

# Mavericks Surf Contest



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Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

*February 15, 2008*  
*GFNMS and MBNMS Joint Advisory Council Meeting*

# Mavericks Surf Contest Area Overview



# Background

- Mavericks Surf Ventures (MSV) organizes the annual surf contest
- Contest was held Saturday January 12, 2008 (contest window: December 1 - March 31); GFNMS given 44 hours notice
- Event occurs within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
- No Sanctuary permits are issued (regulatory prohibitions are not triggered by vent activities)
- GFNMS has been working with MSV since 2005 to address environmental impacts not prohibited by regulations (e.g. voluntary actions by MSV to decrease impacts)



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# 2008 Activities addressing Wildlife Disturbance

- Notice regarding wildlife disturbance regulations sent to media, USCG, local airport, MSV
- Notice sent at beginning of “Mavericks Season” and once contest called

### PREVENT WILDLIFE DISTURBANCE

- It is recommended to **remain at least 2000 feet AGL** when flying within 1/4 mile of the coast, over offshore rocks and islands within California National Marine Sanctuaries
- Avoid sudden changes in direction, altitude, and speed
- Avoid flying directly over, and making multiple passes over seabird and marine mammal colonies and resting areas
- If birds or marine mammals are observed fleeing or reacting to your presence, vacate the area
- Report wildlife disturbances caused by low flying aircraft to the **NOAA Enforcement Hotline: 1-800-853-1964**






### IT'S THE LAW!!!

- Harassment of wildlife by aircraft can be a violation of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service law, punishable by a \$1,000 citation or a mandatory court appearance that could result in a fine of up to \$10,000, one year in jail, aircraft forfeiture, and/or revocation of pilot's airman certificate. Harass means to disturb, worry, molest, rally, concentrate, harrass, chase, drive, herd, or torment.
- In addition to the 1,000 ft AGL overflight restrictions within the local national marine sanctuaries (see map inside), the following can be a violation under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act: taking any marine mammal, sea turtle or seabird in or above the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. "Take" means: (1) if listed as endangered or threatened: to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect or injure, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct; (2) for any other: to harass, hunt, capture, kill, collect or injure, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. This includes... to operate a vessel or aircraft.
- Download the file titled, "Agencies with Overflight Restrictions" for a list of state and federal regulations and authorities related to aircraft disturbance at: [www.farallones.noaa.gov/ecosystemprotection/mapsandregulations.html](http://www.farallones.noaa.gov/ecosystemprotection/mapsandregulations.html)



Gulf of the Farallones  
National Marine Sanctuary  
991 Marine Drive – Presidio of San Francisco CA 94129  
Media Contact: Mary Jane Schramm, 415/ 561- 6622 x205

## INFORMATION BULLETIN

NOTICE TO: Media, Pilots and Vessel Operators

From: Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, San Francisco, CA

RE: APPROACH RESTRICTIONS AFFECTING  
MAVERICKS SURF CONTEST COVERAGE  
FOR VESSELS, AIRCRAFT

The annual Mavericks Surf Competition could be called any day now!

Please note that there are PERMANENT, YEAR-ROUND federal and state restrictions on wildlife disturbance along the California coast, including the areas near the Mavericks' Surf Competition site near Half Moon Bay, California.

The Mavericks contest season coincides with the times when tens of thousands of marine mammals (whales, dolphins, seals/sea lions) are migrating through or living in nearshore waters. Harbor seals at nearby Fitzgerald Marine Reserve may be caring for their newborn pups, or seabirds are engaged in breeding activities on hillsides and offshore rocks (e.g. Devil's Slide rock). Do your part at this

sensitive time in their lives to protect wildlife!

Seabirds and marine mammals are federally protected. Disturbance – even if unintentional – can result in citation and fines for individuals and their organizations. Media are not exempt from these regulations. It is the responsibility of pilots, vessel operators, and media to be aware of protective regulations that apply. One example, "It is prohibited to use an aircraft to harass any wildlife which means to "disturb, worry, molest, rally, concentrate, harrass, chase, drive, herd or torment" (CFR 922.132)."

