



601 EMBARCADERO, SUITE 11 MORRO BAY, CA 93442
805/772-3834 FAX 805/772-4162 WWW.MBNEP.ORG

Community Grant Program Application

Submit application by email to staff@mbnep.org or mail to the Morro Bay National Estuary Program's offices by 4pm on the due date. **Please be sure to include the summary coversheet below, the Priority Issue check list and Action Plan summary, and the Narrative Information Section.**

Project Title:

Applicant:

Address:

Contact Person(s):

Phone: **Fax:**

Email:

Grant Amount Requested (cannot exceed \$5,000):

Total Estimated Project Cost:

Amount & Source of Other Funding (if relevant):

Project Description Summary (fill in here or attach additional document; word limit 300):



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Check off the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Priority Issue(s) addressed by the proposed project:

- Sedimentation.
- Bacterial contamination.
- Elevated nutrient levels.
- Toxic pollutants.
- Scarce freshwater resources.
- Preserving biodiversity.
- Environmentally balanced uses.

The proposed project must work to implement, at a minimum, one of the Action Plans that address the Priority Issues listed above. Please list the relevant Action Plans that will be addressed by this project below. The Action Plans are detailed within the Management Plan which can be found at www.mbnep.org or from the Estuary Program's office.

Morro Bay National Estuary Program Community Grant Application

Narrative Information Section

Project Title: SeaLife Stewards

Full Project Description:

Otters, harbor seals, sea lions and seabirds seeking safe harbor in Morro Bay are often stressed by water-based visitors. Through careful consideration of wildlife disturbance research, limited success of land-based approaches, and review of case-studies; we have planned a water-based education program modeled on the successful Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary program, Team OCEAN in order to implement the most effective way to reduce disturbance to wildlife and increase public awareness. Our volunteers in kayaks will welcome visitors before they encounter wildlife and will engage them with information about the animals, encouraging them to observe from a safe distance. They will also collect data for wildlife disturbances.

The planning team for the SeaLife Stewards program includes three California State Park Interpreters, two Docents, and the oversight of the Coastal Sector Superintendent/Public Safety Superintendent. Many subject matter experts from various agencies have provide input including the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Team OCEAN program, Morro Bay National Estuary Program, Morro Bay Harbor Department, Sea Otter Savvy program, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways, Point Blue Conservation Science, and the Seabird Protection Network. Vendors include local kayak supply shops, printers, t-shirt shops, and California State Park approved vendors including West Marine.

The goal of the program is to decrease human disturbance to wildlife on the water in Morro Bay. The objectives are:

1. To create a safe and knowledgeable group of volunteers, including CalPoly and Cuesta College students, to be on the water on weekends during spring and summer seasons.
2. To educate the public about marine wildlife and safe interactions.
3. To capture baseline data through citizen science for the number of disturbances of wildlife per hour in the first season, and to measure the change in disturbance rate and the number of people contacted for each season that volunteers are on the water.
4. To create Partners in Protection with the local on-the-water-businesses and agencies including Morro Bay National Estuary Program, Morro Bay Harbor Department, and the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The SeaLife Stewards training program will begin in April and cover 20 hours of training and ongoing mentoring. The training sessions and mentoring will draw upon the expertise of many partners including the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, Point Blue Conservation Science, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks, the Marine Mammal Center, Pacific Wildlife Care, CA State Parks – Division of Boating and Waterways, Sea Otter Savvy program, and the Morro Bay Harbor Department. Volunteers are currently being interviewed and screened for their fitness to fulfill the requirements of the position. The training program and volunteer manual are finalized and ready for the comprehensive training to include kayak and harbor safety, overview of the estuary, interpretation training, discretion training, wildlife identification and behavior, citizen science disturbance data collection, and volunteer protocol.

Community Engagement: The local community will be greeted by volunteers on the water as they kayak, paddle board, and boat in the harbor, or just view the volunteers on the water as they walk the harbor path. The community will be engaged in watching a reduction in disturbance to the highly visible otter rafts in the harbor. Local businesses will be engaged through advertising for volunteers, purchases and rentals being made from their businesses, and invitations to meet the volunteers during the evening reception for volunteers and on-the-water businesses.

Audience: The intended audience is kayakers, paddlers, surfers, divers, boaters, and swimmers that recreate in Morro Bay. The Morro Bay Harbor Department estimates that 22,652 kayaks/SUPs were on the water during 2015 and that the number is growing annually. We hope to reach approximately 50% of that group by having four SeaLife Stewards on the water launching from the Morro Bay State Park Marina and the Morro Bay Harbor Department dock from 10 am to 1 pm every Saturday and Sunday from Spring Break through Labor Day.

Benefits: The benefit of the program will be a trained group of volunteers that actively greet and engage visitors and residents on the water in Morro Bay with wildlife behavior, local area knowledge, and proper viewing etiquette, while successfully reducing disturbance to marine wildlife. Another key benefit of the program is to create shared norms for local community for no-impact wildlife viewing and shared goals with Partners in Protection throughout Morro Bay.

