

**MONTEREY BAY SANCTUARY CITIZEN  
WATERSHED MONITORING NETWORK**

***SNAPSHOT DAY***  
***2000***



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## Snapshot Day 2000 was organized by:

The **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) Water Quality Protection Program** works to protect the watersheds of the largest of our nation's 13 marine sanctuaries. (831) 647-4201. [www.bonita.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov](http://www.bonita.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov).

The **Coastal Watershed Council** is a public education non-profit advocating the preservation and protection of coastal watersheds through establishment of community-based watershed stewardship programs. CWC works in partnerships with schools, community organizations, and local governments. (831) 426-9012. [www.coastal-watershed.org](http://www.coastal-watershed.org).

The **Center for Marine Conservation** is the largest national nonprofit organization committed solely to protecting ocean environments and conserving the global abundance and diversity of marine life through science-based advocacy, research, and public education, as well as informed citizen participation. Headquartered in Washington, DC, CMC has regional offices in California, Florida, and Virginia and field offices in Alaska, Maine, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz, CA, and the Florida Keys. (831) 425-1363. [www.cmc-ocean.org](http://www.cmc-ocean.org).

*Special thanks to the California Coastal Commission for assistance with data analysis and to CMC intern Nick Kidd and Coastal Commission intern Daniel Apt for mapping and data input.*

### **Participating Agencies and Organizations**

Big Creek Reserve  
California Coastal Commission  
California State Parks  
California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB)  
Center for Marine Conservation  
City of Monterey  
Coastal Watershed Council  
Earth Systems Science and Policy Program (CSUMB)  
Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Greenspace  
United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County  
Monterey Bay Aquarium  
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency  
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board  
San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center  
Santa Cruz County Environmental Health  
State Water Resources Board  
Surfrider Foundation  
Watershed Institute, CSUMB

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 22, 2000, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day with “Snapshot Day 2000” - a one-day, Sanctuary-wide volunteer water quality monitoring event.



*According to volunteer Liese Shultz, Soledad Creek doesn't pass the sniff test.*

On Snapshot Day, 120 trained volunteers waded into creeks, streams, rivers, sloughs, estuaries, and beaches throughout San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo counties to test water quality and take a “snapshot” of the condition of the Sanctuary’s watersheds.

coliform counts, suggesting waters unsafe for swimming. Many rivers, creeks and sloughs in Monterey County had high nutrient levels in both urban and rural areas. Some of these waterbodies may not have enough dissolved oxygen to support steelhead trout migration.

*Salinas River, Monterey County*



*Coastal Commission staffer, Ross Clark with volunteers at Snapshot Day training.*



Volunteers tested 122 separate locations on 89 waterways for water temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO), conductivity, turbidity, and acidity/alkalinity (pH). Selected sites were also tested for nitrates, phosphates, and fecal coliform. These water quality “parameters” help to identify the general health of a body of water, potential threats to fish and other aquatic organisms, whether the water is safe for human contact, and potential sources of water quality problems.

The Snapshot Day 2000 results remind us that watersheds with water quality problems may require additional education and watershed management efforts to improve conditions. Where water quality is generally good, efforts should focus on insuring that clean waters stay clean.

Snapshot Day 2000 was designed to increase public awareness of water quality issues affecting Sanctuary watersheds and to emphasize the importance of water quality monitoring and the key role volunteer monitors play in our area. The event was a huge success generating a tremendous response from volunteers, good media coverage, and strong support from local businesses.



*Monterey County Snapshot Day volunteers at the Watershed Institute at CSUMB.*

The data collected on Snapshot Day 2000 reinforced previous findings that some of the Sanctuary’s watersheds face water quality problems. Lab results for several creeks in San Mateo County showed high fecal

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## WATER QUALITY MONITORING

### *Why Monitor Water Quality?*

Water quality monitoring is a critical component of effective watershed stewardship, education, and management. Water quality monitoring can: (1) provide an overall view of the health of an individual waterbody or a watershed; (2) identify water quality problems and potential sources of pollution; (3) help prioritize water quality management decisions; (4) serve as a baseline for comparing future data and identifying trends over time; and (5) educate residents and help them to become better stewards of their watershed.