Harassment can also result if a vessel approaches marine mammals or birds on the water, or if a helicopter or plane flies near or hovers above hillsides or rocks where seabirds are resting or nesting.

To be safe, we request that you maintain a minimum distance of 1/4 mile from shore, and altitude of 2,000 feet.

Please see the attached map of areas of special sensitivity.

Sensitive sites near the Mavericks Area include:

- Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- Devil's Slide Rock
- San Pedro Rock
- Farallon Islands

Please don't hesitate to contact me or sanctuary Superintendent Maria Brown if you have any questions.

Mary Jane Schramm, Media Liaison  
415/ 561-6622 x205  
Maria Brown, Sanctuary Superintendent  
415/ 561-6622 x301

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## 2008 Activities addressing Sanctuary impacts

- Sanctuary observers posted on airforce station, breakwater, Ross Cove:

Wildlife counts (offshore, beach, cliffs)

Human use counts (same as above)

Vessel counts (by type)

Aircraft counts

Wildlife disturbance



- MSV made loud-speaker announcements during contest that this special area is part of a National Marine Sanctuary
- MSV issued media notices that people could minimize impact by not coming to Pillar Point during the contest and offered alternate viewing locations (~1000 people) and live webcast (~300,000 people worldwide)



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# 2008 Photos: People Distribution

