



For Immediate Release
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**San Francisco Oil Spill Responder, Mary Cantini, Named Volunteer of the Year by
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation**

Washington, DC—Mary Cantini, a long-time volunteer for the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, who helped conduct beach monitoring and clean-up efforts during the Cosco Busan Oil Spill in San Francisco, was named volunteer of the year by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation at a June 3rd ceremony in Washington, DC.

“Mary is an incredible role model for citizen involvement in NOAA’s work to protect the marine environment,” said Lori Arguelles, president and CEO of the Foundation. “Her dedication, skill and tireless efforts during a major oil spill contributed valuable information to the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and authorities in their subsequent clean-up efforts.”

Since 1999, Mary Cantini, a resident of San Francisco, has contributed to the science and resource protection of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary by assisting with two important research programs. As volunteer for the Sanctuary Education and Long-term Stewardship (SEALS) program she documented disturbance to harbor seals at one of the pupping sites where pup mortality was increasing due to visitor disturbance. This research aided the sanctuary in identifying the causes of disturbance and in implementing measures to halt and then reverse the mortality trend.

In 2005, Mary began systematic monthly surveys under the Beach Watch volunteer program of China Beach and Ocean Beach located outside the Golden Gate Bridge, establishing a baseline of data for these sites on wildlife and physical profiles. In November 2007, both beaches were fouled, China Beach most heavily, during the Cosco Busan oil spill.

Starting the first day after the spill, Mary changed her office hours to begin work at 4:30 a.m. so she could report to her assigned oiled beach in the pre-dawn to begin surveys dressed in HAZMAT (hazardous materials) protection outerwear and laden with sampling gear. She virtually put her regular life “on hold” to aid the spill response efforts. Mary carried out these surveys into mid-January, logging 76 spill hours, driving 295 miles at her own expense, and patrolling 23.5 km of beaches during this one oil spill alone.

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“Despite working under the stress of the emergency, Mary was outstanding as she performed the urgent work of spill response,” stated Farallones sanctuary superintendent Maria Brown. “She contributed first, by providing a baseline of data on coastal wildlife before the spill. And then, during the spill response, her special surveys helped to inform the Unified Command on where to deploy cleanup crews on re-fouled beaches.”

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the private, non-profit partner to the federal National Marine Sanctuary System, managed within NOAA’s National Ocean Service. The 14 sites within the system protect special places in the oceans and Great Lakes, from the Florida Keys to the Hawaiian Islands, and from Lake Huron to the Gulf of Mexico.

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Note to editors: A photo of Mary Cantini is available upon request or by visiting www.nmsfocean.org.