*MBNMS staffer Susan Pufahl welcomes volunteers to Snapshot Day 2000.*

### *The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program*

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) is the largest of the nation's 13 marine sanctuaries, stretching from the Marin headlands in the north to Cambria in the south. The MBNMS encompasses more than 5300 square miles of water including many diverse ecosystems and nearly 500 different species of fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. Eleven major watershed areas, including over 7000 square miles of land, drain into the MBNMS.

Land use in the Sanctuary's watersheds includes urban and suburban development, extensive areas of irrigated croplands, managed timber lands, grazing lands, and other agricultural activities. Extensive public lands with diverse multiple uses are also present, including lands under the management of the federal, state, and local governments. As water passes over any of

the lands in the watershed, it can pick up a variety of potential pollutants such as sediments, oils and grease, nutrients, pesticides, and pathogens which can be transported to the region's rivers, wetlands, harbors, and nearshore waters.

Recognizing that human activities on land can affect Sanctuary waters and resources, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary developed a Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) pursuant to a formal agreement made among federal, state and local agencies when the Sanctuary was founded. The WQPP is a partnership effort to enhance and protect the physical, chemical, and biological conditions in the Sanctuary and its adjacent watersheds. The ability to monitor water quality conditions comprehensively and accurately over time is critical to making effective management decisions. Accordingly, one goal of the WQPP is to provide comprehensive information regarding existing water quality conditions, long-term trends, and the success of pollution management efforts.

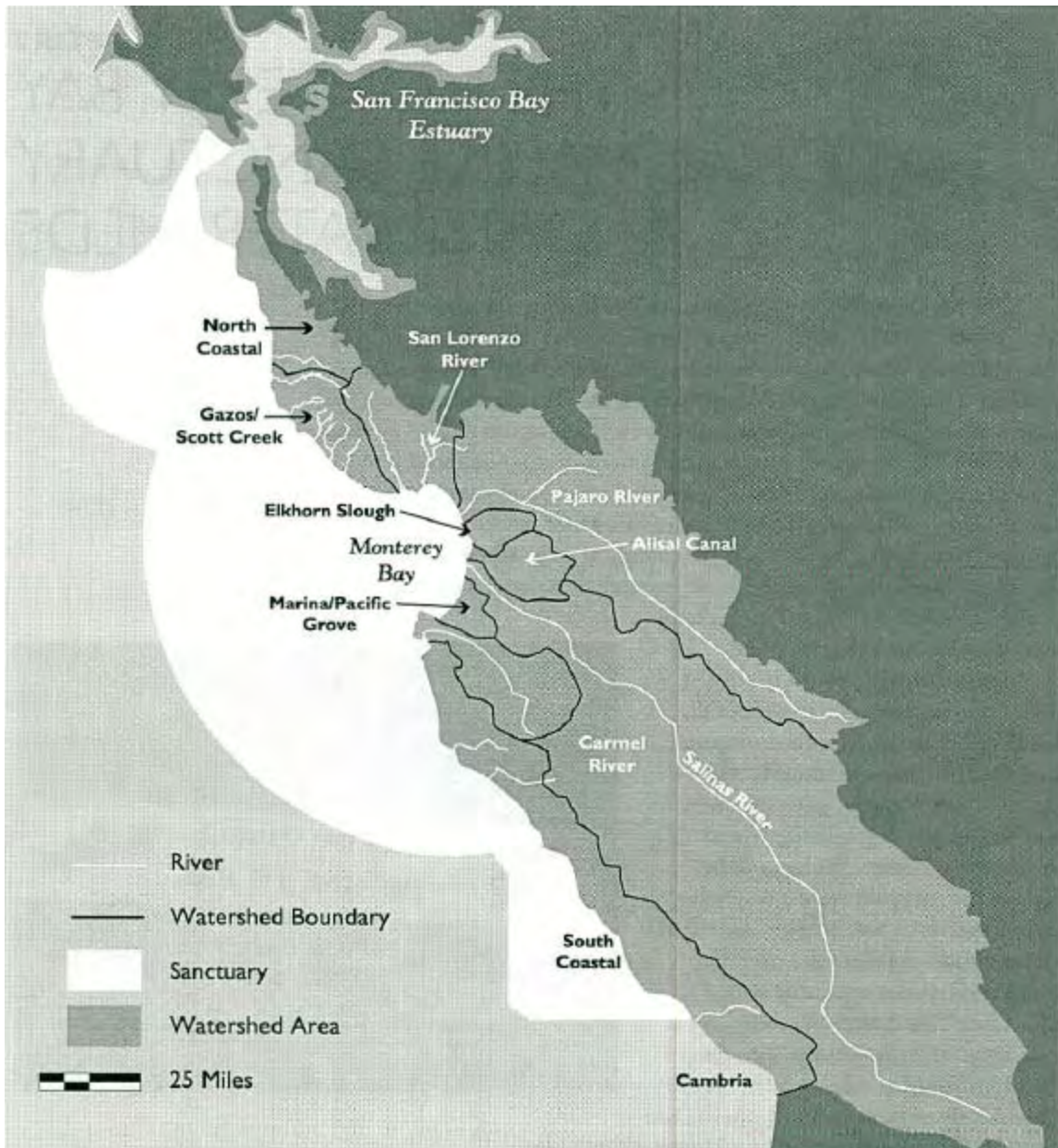
### *The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network*

