



MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

809 Center Street, Room 10, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • (831) 420-5020 • Fax: (831) 420-5011 • citycouncil@cityofsantacruz.com

November 30, 2023

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

RE: Petition to Modify the CA Marine Protected Area Network to Enhance Protections for California's Most Resilient Kelp Forests

Dear President Sklar and Honorable Commissioners:

As a mayor and advocate for the health and vitality of California's coastal ecosystems, I write to express my unwavering support for the expansion of the State's network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), including the expansion of Natural Bridges SMR and the implementation of a new MPA at Pleasure Point. Protecting specific habitat areas, including the remaining areas of stable kelp forests, and increasing the rigor of existing marine protected areas are crucial steps in safeguarding our diverse marine species and ensuring the long-term well-being of the ecosystems off our shores.

The state of our ocean is at a critical juncture, with escalating global temperatures, declining biodiversity, and a growing number of endangered marine species. Northern California has lost more than 95% of its kelp forests since 2014, and kelp forests statewide have experienced declines over the past decade.¹ Pollution, overfishing, offshore drilling, and other human activities are threatening ocean habitats and marine species, while the changing climate increases the risk of extreme weather events and puts even greater stress on ocean ecosystems.^{2 3}

In the face of these mounting threats, California has a unique opportunity to take bold and effective action to conserve ocean habitats and ensure a greater abundance of life off our coast. Over two decades ago, the State passed the groundbreaking Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), which called on the State to use one of the most powerful tools for ocean conservation: MPAs.

MPAs, like state parks on land, protect unique and important ocean habitats from activities that can damage ocean life. Areas that are strongly protected have been shown to be highly effective in conserving biodiversity, enhancing ecosystem resilience, and mitigating the impacts of climate change on our oceans.⁴

¹ Meredith McPherson et. al, [A discrete shift in the structure of a kelp forest ecosystem co-occurs with an epizootic and marine heat wave](#), Communications Biology, March 5, 2021.

² James Horrox, Steve Blackledge and Kelsey Lamp, "[Now Life for the Ocean: How marine protections keep our waters wild](#)," Environment America Research and Policy Center & Frontier Group, February 2021.

³ Arafteh-Dalmau et al., [Integrating climate adaptation and transboundary management: Guidelines for designing climate smart marine protected area](#), One Earth 6, 1–19 November 17, 2023 © 2023 Published by Elsevier Inc.

⁴ James Horrox, Steve Blackledge and Kelsey Lamp, "[Now Life for the Ocean: How marine protections keep our waters wild](#)," Environment America Research and Policy Center & Frontier Group, February 2021.

California's network of MPAs, foreseen in the MLPA, celebrated its tenth anniversary last year, and the State's decadal management review showed that marine life in existing reserves better withstood recent marine heatwaves, and reserves across the State had higher biomass of commercially caught fish than areas lacking protection.⁵

Now, we need to build on this system and maintain California's role as a leader, both nationally and globally, in the fight to protect more ocean habitats.

That is why I urge you to expand our State's network of MPAs within the adaptive management process of the Decadal Management Review. In particular, I am writing in support of the expansion of the Natural Bridges SMR and the implementation of a new MPA at Pleasure Point off the coast of my community, Santa Cruz.

As the author of the Marine Life Management Act and the Marine Life Protection Act, I am fully supportive of Environment California's request for additional marine protected areas. When I was Speaker pro tempore of the California Assembly (1996–2002), I was deeply involved in this subject. In my last year, I also authored the California Ocean Trust Act, which created the California Ocean Science Trust (Cal-OST). Cal-OST has written extensively about the successes within the MPAs, and more would be a very good idea.

We, as Californians, have a deep love for our ocean and feel a profound responsibility to participate in decisions that impact our State's coastal waters. Our ocean is not just a source of clean air, wildlife, and natural beauty but also a mystery that beckons exploration and discovery. It is our moral imperative to lead the nation and the world in taking bold actions to preserve the sea in our own backyard, ensuring its future and the well-being of the communities that rely on it for their survival and prosperity.

In conclusion, we strongly urge you, Honorable Commissioners, to expand California's MPA network to encompass areas of persistent kelp, with a particular focus on safeguarding Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve and implementing a new MPA at Pleasure Point. By doing so, you will leave a lasting legacy of environmental stewardship.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the welfare of our ocean and for considering this proposal. Together, we can ensure a healthier, more abundant future for the unique marine ecosystems that define California.

