

2nd Meeting of the Marketing Subcommittee

November 8, 2012 -- 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Santa Barbara Zoo, 500 Niños Drive, Santa Barbara, California

DRAFT Meeting Notes

Subcommittee members in attendance: Michael Cohen, Andrea Mills, Luhui Isha Ward (on phone); Phyllis Grifman (on phone), Susan Curtis (on phone).

Sanctuary Staff: Julie Bursek, Shauna Bingham, Mike Murray.

Channel Islands Sanctuary Foundation: Harry Rabin, Board Liaison.

1. Synopsis of Education and Outreach Drivers, Resources, and Program Priorities

Julie Bursek, CINMS Team Lead for Education and Outreach, provided an overview of priority program areas, touching on audiences reached, key partnerships, resource challenges, funding mechanisms, and opportunities. Members were impressed with how much is able to be accomplished with such limited staff and funding.

Michael Cohen: Very impressive what you can all accomplish with such limited resources, but it looks like you need more staff. Maybe university partners can help contribute more, and have a presence on the SAC and its working groups.

Harry Rabin: Would be a good starting place to go back and review what was done with funding several years ago (prior to 2004) when there was some additional budget discretionary funds available for education and outreach. The group talked about how several sanctuary programs were started prior to 2004, such as MERITO, but have since then either had to be kept going with external funding arrangements, or not at all.

Michael Cohen: Strong area of emphasis should be “new media” (not just social media). [According to Wikipedia, “New media” refers to on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content]. The CINMS web site is good but could be so much more. Short of additional cash coming in to the sanctuary, new media seems like it could be the most important focal area. Done right, it can feed everything else. Maybe within the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps there may be a few folks with the skills and interest to help with this.

2. Sanctuary Outreach Program

Shauna Bingham, CINMS Volunteer Outreach Coordinator, reviewed sanctuary outreach programs and products. She began by explaining that the sanctuary and the Channel Islands National Park recruit, train and manage 140 volunteers members of the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps. Members are on whale watch trips and other marine excursion tours, leading island hikes, and working at community outreach events. It takes about 3 staff to manage the program. The volunteer contributions are worth about \$600,000 to \$700,000 in value.

Shauna then stepped through a tour of printed sanctuary outreach products, including various brochures, field guides, books and posters. Shauna pointed out which few products, such as the *Protecting Your Channel Islands* brochure remain a priority that we try to find funding to keep going, and characterized most of the remaining products as having not been restocked for a while, with many having been opportunistically produced. When asked what we might try to reprint/restock next, Shauna replied: 1) *Protecting Your Channel Islands* brochure; 2) the CINMS large map poster; 3) the Boating & Safety brochure.

Michael Cohen: Understand that you need to have some printed products, but for the most part “print is dead”. The sanctuary might be better off putting whatever printing funds that can be obtained into electronic products, mobile/tablet products, and help with online services. Tablets are going to end up being everywhere, used for everything, and linked to databases, so that seems like the direction

to move in. Staff described some of the newer projects that are in fact moving in that direction (e.g., a “Whale Spotter” app, the California Tidepools app).

Michael Cohen: The new California Tidepools app is great. It offers so much more potential to get sanctuary messages out, as well as to help with fundraising.

3. Long Range Interpretive Plan for West Coast National Marine Sanctuaries

Julie Bursek highlighted CINMS segments of this draft plan, and then showed slides to explain the types and locations of CINMS signs and kiosks, as well as various partner facilities that currently, or will in the future, bring visibility to the sanctuary.

Harry Rabin: Perhaps the kiosks could be integrated into student activities, driving more interest to the sanctuary and serving as something that is attractive to potential funders.

Michael Cohen: It costs money to maintain, update and replace signs. However, linking your signs back to websites (e.g., with QR codes) can really help. Julie Bursek explained how we are starting to do this with some newer signs. Also, with regard to the very real need for additional funds at the sanctuary, Michael Cohen noted that it is important to keep in mind that lots of people will contribute something as small as one dollar for lots of things. And so, with this in mind, perhaps at the various sites, facilities, and places of interaction that Julie described visitors can be asked to make a small contribution, like just a dollar? Those small amounts of funds could help with upkeep, maintenance, etc. Think of the Zoo train as a successful example.