Faced with budget and staffing limitations, government agencies monitor less than 10% of California's rivers and streams, and funding for water quality testing has decreased dramatically over the past decade. Responding to this problem, citizen volunteers have begun filling the gaps in water quality data by testing local watersheds themselves.

According to a March 1999 survey, over 20 citizen groups actively monitor the watersheds of the MBNMS. Recognizing both the value and the increased potential for citizen watershed monitoring in the Sanctuary, the Coastal Watershed Council, the Center for Marine Conservation, and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, founded the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network.

The overall goal of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network is to help create integrated, long-term, volunteer-based water quality and watershed monitoring within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and its watersheds and to make these citizen monitoring programs an integral component of watershed stewardship and Sanctuary education and management.

# WATERSHEDS OF THE MONTEREY BAY SANCTUARY



The sanctuary and its eleven major watersheds

## *Snapshot Day 2000*

Snapshot Day 2000 was sponsored by the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network. Although similar large-scale water quality monitoring events have been held in other areas of the nation, Snapshot Day 2000 was the single largest water quality monitoring event in California history. Testing occurred at 122 different sites on 89 waterbodies, spanning nearly 300 miles of California's coastline, including four counties, and ten of the Sanctuary's eleven major watersheds.

## MONITORING RESULTS

### Methods and Quality Control

Snapshot Day 2000 volunteers tested a range of physical and chemical parameters designed to generate baseline data. The parameters were selected based on their ability to serve as indicators of general waterbody health as well as ease of testing in the field with available equipment. All Snapshot Day 2000 volunteers were equipped with thermometers, dissolved oxygen meters, pH strips, and conductivity meters. Turbidity was assessed visually. All nitrate (converted to NO<sub>3</sub>), phosphate (as PO<sub>4</sub>), and fecal coliform analyses were performed in laboratories.

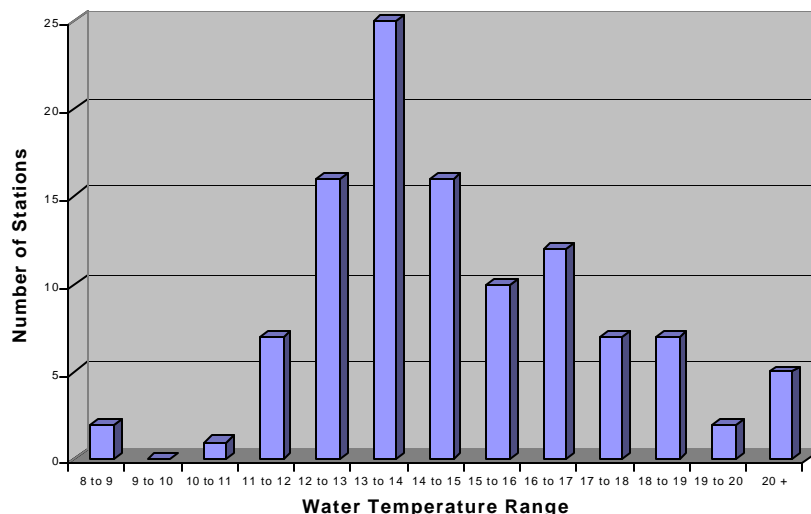
Quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) was accomplished through a pre-monitoring training and equipment calibration session one week prior to Snapshot Day. Four regional training sessions occurred throughout the Monterey Bay Sanctuary on April 15, 2000 to familiarize all volunteer group leaders and coordinators with monitoring protocols, sampling equipment, datasheets and safety measures. State Water Resources Control Board staff, Revital Katznelson, provided information on technical oversight, QA/QC techniques and data collection strategies.

