

March 2008

COMMUNITY



NEWS OF THE CALIFORNIA SEA URCHIN COMMISSION

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

COMMISSION ADOPTS AN ASSESSMENT INCREASE

FOCUSES ON FUTURE CHALLENGES TO THE FISHERY

The Sea Urchin Commission approved a three-fold increase in the assessment on sea urchin landings to ensure adequate funding to address pressing challenges to the sea urchin industry. Following an industry-wide vote of all divers and processors, the Commission formally affirmed (at its January 25, 2008 meeting) the industry preference for an assessment of 3¢ per pound of sea urchin landed.

The Commission recognized that the initial assessment of 1¢, while appropriate during its startup years, would not be adequate to take on the many things threatening the fisheries future. It presented the industry a choice between doubling or tripling the assessment. Fifty-seven percent of the valid votes cast selected tripling the assessment.

Included in the increase is a dedication of not less than one-third of the assessment to activities seeking to protect access to sea urchin resources, i.e., protecting its ability to harvest sea urchin. The increased assessment and this commitment is a strong statement to industry members and others that the Commission takes its duties to protect and promote a sustainable fishery very seriously.

High on the Commission's priority is the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); state and federal refusal to manage and recover sea otters without jeopardizing shellfish fishing; scientific monitoring of sea urchin populations to support responsible fishery management; exploring new management strategies, including co-management options; and, ensuring new legislation does not undermine an economical fishery.

The Commission has taken a lead within the fishing community to advocate for responsible and

balanced creation of MPAs, without needlessly hindering fishing opportunities. The California Fisheries Coalition (CFC) was formed with the strong support of the Sea Urchin Commission. With this assessment increase, the Commission will be a strong partner with the CFC as MPAs come to the south part of the State. (See MPA article in this newsletter.)

Another major threat to the sea urchin fishery is the short-sightedness of both the federal and state governments in failing to appropriately protect sea otters. Instead of confronting the overwhelming water quality threat to sea otters, the Fish & Wildlife Service chooses instead a path that will threaten endangered abalone and other shellfish, including sea urchin.

In an environment when many well funded organizations constantly circle in search of an opportunity to attack, the Commission knows that the industry must be ready with credible scientific data to defend responsible fishery management. The Commission will now be able to expand its current efforts to accumulate necessary data and improve its analysis and use of this data.

In addition to elevating attention to the above activities, the increased assessment will allow the Sea Urchin Commission to continue efforts to promote high consistent quality sea urchin products, introduce consumers to California sea urchin, expand markets, and ensure a high level of industry-wide coordination and communication.

The Commission will meet in May to adopt a new budget and set plans for future work to resolve some of the critical challenges facing the sea urchin industry.

—VERN GOEHRING: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

TGood Day. It's election time! I feel this election will be important. We are facing some trying times for the urchin industry including MPAs coming to Southern California then back to Northern California. The decisions made in the next two years will affect us for years to come, if not forever. Therefore, we need good leadership; people who will represent our industry so that we all benefit from a fishery that enables us to feed our families. Please vote when you receive the ballot.

The CSUC meeting in Los Alamitos at the end of January was interesting. The main topic was the assessment rate. Most, if not all, agree that we need funds to continue to operate and tackle the issues our industry is facing- MPAs, sea otters, wave energy to name but a few. I know

some are not happy with the increase. After the MPA issue is resolved, we can take another look at the assessments and readjust it if appropriate. This is OUR Commission. We can make the decisions that will keep our fishery going.

On another matter, I received some complaints that we are not doing enough marketing or promotion. I feel in marketing we first must have a good product. That is what the Commission is trying to do – ensure a good product by setting industry standards for temperature, diver handling, processor handling, grade standards and names. Next, we must look for new markets and expand existing markets. The Commission has sought to do this by being involved with restaurant associations, the Rice Commission, and others in public outreach functions. We supplied fresh uni samples and introduced

people to uni; people who have never tasted uni before. Many tried and liked it. The Commission also has been involved with product development by creating new uni recipes and serving them at various functions. If people do not know what sea urchins are and how uni tastes, our domestic markets will not grow. And, domestic markets are growing. As our domestic markets grow, our price per pound will also grow as a result of lessening dependence on unstable foreign markets.

So please stand with me by supporting OUR commission and voting for commissioners who will make wise decisions.

Good luck and good diving.

