



Names harbor confusion

NEW SANTA CRUZ ANCHORAGE SHOULD END MIX-UPS BY CAPTAINS SEEKING SAFE HAVEN



KAREN T. BORCHERS — MERCURY NEWS

Port officials want to rename Santa Cruz Harbor — seen here from Twin Lakes Beach — Santa Cruz Anchorage, to avoid confusion between the main harbor and the Small Craft Harbor.

Harbor

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By David L. Beck
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Officially speaking, there's only room for one Santa Cruz Harbor in this town.

Which is why all that nice, sheltered water between the jetty and Lighthouse Point — long designated Santa Cruz Harbor on maps and marine charts — is being renamed the Santa Cruz Anchorage.

The idea is to avoid confusion with the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor. When you're at sea and looking for the harbor, say port officials, you shouldn't have to try to figure out which Santa Cruz harbor you're aiming for.

The water in question is on both sides of the Santa Cruz Wharf, between the Small Craft Harbor mouth on the east and the Lighthouse surfing area — Steamer Lane — on the west. "That whole section where the bay actually curves in," said port operations manager Kimbra Eldridge, "is a wonderful anchorage."

"But it was labeled as a harbor way, way back, like 100 years ago." And so it remains on maps today.

That was OK when Santa Cruz didn't actually have a harbor. But in the early 1960s, the

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Army Corps of Engineers dredged the former Woods Lagoon and turned it into a small boat harbor. With the later addition of an upper harbor, the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor now has permanent berths for about 1,200 boats, plus room for about 100 visitors, Eldridge said.

That doesn't mean you can't tie up to a buoy or anchor off of the Main Beach, in Cowell Cove or off of Twin Lakes Beach. But on official U.S. Geographic Survey maps, all that is called "Santa Cruz Harbor."

"It's been a source of confusion," said Brian Foss, the port director.

The opportunity to formally rename those waters arose, said Eldridge, when the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) "came to us and said, 'We're going to redo our charts. Any changes?'"

"So we said, 'While you're doing this, just to avoid confusion, let's call this Santa Cruz Anchorage.'"

Of course, the days when a Capt. Cook could glance at the calendar and name his latest discovery "Friday" or "Christmas" are long gone. In the 21st century, the process takes a little longer.

On Dec. 5, Eldridge wrote a formal Request for Geographic Name Change to the executive secretary for domestic geographic names, Roger Payne, at USGS headquarters in Reston, Va. "The term Santa Cruz Harbor is confusing to the mariner," she wrote.

The USGS inquired whether Santa Cruz County had any objections. Eldridge replied that the county had nothing to do with it; the harbor and the adjacent waters are all in the city of Santa Cruz.

So Payne wrote Mayor Christopher Krohn, who passed the letter on the Martin Bernal, the assistant city manager, who passed it on to the city council, which on May 14 gave its assent to the name change.

Back to Reston, where the board is still waiting to hear from the city, NOAA and the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names. The state board consists of five voting members, all volunteer "place name geeks" from the California Resource Agency — representing Forestry, Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, and Conservation, as well as advisory federal officials and interested citizens, according to the current chairman, Eric Spry, a Department of Forestry computer mapping expert.

The state board is scheduled to meet June 12. Spry hasn't heard from any opponents of Santa Cruz Anchorage, but he plans to see if any local interest groups want to weigh in. "There are some groups we normally work with," he said, "but not for names in water. That's kind of a unique one for us."

The USGS committee next meets on June 13. But it won't put Santa Cruz on its agenda until all the state and local entities have done their parts. Only after the national committee votes can the printers of charts and maps start changing "Harbor" to "Anchorage."

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