### Action Levels

To determine whether test results indicated a potential water quality problem, Snapshot Day 2000 results were compared with action levels for each parameter (temperature, DO, pH, nutrients, and fecal coliform) that were established for the Central Coast Ambient Monitoring Program (CCAMP) by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The CCAMP “action levels” are intended to identify water quality conditions that warrant consideration of corrective measures, but do not necessarily imply violations of water quality regulations.

### Water Temperature

Water temperature is an important environmental factor for fish and other aquatic life, as many species need specific temperatures to survive and reproduce. Temperature also



affects the concentration of dissolved oxygen in the water column and the rate of photosynthesis for aquatic plants. Human activities such as water diversions that decrease flows or removal of streamside vegetation that shades the water, can lead to elevated water temperatures.

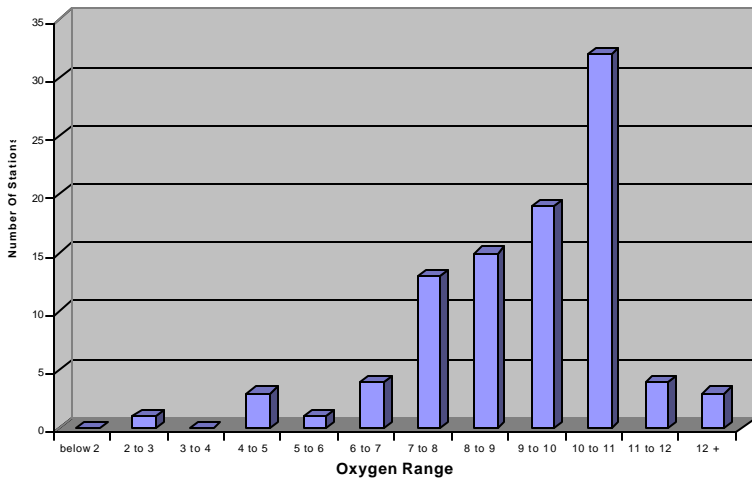
It is important to keep in mind that Snapshot Day 2000 took place on an overcast day in April and much of the data was collected in the morning hours, therefore water temperatures results likely do not reflect the maximum daily or annual temperature for the waterbody

The CCAMP action level for water temperature is 22 degrees Celsius. Temperatures above 22 degrees can be stressful for steelhead trout. The mean temperature for sites tested was 14.6 degrees Celsius. Five sites, all located in Monterey County, had water temperatures above 20 degrees. Two sites tested at or above the CCAMP action level for water temperature: Alisal Slough at 22 degrees and Moro Cojo Slough at 23.2 degrees.



Measuring the temperature of Soquel Creek, Santa Cruz County.

**Oxygen Concentrations Among Stations**



Dissolved Oxygen.

All aquatic animals require dissolved oxygen to breathe. The concentration of dissolved oxygen in the water column affects a wide range of behavior such as feeding, spawning, and incubation. Nutrients found in sewage, fertilizers, and manure provides a food source for algae and aquatic weeds, causing blooms and increased vegetation. This in turn depletes the amount of oxygen available in the water column.

The minimum CCAMP action level for dissolved oxygen is 7 milligrams/liter, based on the amount of dissolved oxygen needed by migrating steelhead trout. The mean dissolved oxygen level across testing sites was 9.1 mg/l. Sites with dissolved oxygen levels lower than the CCAMP action level included: Elkhorn Slough, Tembladero Slough, Alisal Slough, the Salinas River, Atascadero Creek, Rinconada Creek, Santa Margarita Creek and Trout Creek.

Dissolved oxygen levels are closely related to water temperature, dissolved oxygen levels decrease as water temperature increases. Accordingly, test results from a monitoring event on a cool and cloudy morning in April are unlikely to reflect yearly minimums.

