

**Iconic Kelp Plan Recommendations
a Working Group Report
to the
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council**

May 2, 2024

Compiled by Keith Rootsart, Kelp Working Group Chair

Background

- Research, education and conservation of iconic kelp forests is a MBNMS priority
- On December 9, 2022, the MBNMS Advisory Council (AC) approved a motion requesting the Research Activity Panel (RAP), “evaluate in MBNMS suggested/proposed options for science to inform monitoring, recovery, and restoration of kelp forests.”
- On February 17, 2023. The AC approved a RAP memo on general research needs regarding kelp.
- On November 17, 2023. The AC decided to develop a Working Group to advise MBNMS staff on what is necessary to develop an Iconic Kelp Plan.
- The purpose of the AC working group is to develop community-based recommendations to inform a MBNMS kelp plan, related to monitoring, recovery, and restoration as implemented through MBNMS programs of outreach/education, policy/management, and research.

Kelp Working Group Membership

- Education and Outreach Sub Working Group
Monica Lal (Co-Chair), Marina Maze, Rebecca Mostow, Tom Rowley, Mark Shelley, Patrick Webster
- Conservation and Policy Sub Working Group
Keith Rootsart (Chair), Rebecca Ceniceros, Kristen Elsmore, Michael Esgro, Adam Helm, Rachel Kippen, April Ridlon, Connor Smith (observer), Amy Wolfrum
- Research Sub Working Group
Josh Smith (Co-Chair), Mark Carr, Greg Crandall, Norah Eddy, Jan Freiwald, Scott Hamilton, James Lindholm, Tristin McHugh, Brandon Southall

Kelp Working Group Process

Using a “Jamboard” process, the sub committees and entire working groups had a series of meetings and answered questions provided by MBNMS staff. For the sake of transparency, all of the Jamboard responses and meeting notes are provided in AC briefing material.

Meetings held:

- First All Working Group meeting: March 12, 2024
- Education and Outreach Sub-Working Group meeting: April 10, 2024
- Conservation and Policy Sub-Working Group meeting: April 15, 2024
- Research Sub-Working Group meeting: April 18, 2024
- Final All Working Group Meeting: April 30, 2024

In the AC meeting materials associated with this report, results of the following are presented:

- Three “Jamboards”
- The list of 23 questions developed by MBNMS staff
- 287 comments by Working Group members to address the staff questions
- 14 pages of notes

Recommendations

While all of the notes and 287 comments by working group members should be considered by MBNMS staff that will be developing the MBNMS Kelp Plan, the following recommendations received the most support. When there was overlap in recommendations across the sub Working Group topics, they are simply listed under one of the groups.

Recommendations for Education and Outreach:

1. How do people view kelp as a part of their life? → Then, how can they partake in trying to restore kelp?
 - We need people to view kelp as a part of their life, and provide them with actions they can take to support kelp.
 - Philosophical realignment of their relationship with the coast.
 - Needs to be *inclusive!*
2. Engage existing social media platforms with kelp-related information.
3. Develop “one-pagers” and talking points for non-traditional audiences.
 - Needs to include school groups.
 - This is an opportunity to share concepts like climate change and connection to the threatened southern sea otter.

Recommendations for Conservation and Policy:

1. Sanctuary should coordinate / provide a clearing house on research and restoration efforts in MBNMS (i.e., so people can most effectively collaborate)

2. Clarify the respective permitting processes from agencies and streamline agency permit processes for kelp research and restoration (in coordination with the KRMP).
 - Clarification is needed around the ability to engage in restoration in State MPAs.
3. Science Based kelp restoration that moves beyond the pilot scale should be pursued.

Recommendations for Research

1. Research the economic, social, and cultural values of healthy kelp forest and restoration efforts.
 - A socioeconomic study with potential partnerships with MIIS and ONMS headquarters.
 - Identify areas of high priority, including ecologically, socially, and culturally relevant locations.
1. Develop a visual, conceptual model of MBNMS kelp forests.
2. Build collaborations among agency, NGO, academic, and community participation. Include support (see points below) for research, restoration, monitoring, and management of kelp forests, including evaluating the costs associated with different restoration approaches.
 - MBNMS small boats and staff time are necessary to build healthy collaborations.
 - Need clarification on how academic organizations and agencies legally engage with community scientists and fishers in collaborative projects.
4. Locations could be identified using the modeling guidance already generated by state-funded projects, and assessing stakeholder needs.

Other Considerations

- New funding resources are necessary to address all of the recommendations
- The Kelp Plan should be revisited regularly, with annual reports to the AC by MBNMS staff.
 - The Chair recommends that a Kelp Working Group modifies the plan as needed after each report to the SAC.
- The Sanctuary Advisory Council can advance kelp restoration with support letters and continued engagement with their constituents.