Oceanography and Geology of the Gulf of the Farallones

The San Francisco Bay region of California is famous for its stunning landscapes and complex geology. Adjacent to this region, in the watery world of the Pacific Ocean beyond the Golden Gate, lies the Gulf of the Farallones, a physical environment equally complex and fascinating, but less obvious, less visible, and therefore more mysterious.

Scientific studies are revealing that the sea floor of the gulf, like the region onshore, was crafted by geologic forces that include movements of the San Andreas Fault system, major changes in sea level, and the action of rivers. The ceaseless work of oceanic currents has further sculpted the sea bottom in the gulf into landscapes that today range from flat plains and giant sand ripples to deep canyons and rugged mountains, some of whose highest summits poke above the water to form the Farallon Islands.