Conductivity

Conductivity is a measure of the ability of water to conduct electrical current. Measuring conductivity gives an indication of the amount of total solids (such as salts, mineral, acids, and metals) dissolved in the water. Conductivity varies with water source and geographic

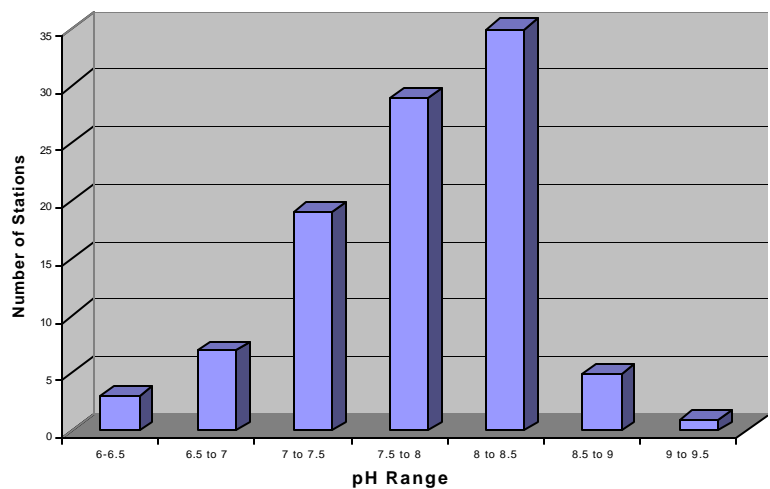
region; there is no action level for conductivity. However, once a baseline of conductivity values is established, variations may signal a change in the waterbody's composition. For example, a decline in conductivity may be caused by rainwater and an increase in conductivity may signal sources of pollution such as agricultural runoff or municipal wastewater. Snapshot Day volunteers measured conductivity to provide a baseline for comparison.

Alkalinity/Acidity (pH)

pH is a measure of the percent of hydrogen ions in a water column. Water with a pH value of 7 is neutral, above 9 is alkaline and below 5 is acidic.

The CCAMP Action levels for pH are levels either above 8.5 or below 7.0. The mean pH level for all sites tested was 7.6. Sites testing above the CCAMP action level included: Corcoran lagoon in Santa Cruz County and Moro Cojo Slough and Willow Creek in Monterey County. Sites testing below the CCAMP action level for pH included: Arana and Soquel creeks in Santa Cruz County and Gabilan Creek and several sites on the Carmel River in Monterey County.

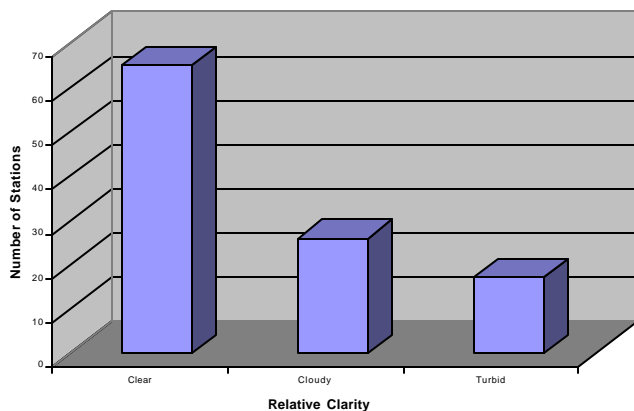
**pH Range Among Stations**



*Volunteer testing water quality at Alisal Slough, Monterey County.*



Water Clarity Among Stations



### Turbidity

Turbidity is a measure of the amount of suspended particles in water and natural turbidity levels vary from stream to stream. Excessive turbidity may indicate erosion, nutrient loading, or artificial algae growth. Snapshot day volunteers assessed area waterbodies for turbidity through a visual analysis, classifying water clarity at a given site as: clear, cloudy, or turbid. Less than 15% of the sites tested were classified as turbid.

### Nutrients

Nitrates and phosphates are nutrients that occur naturally in waterbodies and promote aquatic plant growth. Excessive nutrient levels can lead to algal blooms and extensive aquatic weed growth that in turn depletes the amount of oxygen available in the water column. Runoff containing fertilizers, manure, industrial waste, or sewage, contribute to elevated nutrient levels. Not all sites were tested for nutrients; 51 sites were tested for nitrates and 45 sites were tested for phosphates.

Four sites on Alisal and Tembladero sloughs tested above the state safe drinking water standard for nitrate of 45 mg/l. Six additional sites exceeded the CCAMP Action Level for nitrate of 10 mg/l. Six sites tested above the CCAMP Action level for phosphate, tentatively set at 0.5 mg/l: Lidell Creek in Santa Cruz, two sites each on Tembladero and Alisal Sloughs, and a creek in Pacific Grove at 13<sup>th</sup> and Central.

