



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
**NATIONAL OCEANIC SERVICE**  
**Office of National Marine Sanctuaries**  
1305 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

October 1, 2012

Dear Aviation Community Member,

When Gulf of the Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries were designated (1981 and 1992, respectively), a federal regulation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was implemented to protect seabird colonies and marine mammal rookeries from aircraft disturbance. These regulations prohibit motorized flights below 1,000 feet AGL within specific zones of the sanctuaries; however the overflight prohibition zones were not depicted on aeronautical charts prior to 2012.

After extensive discussions between NOAA and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials, NOAA agreed in 2010 to change the wording of the regulations to clarify that the 1,000-foot delineation is an altitude disturbance threshold for federally protected marine mammals and seabirds – not an FAA airspace restriction. In other words, flying below 1,000 feet AGL in any sanctuary overflight prohibition zone triggers a natural resource violation – not a flight rule violation.

In response to NOAA's regulatory changes (finalized in February 2012), the FAA recently updated the Los Angeles and San Francisco sectional and terminal area charts to advise pilots of NOAA's regulations and to accurately display sanctuary overflight prohibition zones along the coast. Now that the aeronautical charts accurately reflect NOAA's regulations, pilots will be held more accountable for complying with NOAA's federal overflight regulations. Below are examples of the language depicted on the updated aeronautical charts.



NOAA has created a web page on the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' web site that describes the recent changes to several west coast sectional and terminal area charts. For a description of chart changes and the reasons behind them, go to <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/flight/welcome.html>.

The following resources are also available on-line or upon request:

- For a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about central California overflight regulations, go to <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/flight/faqs.html>
- For a large-scale map of the central California overflight prohibition zones, go to <http://farallones.noaa.gov/eco/seabird/media/overflightregmaplg.jpg>
- For sanctuary regulatory descriptions of central California's overflight prohibition zones, go to [http://farallones.noaa.gov/manage/pdf/77FR3919\\_Overflighfinalrule.pdf](http://farallones.noaa.gov/manage/pdf/77FR3919_Overflighfinalrule.pdf)

If you have any further questions about the regulation or chart changes, or if you would like a presentation to your group about this topic, we invite you to contact us at [California.Seabird@noaa.gov](mailto:California.Seabird@noaa.gov).

Sincerely,

*Paul Michel*

Paul Michel, Superintendent

*Maria Brown*

Maria Brown, Superintendent