—TOM TRUMPER: DIVER, FORT BRAGG

CALIFORNIA RED SEA URCHINS LANDINGS BY REGION AND MONTH 2007

2007 Preliminary thru November

	MONTH	RECEIPTS	POUNDS	EXVESSEL VALUE*
NORTHERN CA	Jan	133	127,596	69,911
	Feb	96	94,755	52,142
	Mar	179	219,606	128,301
	Apr	63	53,824	23,974
	May	105	108,749	52,636
	Jun	59	62,573	27,168
	Jul	90	96,135	47,739
	Aug	143	194,452	99,149
	Sep	133	174,347	107,572
	Oct	151	177,667	114,498
	Nov	60	74,612	48,548
Subtotal		1,212	1,384,316	771,638
SOUTHERN CA	Jan	859	1,016,030	466,482
	Feb	444	477,230	228,175
	Mar	842	985,168	445,823
	Apr	437	401,174	191,521
	May	938	1,074,177	489,860
	Jun	577	608,374	228,825
	Jul	505	554,022	271,346
	Aug	700	856,567	407,104
	Sep	693	814,336	400,314
	Oct	788	916,134	438,034
	Nov	670	820,592	396,080
Subtotal		7,453	8,523,804	3,963,564

* Exvessel value may not reflect actual price paid to fisherman | SOURCE: The Department of Fish and Game

MPAS COMING TO A SOUTH AREA NEAR YOU

MPAs Coming to a South Area Near You

Over the past three years marine protected areas have been established along the south central coast of California and soon they will be adopted along the north central coast reaching north to Point Arena. These MPAs are being created according to state law referred to as the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA).

If MPAs continue to be created in the future as they have in the past, they could be devastating to sea urchin diving when the process moves south (Point Conception to Mexico) later in 2008.

Years ago, divers in the Santa Barbara and Ventura areas will recall, MPAs were created at the Channel Islands under other general state laws. If the Channel Islands experience left a bad impression, the new MLPA experience won't be any different.

MPAs Ignore Pollution

While the law says MPAs are to protect marine ecosystems, biodiversity and key habitats from any human threats, they are being implemented assuming the only threat worth addressing is the threat of fishing. So far the only activities restricted within MPAs is commercial and recreational fishing. *Polluters that degrade the marine environment get a free pass.*

The Sea Urchin Commission is represented in the current round of MPA designation meetings by Dirk Ammerman, a diver in Fort Bragg. Although Dirk reports that sea urchin diving may not be negatively impact too extremely in the current round of designations, it doesn't change the fact that the process is heavily biased against fishing.

Some of the key points of bias in the process include:

- A refusal to recognize and give credit to the conservation values of existing fishing regulations, resulting in a duplication of restrictions necessary to conserve marine species.
- A refusal to ensure that the MLPA is implemented compatibly with other laws that seek to protect the ocean, including laws that address fishery management, water quality, and coastal development, and to ensure that new restrictions are placed on activities in proportion to threats.
- A refusal to identify which marine ecosystem functions, species or habitats are inadequately protected by existing conservation measures, it's presumed that everything needs an expansive MPA network to thrive.
- A refusal to fully use all related science and scientific tools to better understand the needs in the ocean and the possible outcomes of different MPA options. While some progress has been made here, there is still a long way to go.
- A refusal to undertake a comprehensive socioeconomic analysis of MPAs so the least damaging alternative, that still accomplishes MLPA objectives, can be selected. The process simply, but inadequately, looks only at ex-vessel values of fishing and ignores the economic value that comes from support businesses and the thousands of jobs in those businesses.

Fisheries Coalition Seeks Equity

The Sea Urchin Commission was instrumental in creating the California Fisheries Coalition (CFC) for the purpose of bringing recreational and commercial fishing organizations together to work for an equitable and balanced implementation of the MLPA. The CFC has been very active and has contributed much to the discussion and understanding of MPAs. The work of the CFC (its reports, position papers, news releases, etc.) is posted on its website: www.cafisheriescoalition.org.

As the MLPA process moves south, the CFC is reviewing strategies to deal with a process that so far has ignored pleas for equity.

CFC will work to ensure fishery scientists remain on the Science Advisory Team to guide the design of MPAs. It is seeking to include in the process a workshop modeling tool that allows stakeholders to join with scientists and regulators to test outcomes of various alternative MPAs. In addition, the CFC will work to build political support to correct the above biases.

The Sea Urchin Commission needs divers and processors to recruit other Southern California fishery groups, help explore options and common interests, share the above concerns with their local elected representatives, make a contribution to the CFC (see its website) and take an active part in carrying out planned actions. There is something to do for everyone, so please do your part.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Fish and Game Commission discussed the days of the week regulatory change at its March 6-7, 2008 meeting in Stockton. The adoption hearing is scheduled for April 11, 2008 in Bodega Bay.

