

Motorized Personal Watercraft (MPWC)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Management Program
Review (November 2006)

1. Why does the Surfrider Foundation support restricted use of MPWC in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS)?

The MBNMS restricted use of MPWC in 1992 and confined their use to four zones located outside four harbors. The intent was to provide enhanced resource protection for marine mammal and seabird concentrations, kelp forest areas, river mouths, estuaries, lagoons and all near shore areas where sensitive marine resources concentrate and are most vulnerable to disturbance and other injury from MPWC. Since then, MPWC manufacturers and users have successfully avoided compliance with these restrictions by using MPWC's designed to fall out of the original definition.

The intent of the original regulation was to restrict their use to MPWC zones located near the harbors at Monterey, Moss Landing, Santa Cruz, and Pillar Point. The purpose of this restriction was to prevent wildlife disturbances and negative impacts to the unique and fragile marine environment in the MBNMS.

The Surfrider Foundation supports the recreational use of MPWC in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary within the four designated offshore zones established by NOAA, and the use of MPWC for public agency life rescue, safety and enforcement operations. We do not support any other private

uses of MPWC in any other areas of the MBNMS.

This position is based on an overwhelming body of scientific evidence and court rulings (Personal Watercraft Industry Association vs. Department of Commerce/NOAA, 1995) documenting the adverse environmental impacts of MPWC, especially in the near shore areas where MPWC are commonly used.

2. What is Surfrider Foundation's role in the management of the MBMNS?

The Surfrider Foundation has four chapters within the jurisdiction of MBNMS who are actively involved in coastal and ocean conservation issues. The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education. We are one of many active stakeholders in the management review process that is being run by the National Marine Sanctuaries program of NOAA. The Surfrider Foundation does not get to make the rules with regard to any regulation. Given that the world's oceans are in crisis, we feel that we are obligated to advocate a position that is most protective of the ocean's resources in this special place.

3. What does a Surfrider Foundation resolution mean?

In June 2006, the Surfrider Foundation's National Board of Directors passed a resolution in support of the position of the Surfrider Foundation Chapters located within the boundaries of the MBNMS (San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Luis Bay) on the responsible use of MPWC within the boundaries of the MBNMS. That resolution stated that the position of these chapters is consistent with the National MPWC policy that; 1)

recognizes that not all waterways are appropriate for use of MPWC; 2) restricts the use of MPWC in order to reduce negative impacts to aquatic ecosystems, and 3) supports restrictions and buffers to reduce negative impacts to aquatic ecosystems in sensitive ecological areas.

It also states that the National Board supports the position of these Chapters on the responsible use of MPWC within the boundaries of the MBNMS that allows for the recreational use of MPWC within the four designated offshore zones established by NOAA, allows MPWC use for public agency life rescue, safety and enforcement operations, but does not allow for any other private uses of MPWC in any other areas of the MBNMS.

This resolution is a statement of strong support by the National Board of Director's for the position taken by our local chapters in the MBNMS area. It doesn't represent a national policy that would impact other Surfrider Foundation chapter positions on issues elsewhere.

4. Is Surfrider Foundation against tow-in surfing?

The Surfrider Foundation is not against tow-in surfing. It is the position of the Surfrider Foundation, based on our Personal Watercraft policy that was passed in 1999, (before tow-in surfing went mainstream) that not all waters ways are appropriate for boating and motorized personal watercraft (MPWC). Further it states that the Surfrider Foundation recognizes that sensitive ecological areas warrant MPWC restrictions and buffers to reduce negative impacts to aquatic ecosystems.

So, the Surfrider Foundation believes that in some places tow-in surfing using MPWC is appropriate and in other ecologically sensitive areas, like the MBNMS, it isn't appropriate.

5. Why focus on Monterey Bay NMS?

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) has one of the most diverse and abundant assemblages of marine animals in the world, including six species of pinniped, twenty-seven species of cetacean, four species of sea turtles, and one species of sea otter (fissiped).

The MBNMS waters are among the most heavily used by seabirds worldwide, including ninety-four species of seabird that are known to occur regularly within and in the vicinity of the Sanctuary, and approximately ninety species of tidal and wetland birds occur on the shores, marshes, and estuaries bordering Sanctuary waters.

The MBNMS is located on the Pacific Flyway, allowing migratory birds a place to stopover during both north and south migrations between southern wintering grounds and northern breeding sites.

Nearly all of the mammal and turtle species, and many birds, are protected under the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act or Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The MBNMS has been dubbed “the Serengeti of the Sea” because so many large diverse animals are very easy to view and accessible to humans.

In other words, this is one of the most special ocean environments in the world, tantamount to other global ecological gems like Yellowstone National Park.

6. Is the Surfrider Foundation looking for any other places to restrict tow-in surfing?

No. As of October 2006 the Surfrider Foundation the Surfrider

Foundation is not pursuing campaigns to restrict MPWC use or tow-in surfing. That said, there might be other sensitive ecological locations where MPWC use may be inappropriate.

7. Why are Motorize Personal Water Craft so harmful?

Motorized Personal Watercraft (MPWC) are small, fast, and highly maneuverable craft that possess unconventionally high thrust capability and horsepower relative to their size and weight that enables them to make sharp turns at high speeds and alter direction rapidly making them particularly dangerous to marine mammals that have trouble anticipating their course or direction. The MPWC's small size, shallow draft, instant thrust, and "quick reflex" enable them to operate closer to shore than conventional vessels and in near shore areas. Water jet-propelled MPWC gained mainstream popularity in the United States in the 1980s, with sales accelerating through the mid 1990s. The use of MPWC has increased in the MBNMS during the past few years in part due to their increased use to tow surfers into large waves.

8. Why doesn't the Surfrider Foundation work to restrict 2-stroke outboards?

2-stroke outboards are typically operated in a different manner than MPWC. They are less likely and less capable to change directions rapidly, they tend to not operate at such high speeds or RPMs, and they tend not go as close to shore or within shallow waters. For these reasons they are not as likely to disturb wildlife.

9. If MPWCs are banned, other craft will replace them so why do support this ban?

The proposed update of the definition of a MPWC is intended

to encompass current MPWC and all future design modifications of motorized personal watercraft. We recognize that restricting MPWC use in sensitive nearshore areas will not prevent other types of craft from these areas. However, unlike PWC, many types of larger water craft cannot enter these shallow, rocky areas. Further, it is the responsibility of NOAA and the Coast Guard to enforce the safe use of marine vessels in the ocean.

10. Why not work out a compromise with our fellow tow-in/at surfers who support the Surfrider Foundation?

The Surfrider Foundation and a coalition of numerous environmental and ocean user groups attempted to work out a compromise during the preparation of the JMPR recommendations, but this effort stalled when 1) the PWC industry refused to negotiate in good faith, i.e. refused to discuss a new PWC definition and 2) local tow-in supporters opposed restricting tow-surfing to Mavericks only, and instead demanded other exceptions up and down the coast.

Given the inability to reach a compromise through the lengthy and extensive working group process, we are advocating a position that is most protective of coastal and marine resources. It is the job of the National Marine Sanctuary Program to balance the interests of the many groups who care for and use the MBNMS.

11. Are there other places that restrict MPWC use?

Yes. MPWC use has been banned or restricted in other sensitive ecological habitats, including the Gulf of Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, the San Juan Islands in Washington, Biscayne National Park in Florida, Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout National Seashores in North Carolina, Gulf Islands National

Seashore in Florida and Mississippi and many other places.

For more information and background documents visit:

<http://www.surfridersmc.org/portal/ProtectTheMBNMS/tabid/58/Default.aspx>