### Fecal Coliform

Fecal coliform bacteria originate from the feces of warm-blooded animals and are an indicator for sewage contamination (see dissolved oxygen above) as well as feces-borne organisms that can cause diseases such as hepatitis A, bacterial

meningitis, and encephalitis. Excessive fecal coliform counts can thus indicate potential problems for both aquatic and human health.

Under California law, fecal coliform bacteria counts should not exceed 200 per 100 milliliters in swimming areas. As with nutrients, not all Snapshot Day 2000 sites were tested for fecal coliform. Of 57 sites tested for fecal coliform, 18 had counts above what is considered safe for bodily contact. The fecal coliform bacteria count at a site on Pilarcitos Creek in San Mateo County was nearly 60 times the level considered safe for swimming.

### Photo Documentation

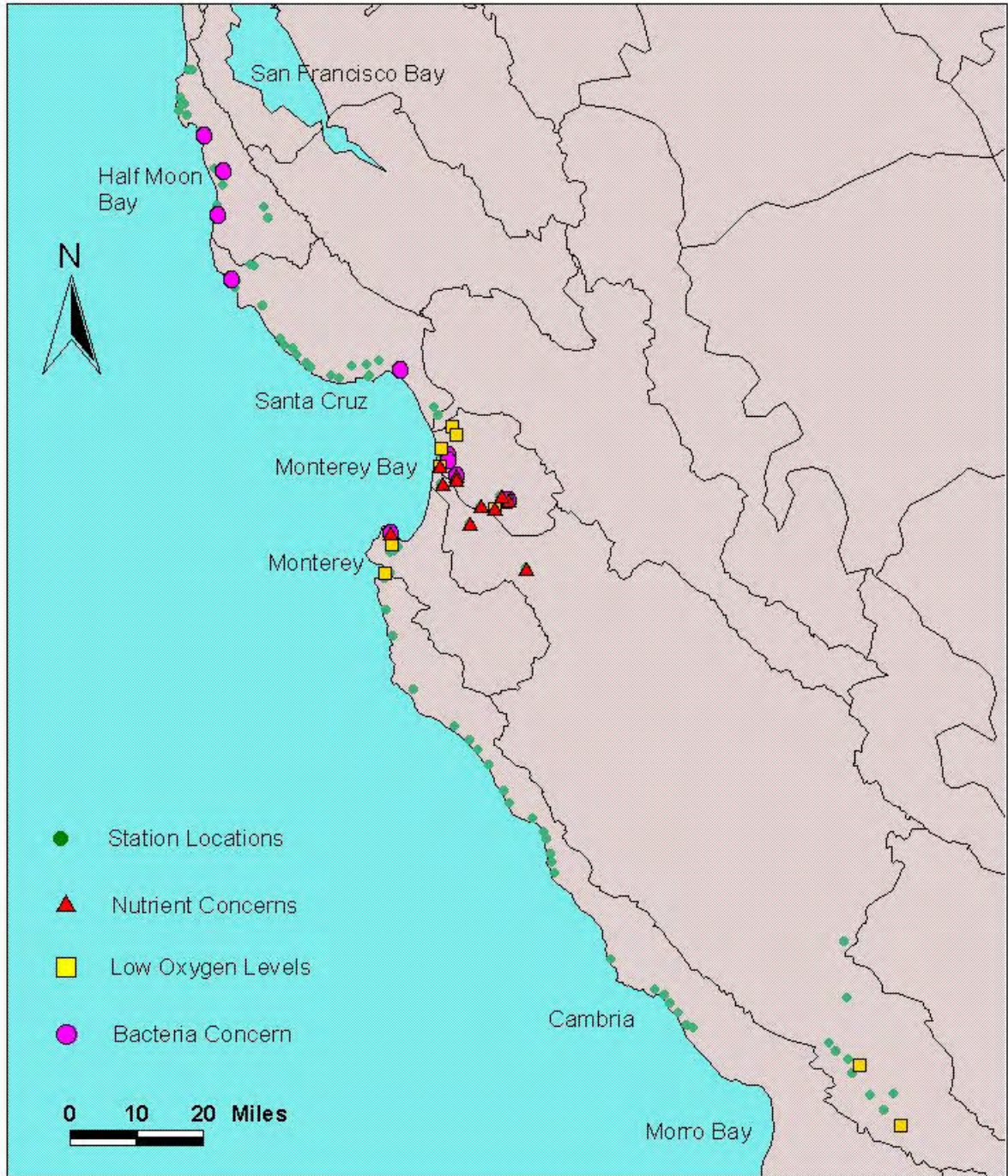
Taking photos of monitoring sites provides information about the type and extent of riparian vegetation, water level, and visible sources of pollution such as trash in the stream. Photos can also help future volunteers locate a particular site for testing. All Snapshot Day 2000 volunteers photographed the conditions at their test sites. Many of these photos are included in this report.