Mavericks  
Beach



Mavericks  
Beach

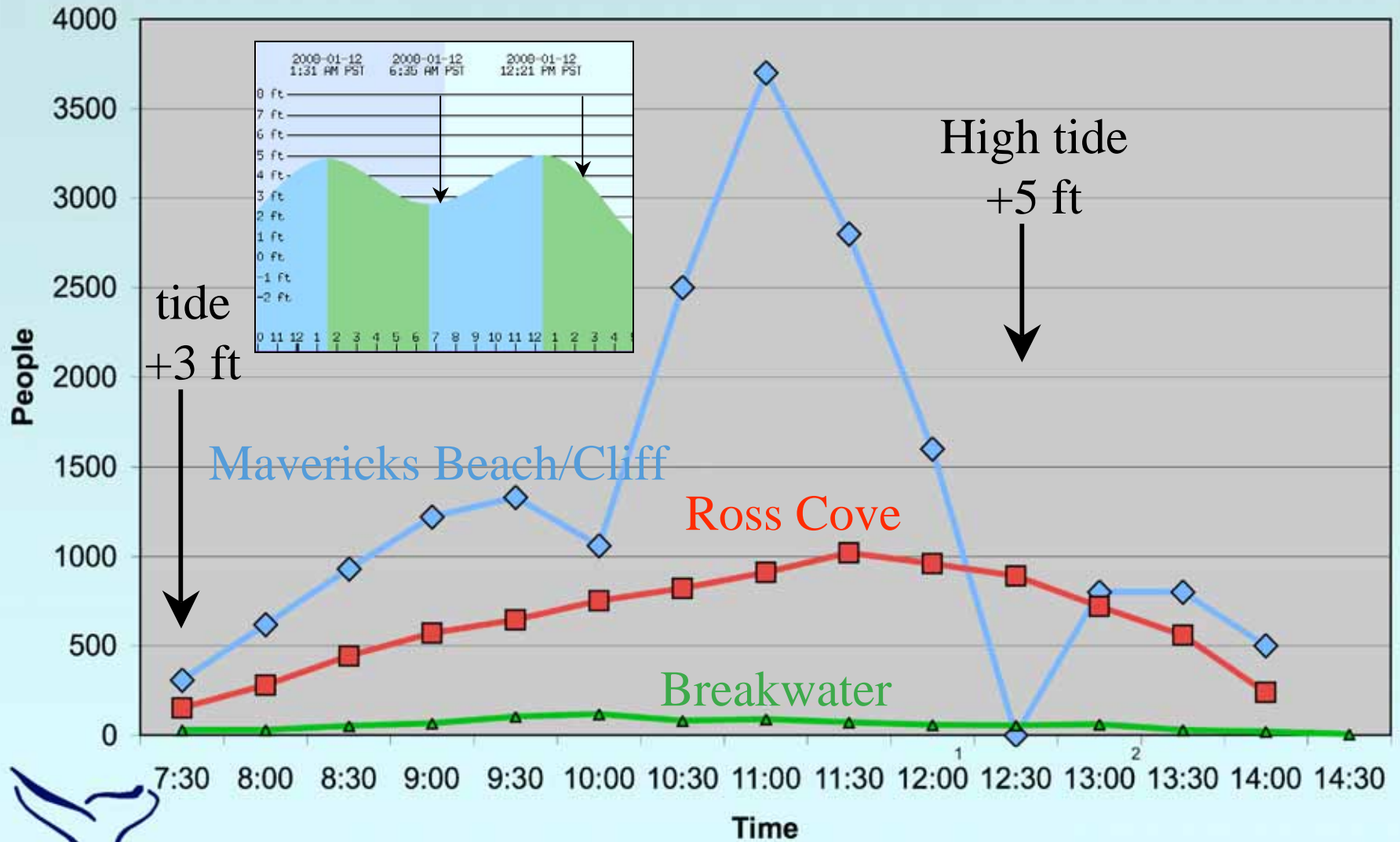


Bluff overlooking  
Mavericks Beach



POST property  
overlooking Ross Cove

# 2008 People Counts



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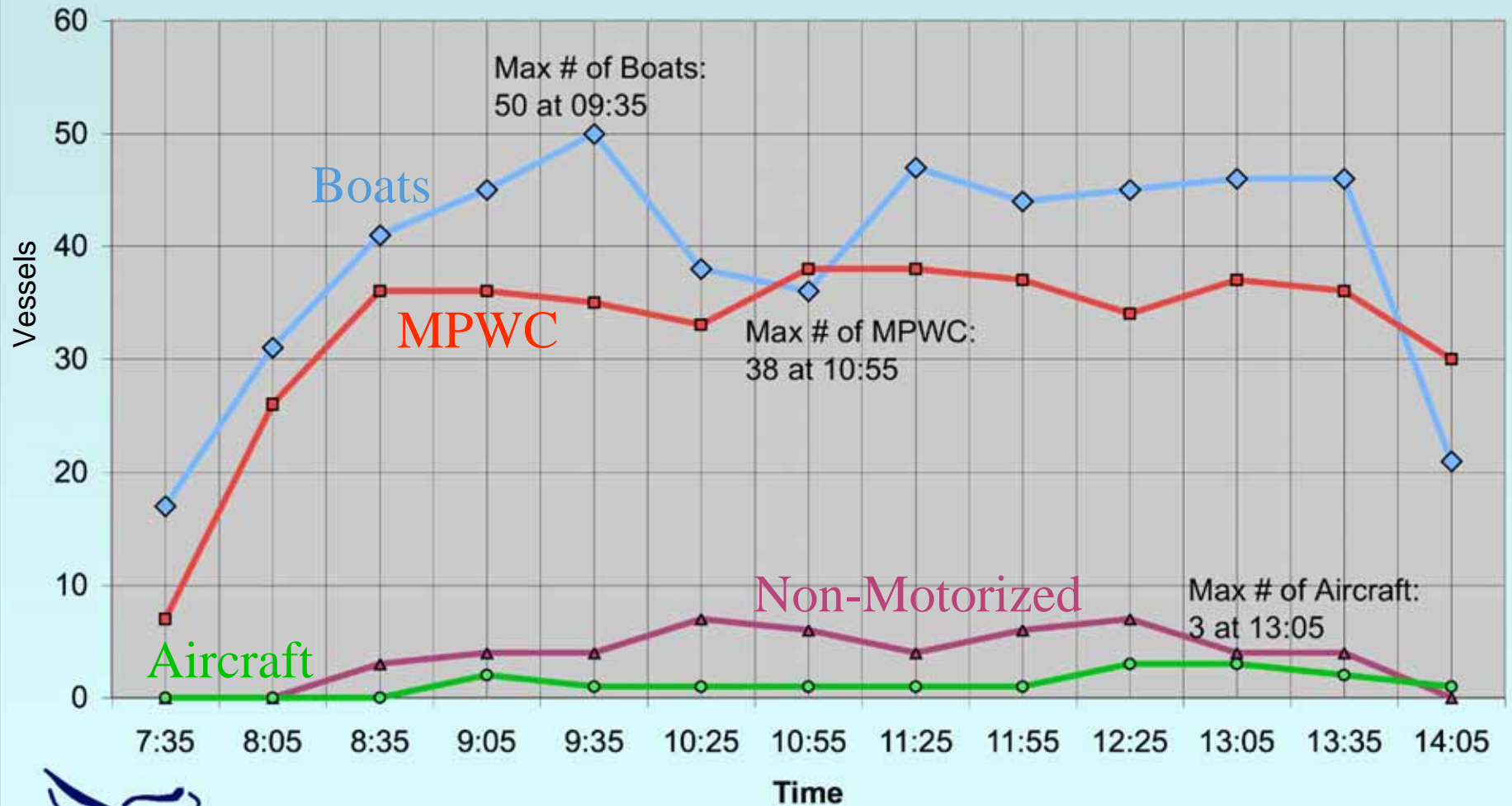
## 2008 Contest USCG Video



