

Honoring Women in the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

In celebration of Women's History Month we want to highlight some of the women who are making history in our sanctuary through education, research, conservation and stewardship programs to ensure our sanctuary is protected and can support an abundance of life for future generations. At Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, more than half of our staff and a large portion of our volunteers are women. Some of them have been with us for over 20 years, conducting bi-weekly beach surveys, marine debris cleanups, and educating the public in our Visitor Center and outreach events. Others have spent hundreds of hours serving on our Sanctuary Advisory Council and the board of our non-profit partner, Greater Farallones Association. Let's take a look at what inspired these women to dedicate their lives and time to protect our oceans.



Maria Brown, Superintendent of GFNMS

Maria Brown said the inspiration for her work came from her love of animals and the outdoors. After studying mountain lions in the hills of Berkeley, California, Maria went on to earn her master's degree in Urban & Environmental Policy at Tufts University. She became the Executive Director of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association, newly renamed Greater Farallones Association, and then became the superintendent of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary in 2004. Under her supervision the sanctuary underwent a major expansion, tripling in size. Her continued work with staff and partners has increased the survival of harbor seals pups, restored seabird populations along the coast, reduced human disturbance and harassment of white sharks, and changed shipping lanes to reduce vessel strike mortality among whales, among many other significant conservation accomplishments.



Beth Cataldo and Holly Reed, Volunteers for Marine Debris and Beach Watch

Beth Cataldo and Holly Reed have been long time volunteers of not one, but two of our citizen science programs - Marine Debris and Beach Watch. They perform monthly Beach Watch surveys, collecting data on birds and marine mammals, human activities, and oil pollution. In addition, they help with Marine Debris Surveys: cleaning up our beaches while collecting data on the different types of trash encountered. They visit their beaches even during the nastiest of weather, the earliest of times, and the most precarious of landscapes. Beth and Holly are just two examples from a whole group of phenomenal volunteers who spend their free time getting wet, muddy, cold, windburned and sand-caked (doesn't that sound fun?!) to do work that helps us monitor and manage the sanctuary and keep our marine environments safe and healthy.



Francesca Koe, Sanctuary Advisory Council and Greater Farallones Association Board Member

Francesca Koe is the only woman to serve on both our Sanctuary Advisory Council and the board of the Greater Farallones Association. She is a dedicated champion for ocean conservation -- as manifested by her service as former GFA President (2010 - 2016) and her role in designing marine protected areas for our north-central region as a primary stakeholder in the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative. Francesca is a multi-agency diving instructor and has certified hundreds of students as divers. She is also a competitive free diver - her deepest dive on a rebreather is 250 feet; and using no equipment at all, she's descended to 150 ft. Francesca is a certified AIDA judge and editor-at-large for Deeperblue.com. She is inspired by the ocean, reminding others that "our northern California waters are the most wonderful place to see a spectrum of marine wildlife." She maintains that this is still one of her favorite dive sites, despite all the places in the world she's been.