### Conclusion

Data from one day of monitoring is not enough to assess the water quality of a sample site, a stream, or a watershed. Meaningful interpretation of data requires years of regular sampling and must take into account variables such as time of day, seasonal changes, and other factors. However, it is clear from existing monitoring efforts throughout the region is that urban runoff, agricultural runoff, wetland and riparian degradation and point source pollution are all impacting the Sanctuary's watersheds. It is equally clear that citizen volunteers will play an increasing role in tracking pollution and helping to ensure that water quality problems throughout the MBNMS are addressed.



Volunteers on the Carmel River, Monterey County.



**Fig. 1. Snapshot Day 2000 Station Locations.** Locations of all Snapshot Day stations. Stations are depicted as a green dot (?) unless one or more water quality concerns were identified. Concerns are characterized by water quality values that exceed Nutrient (?) or Bacteria (?) screening levels (CCAMP action value) used by the Regional Water Quality Control Board or oxygen (⚡) concentrations below 7 mg/l.



**Fig. 2. Snapshot Day Stations of Concern.** Map of 5 Stations (★) where at least two of three water quality screening values were exceeded. Four of the Stations of Concern were found along the Tembladero Slough drainage.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

### *The Future of the Citizen Monitoring Network*

With funding from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the City of Pacific Grove, the MBNMS, and the California Coastal Commission, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary recently hired a Network Coordinator to manage citizen monitoring activities throughout the Sanctuary's watersheds.

With the assistance of the new Coordinator, the Network continues to work towards its goal of comprehensive monitoring by creating and supporting integrated, long-term, volunteer-based water quality and watershed monitoring programs within the Sanctuary and its adjacent watersheds.



*Network Coordinator Bridget Hoover with Bonnie Van Hise.*

Participants in the Network are working to refine citizen monitoring methods throughout the Monterey Bay Sanctuary watersheds, and to ensure a standard level of quality for regional citizen monitoring results. As it continues to develop and grow, the Network will provide a regional template for other regions throughout coastal California.

The Network Coordinator is involved in a variety of ongoing activities including: setting up a Network Listserve:

([mbnms\\_volmonet@ragged.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov](mailto:mbnms_volmonet@ragged.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov)), coordinating an annual First Flush monitoring event (which took place on October 11, 2000), creating a document which will establish criteria for categorizing data based on its quality and reliability,



establishing a Network website, and finally, preparing for the Second Annual Snapshot Day to take place on Earth Day 2001.

### *The Future of Snapshot Day*

It is our hope that Snapshot Day will continue as an annual event, inspiring area citizens become more involved both in water quality monitoring and in watershed protection. Over time, Snapshot Day may provide useful information on water quality trends throughout the Sanctuary's watersheds. Snapshot Day data may also help agencies and decision-makers to identify water quality problems and

encourage them to focus resources and expertise on reducing sources of pollution in the Sanctuary's watersheds.

Ultimately, Snapshot Day and the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network share one goal: protection and enhancement of water quality throughout the Sanctuary and its watersheds.

### *Thank You to our Volunteers!*

Snapshot Day was truly a community effort. Volunteers ranged from school children to County Supervisors, and included government agencies, community organizations, and concerned citizens. Local, State and Federal agencies loaned water quality monitoring equipment to the effort, and area businesses donated products and services from bagels to film developing.