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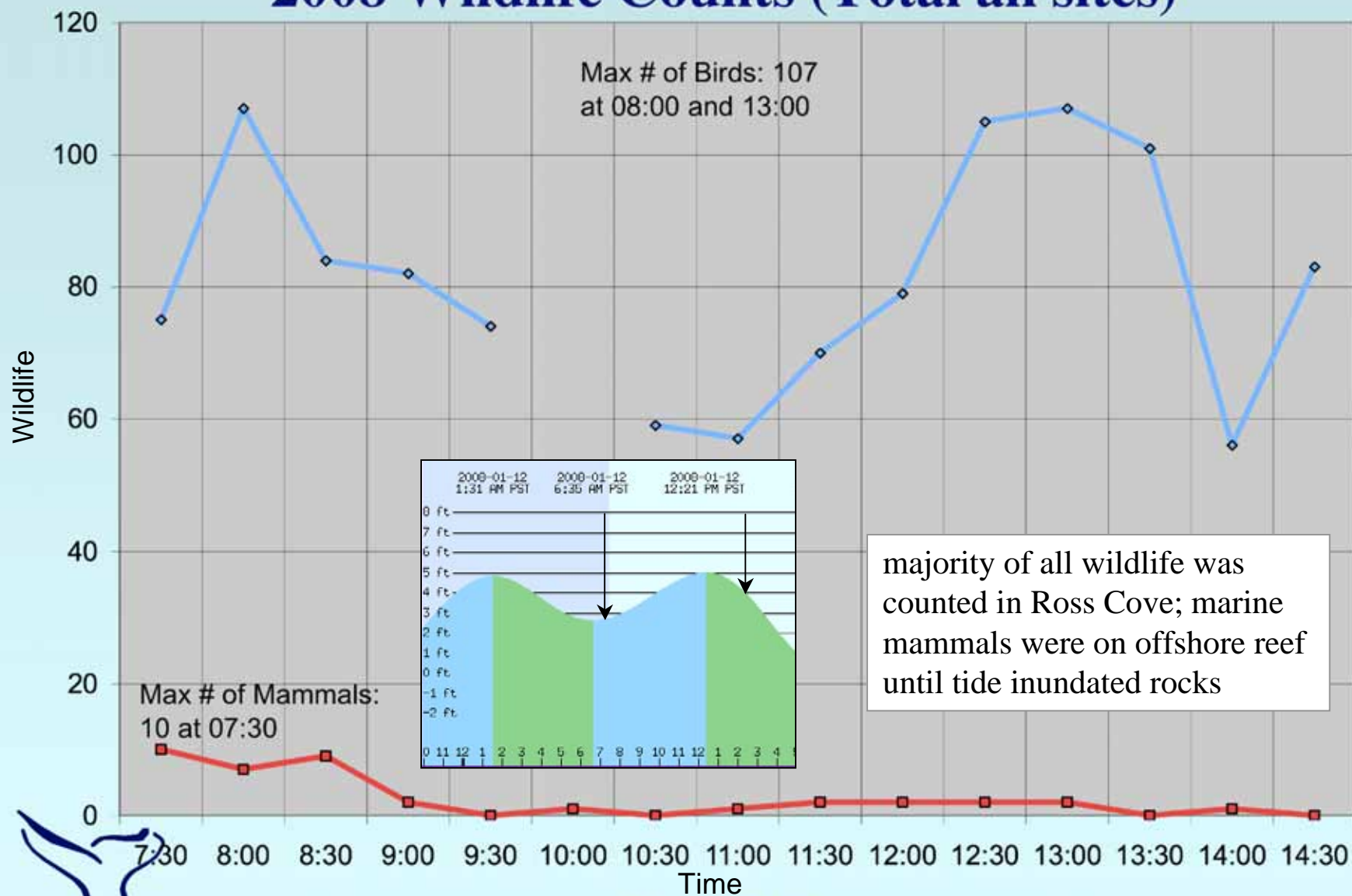


