

## A Statement from the MBNMS Superintendent

Recent extreme low tides have exposed [marine mammal](#) bones in the intertidal zone of San Simeon Bay. [Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary \(MBNMS\)](#) staff have received reports of beachgoers collecting these bones. While such finds are intriguing, marine mammals and their remains are protected by federal law and are best left in place.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary belongs to the American people, and the resources found here are protected by law in the same manner as natural resources protected in Yosemite National Park. Please help by leaving bones and other natural objects in place. While a bone may seem to have outlived its usefulness, it is part of the ecological system, providing protection and habitat for small marine organisms, just like fallen trees provide habitat and nutrients in a forest.

Anyone who has collected a marine mammal bone within ¼-mile of the ocean must register the bone immediately with the [Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\)](#). Otherwise, possession of the bone could subject the owner to federal prosecution under the [Marine Mammal Protection Act](#).

Bones found in the ocean cannot be collected at all, unless the individual has a valid permit for such collection from the Office of Protected Resources, NMFS.

If you have come into possession of a marine mammal hard part (bare bone or tooth) recently taken from the San Simeon/Cambria area that has not been registered or permitted by NMFS, you must do one of the following:

- Contact the Office of Protected Resources, NMFS in Long Beach by calling (562) 980-3230 to either register the part or get information about obtaining a permit to keep the part.
- Surrender the part to the Sanctuary [Coastal Discovery Center](#) at William Randolph Hearst Memorial Beach, opposite the entrance to Hearst Castle on Highway 1. No questions will be asked, and the part will be used for educational purposes. Call (805) 801-0773 before arriving to ensure that someone is there to receive the part.

Marine mammal parts with soft tissue cannot be collected by the public anywhere. Government officials can legally handle these parts to protect public health and safety or for conservation purposes. Authorized researchers can also collect such parts when permitted by NMFS.

I ask the San Simeon and Cambria communities to help the sanctuary protect ocean resources by encouraging friends and neighbors to leave marine mammal bones in place and by reporting any illegal collection to the NOAA Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-853-1964.

Paul Michel  
Superintendent  
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary