particularly susceptible.

Issue 58 of the Marine Pollution Bulletin {(2009) 287-289}, provided to your staff on June 6, 2011, states: "This huge turtle, weighing as much as 640 kg, subsists almost entirely on jellyfish and other gelatinous zooplankton. In the last century, in addition to incidental catch in fishing gear, collision with boat propellers, and development on its nesting beaches, a new menace has arisen: plastic... Unfortunately an animal that can gulp down a toxin laden Portuguese-man-of-war does not necessarily survive eating an inert plastic bag."



This May 2011, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council passed a resolution in support of federal, state, and local plastic bag bans. By prohibiting the use of single-use plastic bags, the City of Monterey will join a growing movement to reduce marine debris through these types of strategies, and improve the health of our oceans. When local governments join together to address a problem such as litter and marine debris, the benefits for the natural environment can be significant. Thank you for your leadership in taking this step to improve the health our oceans in general, and to protect the waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary specifically.

Should you wish to discuss this issue or if you have any questions, please contact Ms. Deirdre Whalen of my staff by phone at 831-647-4207 or via email at deirdre.whalen@noaa.gov. Thank you for your help in improving the environment of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Michel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Michel" clearly legible.

Paul Michel
Superintendent