4. Organizational Memberships

A list was provided of organizational memberships that CINMS has which relate to sanctuary education, outreach, tourism, and marketing. Julie Bursek and Laura Francis maintain some memberships, but it used to be the case that the sanctuary was able to participate in even more.

Michael Cohen: Suggests that sanctuary staff consider joining the Convention and Visitors Bureaus in both Santa Barbara and Ventura. Just get a membership (don't have to be on the board) to get linked into the tourism sector and destination marketing.

5. Social Media and Online Tools

Time was running short at this point in the meeting, but staff acknowledged that the list of online tools that Michael Cohen had previously shared with the Subcommittee via email (see attached) was a very helpful starting point for investigating some options of interest. Michael Cohen indicated he might be able to help bring in some expertise to help us understand and evaluate the latest available tools.

The group also quickly reviewed recently compiled CINMS web site visitation statistics, noting that the overall traffic was pretty good, and that there is something to be learned about which pages are most visited. That said, it was also understood that visitation could always be driven higher, including to certain pages that we may want to be seen more often. Using Google analytics, Michael Cohen said, we could learn a lot more about how the CINMS site compares to others.

6. Administrative Business and Next Steps

There was a nomination made by Michael Cohen for Rich Block to be chair. However, given his absence, the group deferred taking any action on this at this time. The group asked that a simple staff report be provided at the next SAC meeting. Michael Cohen added that he hopes the Subcommittee will soon get to the point where they are laying out some real actions that can be taken, and helping to get things done. He hoped that an extended planning and study process would not characterize the road ahead for this group.

The sanctuary staff present agreed that they should come back to the subcommittee with some specific high priority needs that they feel the subcommittee could help with. It was suggested that the next meeting could be in January.

ATTACHMENT:

Notes from SAC member Michael Cohen, President, Santa Barbara Adventure Company

September 19, 2012

With permission, shared with the SAC Subcommittee on Sanctuary Marketing

Mike [Murray]:

I will be bringing this up at the next meeting, but I wanted to get you an outline of thoughts. My business lives and dies by our online campaign, we are currently #1 on trip advisor and well ranked on Google. We ask all of our guests where they heard about us and 90 percent say through Google and trip advisor. We need to have a review of and plan for the CINMS internet presence moving forward if we are going to create visibility. This is essential to move forward and will add to your bottom line over time. The biggest challenge is setting up a solid plan and designating a paid person to get these steps accomplished. You have to look at it as being as essential as opening the doors and paying the power bill, or making pay roll. It has to happen regularly and be monitored for progress. Basically, you'd need to evaluate your staff, reassign duties, and assign these tasks with a plan. Or, hire a consultant.

I realize your funding is short and no one can do this stuff on your current budget. However, this project alone will increase your visibility and income more than any other plan we put forth. It is an issue of realigning funds and staff duties, which may not be possible. But the results will be worth it. I know I'm not super realistic on this front as you are already doing so much with so little, but I can dream.

Website, social media, and blog review:

This could be a basic plan, and is based on a quick review of your current internet media presence.