# 2008 Vessel Counts



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# 2008 Wildlife Counts (Total all sites)



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## 2008 Regulatory Compliance Observations

Sanctuary observers reported potential incidents involving MPWC and Aircraft that have been reported to the NOAA-Office of Law Enforcement for follow-up



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## 2008 Activities addressing Tidepool Trampling

Pillar Point Tidepools were NOT CLOSED during the contest since predicted tide was greater than +0.5 ft

*(MSV had agreed to set up barricade and provide volunteers, if closure needed; GFNMS staff would address any problems or questions from the public)*



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## 2008 Activities addressing Marine Debris, Cliff Erosion

### Marine Debris

- MSV had recycling, compost, trash cans on site
- 2 food vendors only - MSV insisted on recyclable materials, where possible
- MSV conducted post-event beach clean-up: 40 bags total, 25 garbage, 15 recyclable



### Cliff Erosion

- GFNMS has expressed concern to MSV regarding cliff erosion from climbing spectators (cliffs not in NMS jurisdiction)
  - MSV and public agencies posted cliffs with signs
  - Frequent announcements regarding public safety and calls for climbers to get down



# 2008 Activities

## Education and Outreach

- Sanctuary had a well-positioned booth at the event to provide information about the Sanctuary, the science of why the large surf break is here, and answer general public and media questions

Sanctuary information broadcast:

- MSV web page
- Public Announcements over loud speaker
- Live webcast: interview with Deputy Superintendent
- Contest DVD (thankyouocean PSA)
- MSV media kit



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## Additional 2007-2008 Activities

*Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary staff are working with MSV to address impacts to Sanctuary resources, educate the public about Sanctuaries, and inspire students about science of oceanography*

- Continue piloting Sanctuary-developed middle school curriculum on waves (joint with MSV; in 2007-MSV arranged for surfers, surf forecaster to participate)
- In 2007, Sanctuary (in partnership with CA Coastal Conservancy, CSUMB, USGS, SIMoN, others) issued press release on science of why Mavericks big wave location is here in the NMS. Information on SIMoN and NMSP websites.

## Future Activities

- Continue to observe, learn, and address what additional ecosystem protection measures may be needed during the contest
- Sanctuary and MSV will develop a sign for Pillar Point beach explaining that Mavericks is in MBNMS and factors controlling big wave formation
- Sanctuary will develop visitor center display on geology, oceanography of Mavericks big waves



NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARIES

*Questions?*



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