Sincerely,



Fred Keeley
Mayor

P:\CMAD\Word(Wpfiles)\SUZANNEU\Mayorfk 2022-2026\Letters\CA Fish and Game - Kelp Forests.docx

⁵ California Department of Fish and Wildlife, [California's Marine Protected Area Network Decadal Management Review](#), 2022.

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0030
(916) 319-2090

DISTRICT OFFICES
857 SANTA ROSA STREET
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401
(805) 549-3001

99 PACIFIC STREET, SUITE 575G
MONTEREY, CA 93940
(831) 649-2832



COMMITTEES
HIGHER EDUCATION
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
NATURAL RESOURCES
PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND
RETIREMENT
RULES

SELECT COMMITTEES
CHAIR: OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY IN
CALIFORNIA
CHAIR: SERVING STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES

VICE CHAIR: JOINT COMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

November 28th, 2023

Re: Strengthening and Expanding California's Marine Protected Area Network

Dear President Sklar and Honorable Commissioners,

As an Assemblymember and advocate for the health and vitality of California's coastal ecosystems, I write to express my support for the expansion of the state's network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to include the expansion and strengthening of Point Buchon SMCA and Natural Bridges SMR. Protecting specific habitat areas, including the remaining areas of stable kelp forests, and increasing the rigor of existing marine protected areas are crucial steps in safeguarding our diverse marine species and ensuring the long-term well-being of the ecosystems off our shores.

The state of our ocean is at a critical juncture, with escalating global temperatures, declining biodiversity, and a growing number of endangered marine species. Northern California has lost more than 95% of its kelp forests since 2014, and kelp forests statewide have experienced declines over the past decade.¹ Pollution, overfishing, offshore drilling and other human activities are threatening ocean habitat and marine species, while the changing climate increases the risk of extreme weather events and puts even greater stress on ocean ecosystems.^{2,3}

In the face of these mounting threats, California has a unique opportunity to take bold and effective action to conserve ocean habitats and ensure a greater abundance of life off our coast. Over two decades ago, the state passed the groundbreaking Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), which called on the state to use one of the most powerful tools for ocean conservation: marine protected areas (MPAs).

¹ Meredith McPherson et. al, [Large-scale shift in the structure of a kelp forest ecosystem co-occurs with an epizootic and marine heatwave](#), Communications Biology, March 5, 2021

² James Horrox, Steve Blackledge and Kelsey Lamp, "[New Life for the Ocean: How marine protections keep our waters wild](#)," Environment America Research and Policy Center & Frontier Group, February 2021.

³ Arafah-Dalmau et al., [Integrating climate adaptation and transboundary management: Guidelines for designing climate smart marine protected areas](#), One Earth 6, 1–19 November 17, 2023 ^a 2023 Published

MPAs, like state parks on land, protect unique and important ocean habitats from activities that can damage ocean life. Areas that are strongly protected have been shown to be highly effective in conserving biodiversity, enhancing ecosystem resilience, and mitigating the impacts of climate change on our oceans.⁴ California's network of MPAs, foreseen in the MLPA, celebrated its tenth-anniversary last year, and the state's decadal management review showed that marine life in existing reserves better withstood recent marine heatwaves, and reserves across the state had higher biomass of commercially caught fish than areas lacking protection.⁵ Now, we need to build on this system and maintain California's role as a leader, both nationally and globally, in the fight to protect more ocean habitats.

That's why I urge you to expand our state's network of MPAs within the adaptive management process of the Decadal Management Review. In particular, I am writing in support of the strengthening and expansion of Point Buchon SMCA and Natural Bridges SMR off the coast of my community.

We, as Californians, have a deep love for our ocean and feel a profound responsibility to participate in decisions that impact our state's coastal waters. Our ocean is not just a source of clean air, wildlife, and natural beauty but also a mystery that beckons exploration and discovery. It is our moral imperative to lead the nation and the world in taking bold actions to preserve the sea in our own backyard, ensuring its future and the well-being of the communities that rely on it for their survival and prosperity.

In conclusion, we strongly urge you, Honorable Commissioners, to expand California's MPA network to encompass areas of persistent kelp, with a particular focus on safeguarding the strengthening and expansion of Point Buchon SMCA and Natural Bridges SMR.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the welfare of our ocean and for considering this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Addis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "A".

DAWN ADDIS
Assemblymember, 30th District

⁴ James Horrox, Steve Blackledge and Kelsey Lamp, "[New Life for the Ocean: How marine protections keep our waters wild](#)," Environment America Research and Policy Center & Frontier Group, February 2021.

⁵ California Department of Fish and Wildlife. [California's Marine Protected Area Network Decadal Management Review](#). 2022.