Project Budget:

<u>SeaLife Stewards Program Expenses:</u>			
	Requested Funds	Other Funding Sources	Total Costs
EXPENSES:			
10 Life Vests		\$500.00	\$500.00
5 Kayak Paddles	\$300.00		\$300.00
Equipment Maintenance/Repair		\$400.00	\$400.00
Training Manuals Printing Costs		\$500.00	\$500.00
Training Hospitality		\$150.00	\$150.00
5 Marine Radios		\$500.00	\$500.00
Kayak Storage Rack - Vertical	\$300.00		\$300.00
Kayak Storage Rack - Horizontal		\$400.00	\$400.00
4 Padlocks		\$100.00	\$100.00
5 Towlines	\$50.00		\$50.00
4 Helmets	\$200.00		\$200.00
5 Distress Markers	\$50.00		\$50.00
3 Waterproof First Aid Kits	\$60.00		\$60.00
2 Dock boxes	\$1,000.00		\$1,000.00
4 Ocean Kayak Scramblers	\$1,300.00	\$1,300.00	\$2,600.00
Total Other Expenses	\$3,260.00	\$3,850.00	\$7,110.00
EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION:			
Salary and Wages		CA State Parks*	
Total Salary & Benefits		CA State Parks*	
Total Budgeted Expenses	\$3,260.00	\$3,850.00	\$7,110.00

Under "Other Funding Sources" bolded items are committed.

*Matching funds are provided by California State Parks in salary and volunteer hours.

Evaluation: The success of the program will be measured by assessing the changes in the disturbance rates as measured by the SeaLife Stewards through disturbance monitoring and partner agencies such as the Seabird Protection Network and Sea Otter Savvy citizen science monitors from the beginning to the end of each season on the water, the numbers of people contacted in a season, and the numbers of Partners in Protection created throughout the program.

Schedule:

February 1 to March 30	Volunteer Recruitment and Interviews
April 16/23/30	Volunteer Training
May 7 to May 29	Volunteers work weekends with mentors
May 7 – September 25	SeaLife Stewards on the water every weekend
September 26–30	Finalize data and assessments for the season’s program
October 2016	Planning Team analyzes disturbance data and plans for next recruitment and training

Qualifications: The planning team is comprised of a diverse group of experts in outreach/education, interpretive program planning, interpretive methods and evaluation, wildlife disturbance reduction methods through outreach/education, community engagement, volunteer training, and volunteer management. The training team is comprised of experts in wildlife disturbance monitoring, wildlife disturbance reduction, enforcement, volunteer management, kayak interpretation, ocean safety, marine wildlife laws and policy, kayak interpretation and wildlife disturbance reduction, park management, estuary policy/programs/biology, marine mammal biology, and bird biology. The planning team is made up of representatives from the SLO Coast State Park Docent Council, Central Coast State Parks Association, California State Parks, Marine Protected Area Ambassador program, the Seabird Protection Network – Point Sur to Point Mugu Chapter Outreach/Education team, and the San Luis Obispo Marine Protected Area Collaborative. The training team is made up of representatives from the Central Coast State Parks Association, Docent Council, California State Parks, California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways, Morro Bay National Estuary Program, Pacific Wildlife Care, the Marine Mammal Center, Sea Otter Savvy program, Morro Bay Harbor Department, Point Blue Conservations Science, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Past experiences of the members of the planning team that have helped shape the design of this new program include the Morro Coast Audubon Society Seabird Citizen Science Monitoring and Outreach program, Friends of the Elephant Seal docent program, Sea Otter Experience volunteer program, and the Seabird Protection Network – Point Sur to Point Mugu Chapter Seabird SAFE campaign.

Action Plan Summary:

The SeaLife Stewards program will support the following Action Plans:

Best Management Practice - Boating- BMP-9

SeaLife Stewards will provide safe wildlife viewing tips and reasons why not to disturb wildlife to boaters along with species identification and interpretive facts about the estuary, and wildlife.

Ecosystem Conservation and Restoration – Special Status Species and Recovery Plan -ECR-14

SeaLife Stewards will protect special status species including southern sea otters and brown pelicans. SeaLife Stewards will provide safe wildlife viewing messages and interpretation of how our actions can save or endanger special status species populations.

Environmentally Sound Estuarine Resource Use – Recreational Uses - USE-1

SeaLife Stewards will provide best practices wildlife viewing modeling and proven-effective wildlife viewing etiquette to boaters, kayakers, paddlers, divers, swimmers, and surfers, species identification and interpretation of marine wildlife behavior, along with reasons why disturbance is harmful.

Education & Outreach – Public Education & Outreach - EO1

Visitors on the water in Morro Bay will learn from SeaLife Stewards wildlife species identification, clean estuary practices for on the water and at home, and safe wildlife viewing practices on the water.