*Volunteer Mark Sullivan demonstrating the fun side of watershed monitoring. Soquel Creek, Santa Cruz County.*

## APPENDIX A

### SNAPSHOT DAY 2000 VOLUNTEERS

Marin Aldrich, Half Moon Bay  
Gary Allen, La Honda  
Jeff Almquist, Santa Cruz  
Adam Anderson, Seaside  
Jean Andrews, Santa Cruz  
Sue Angulo, Pacific Grove  
Bill Arkfield, Atascadero  
Gloria Avalos, Salinas  
Cathie Bates, Cambria  
Chris Bates, Cambria  
Dianne Begbie, Monterey  
Ralph Bermudez, Salinas  
Paula Berthoin, Carmel  
Isaias Betancourt, Salinas  
Cristina Betancourt, Salinas  
Shelly Bibbins, Marina  
Christina Bibbins, Marina  
Kim Bracchi, Santa Cruz  
Claudia Bravo, Salinas  
Jim Brownell, Cambria  
Taylor Brutzman, Seaside  
Kevin Burke, Greenfield  
Bree Candiforo, Santa Cruz  
Jaymee Castillo, Seaside  
Mike Castleton, Marina  
George Cattermole, San Gregorio  
Jo Chamberland, Half Moon Bay  
Araceli Ciscernos, Marina  
Ross Clark, Santa Cruz  
Bobby Jo Close, Atascadero  
Elaine Cook, Aptos  
John Cook, Aptos  
Mary Cunov, Carmel Valley  
Toni Danzig, Pescadero  
Cathy DeCecco, Carmel  
Tom Deetz, Watsonville  
Martin Demare, Santa Cruz  
Jen Diaz, Seaside  
Angela Dickeson, Salinas  
Johnny Estrada, Gonzales  
Bronwyn Feikert, Marina

Maria Ferdin, Marina  
DJ Funk, Paso Robles  
Josh Gardiner, Seaside  
Richard Gordon, Redwood City  
Bob Harper, Half Moon Bay  
John Haskins, Watsonville  
Rick Hawley, Cambria  
Walter Health, San Luis Obispo  
C. Hood, Davis  
Bridget Hoover, Marina  
Michele Hoover, Salinas  
Renee Hoyos, Davis  
Annette Jackson, Davenport  
Janice Jones, Marina  
Craig Jung  
Revital Katznelson, Oakland  
Rosemary Kenner, Pacific Grove  
Chuck Kozak, Montara  
Merlin Larson, Burlingame  
Chris Larson, San Gregorio  
Laura Lee Lienk, Seaside  
Mark Liu, Seaside  
Katie Lovesy, Seaside  
Tricia Lowe, Monterey  
Tally Manouki, Marina  
Vivian Matuk, San Francisco  
Carl May, Montara  
Rohana Mayer, Big Sur  
Mamie Meyer, Seaside  
Ray Middleton, Seaside  
Kelly Miller, Monterey  
Liz Mondragon, Seaside  
Tricia Mynster, Marina  
Maria Navarro, Salinas  
Diann Neenan, Santa Cruz  
Allison Neuman, Pacific Grove  
David Norris, Carmel Valley  
Micheal O'Neill, Spreckels  
Kimberly Paglis, Watsonville  
Christin Pastor

Jim Patterson, Atascadero  
Robert Peck, Seaside

Roger Perkins, Fremont  
Steve Peters, Santa Cruz  
Anneliese Piazza, Pacific Grove  
Jon Popper, Marina  
Claire Porter, Seaside  
Kathy Powers, Watsonville  
Clark Reynolds, Ben Lomond  
Richard Rollins, Menlo Park  
Roxanne Rothafel, Santa Cruz  
Jim Rourke, Pescadero  
Linda Sheehan, Fremont  
Liese Shultz, Seaside  
Michelle Scott, Santa Cruz  
Brad Seek, Cambria  
Wendi Shafir, La Honda  
Ben Sherman, Seaside  
Maris Sidenstecker, Seaside  
John Smiley, Big Sur  
Scott Sokol, San Gregorio  
Michael Stevenson, Salinas  
Hope Stragnell, Atascadero  
Keith Sugar, Santa Cruz  
Kristen Sullivan, Santa Cruz  
Mark Sullivan, Santa Cruz  
Rob Trask, Cambria  
Bonnie Hise, Pacific Grove  
Barbara Vanderwerf, El Granada  
Bill Vanderwerf, El Granada  
Rachel Vizcarra, Seaside  
Ruth Vreeland, Monterey  
Susan Waldron, Ben Lomond  
Catherine Walsh, Pescadero  
Larry Walsh, Pescadero  
Kelsey Walsh, Pescadero  
Mariah Walsh, Pescadero  
Shannon Walsh, Pescadero  
Karen Worcester, San Luis Obispo  
Laura Young, La Honda  
Roger Zachary, Atascadero