- **Internal Control of Online Content/Presence.** Look at who has control of your new media assets, and how to can gain control to make your site and internet presence more effective. You have a lot of cool stuff that could be used as content. All of your SAC members could push the content as well, and link into your assets when possible using: Facebook, websites, reviews, and Pinterest. You'd need one person or a small team in your office to control it. How does the organization make changes, updates and additions to the website, reviews and social media? What are the steps? This should be streamlined with control to come from your office, and ideally be handled by a person or team that is new media savvy. This can affect Google rankings, search engine optimization, Facebook and reviews.
- **Trip Advisor Attractions.** Get listed on Trip Advisor and Yelp. Solicit and get ratings. To get reviews we'd need to determine what people are visiting. This may have to wait until there is more of a physical space to visit, like OCTOS or the Channel Islands Boating Center, but we need to get CINMS listed and bring in reviews. Consider that if State Street in Santa Barbara can have a Trip Advisor page, then CINMS could be working on a review presence. All SAC members could help and may link to it. Check out this "Things To Do in Santa Barbara" Trip Advisor page: http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g33045-Activities-Santa_Barbara_California.html
- **Google and Search Engine Optimization (SEO).** You have good rankings for the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. We should also look at getting your ratings boosted on just "Channel Islands." You have what Google loves, which is educational and free content. Some tweaking could get you even higher ranked. You don't want to wait until you have to two new physical attractions (OCTOS and CI Boating Center). Google places and Google ratings should be included. You may need a consultant, or I could have my person look at your stats. We should look at the words "channel islands" as your main key words. You'd probably never top the Channel Islands National Park rankings but you'd want to be ranked 2nd.

- **Facebook.** This is your Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/mchiacos?composeropen=1#!/pages/Channel-Islands-National-Marine-Sanctuary/132504840120529>. Suggest getting someone young to update and post. The value on this is actually very high and should be a priority. You will easily get “friends” and “actions” because what you are doing in a lot of cases is very cool. This is essential for increased visibility and should be looked at as a required duty, somewhat. The experts suggest posting 1 time per day. Let’s start by just getting CINMS up and running. Again, Facebook will love CINMS - it is something all fans can get behind. Get control of this and use it. It is your greatest tool for views. Remember “cool” wins on Facebook.
- **Blogs.** You could use Facebook as your blog, but Google ranks new educational content the highest. Then your fans can push it even further through their social media contacts. Every “like” gets 1,000 views, which is a far reach. You need a blog on your website. You are already doing it, sort of [<http://channelislands.noaa.gov/focus/wnew.html>], but we should evaluate doing that in Word Press in order to increase Google recognition. We should also talk about the fact that you are already blogging in a way, but how it can enhance search engine optimization.
- **Pinterest.** I recently saw an expert speak on social media for the tourism industry through the Santa Barbara Conference and Visitors Bureau. He recommend if you only have limited time and resources focus on Facebook ads, Facebook calls to action (think likes and comments), and Pinterest (this is picture board that is used in social media). This is your Pinterest board: <http://pinterest.com/search/?q=channel+islands+national+marine+sanctuary>. Gain control of this and get many cool awesome photos up.
- **Flicker.** Again, another posting place for photos that people can use and browse. Very cool and helpful for links, likes, and search engine optimized (somewhat). People use the photos for Pinterest or personal stuff, so be warned about licensing.
- **Promotional video.** Suggest 1 minute or less, with a clear message about what are you saying, selling, calling to action. Ideally post on your web site, not YouTube, to keep people on your web site.
- **Links in.** You want to encourage all SAC members to list and link to the CINMS web site. You want any articles online to link in to your site. You don’t want people to leave your site, so you have to reduce links out from your site. For any article about the sanctuary, you should request a link into your site. These are gold.
- **Local tourism web sites.** Consider: www.santabarbara.com, santabarbaraca.com, ventura.com, oxnard.com, etc. You need to spend time getting CINMS linked and listed on any associated site you can find. Consider paying for some pertinent memberships and advertising. Think “links in” -- they boost your ratings.

Take a good look at my web site (<http://www.sbadventureco.com/>) and you will see what is considered cutting edge, even though it is already outdated and we are planning a new web site next year. The new sites are faster, bigger and ranked higher with all of their tabs, links in, photos, etc.

I am happy to help, including having my person review your site and statistics or discuss at meetings. On the Santa Barbara Conference and Visitors Bureau board I am outspoken about keeping that organization cutting edge with new technology. It is all going to mobile at a very fast rate, so you will need a mobile site down the road.

Let’s talk more at the meeting this Friday.
Excuse the typos.
Michael Cohen