The Institute for Fisheries Resources has initiated a Local and Seasonal Seafood Program to provide information to consumers about when different seafood is in season and where they can buy seafood locally direct from fishermen. This will benefit fishermen by creating a public awareness of local fishing communities, creating a personal connection between consumers and fishermen, and potentially augmenting ones compensation. If you are a commercial fisherman who sells directly to consumers or local restaurants and would like to have your information listed in the directory, please contact Sara Randall at 415-561-3474*222. The information will be displayed on the IFR website and distributed at various outreach events throughout the year. For more information about the program, see www.ifrfish.org/programs/localseafood.html#california.

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION: THE GREATER CO₂ PROBLEM

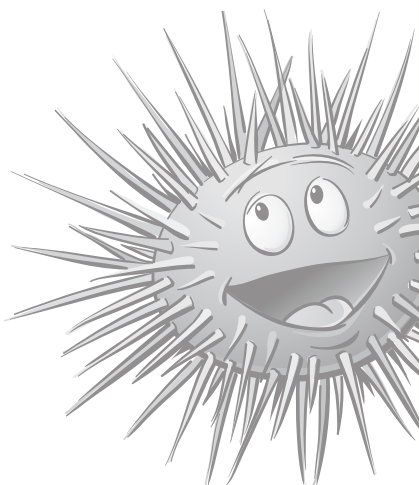
The Russians began drilling through the ice cap in Antarctica at Vostok in 1970, and after 18 years reached the bottom at 2¼ miles. This ice core recorded 420,000 years of ice accumulation: the gasses, CO₂ and methane trapped and preserved from the snowfall. This record of atmospheric gas levels is conclusive proof that today's CO₂ levels vastly exceed atmospheric levels for nearly half a million years of earth's history.

When CO₂ dissolves in seawater it causes a build-up of carbonic acid, changing ocean pH, making seawater more acidic. Human-induced CO₂ build-up in the past 200 years has already changed ocean pH by 30 percent. Atmospheric CO₂ continues to increase, and models predict that within 100 years, ocean pH will reach acidic levels not seen for more than three million years.

Ocean acidity strongly interferes with the ability of shellfish to form their shells, and sea urchins are among the most susceptible species to be negatively impacted. At current rates, the fossil fuels society burns will slowly kill the ocean. The worst problems won't occur in our lifetime, but action must be taken during our lifetime to change the trend.

All the presidential candidates have called for reductions in CO₂ emissions: Senator Obama even has a goal to achieve an 80 percent worldwide cut in CO₂ emissions by the year 2050. Congress will approve legislation to address the CO₂ problem, mandating restrictions on fossil fuel users, within the next few years. We in the fishing industry, need to support these reductions and I believe we should be the first to say so. After all, it's our ocean, our planet and our future.

—BRUCE STEELE: DIVER



DON'T THINK YOU'RE NOTHIN' 'CUZ YOU AIN'T

John Steinbeck has always been one of my heroes — among his many accomplishments, he profiled the boom times of the Monterey sardine fishing era of the 1930's and 40's. It was a time when the sardine population would seemingly last forever. But it didn't.

Recently at the National Steinbeck Center, I had the honor of addressing the Salinas Rotary Club, a group of over 200 of the area's community leaders. Coincidentally, Governor Schwarzenegger gave a speech just before I went on, stumping his budget reform package. (I must say, he did a great job warming up the crowd for me!) After his speech, there was an intermission, at which time I was introduced to him. He asked me what my topic was to be — I told him, "California sea urchin diving, surfing, and sustainable fishing." He shook my hand and said, "Sounds really interesting!"

There was a time, not very long ago, when, as I was groveling around on the bottom, trying to scratch out a day's pay, I used to think to myself: "TK, you ain't nothin'."

Bluewater Gold Rush, the only book about California sea urchin diving, isn't just about me — it's about all you guys. And I hope as you read it, you see some part of yourself in there somewhere. As of today, it's in 10 countries, over 4,300 sold, and in the top one percent of amazon.com sales. I've told our stories to over 90 groups (3,000 people), including surfing and scuba clubs, schools, museums, bookstores, environmental

groups, writer's groups, and rotary clubs. I've got the Long Beach Rotary coming up in April (450 people) and the Historical Diving Society annual conference later in the year. Also, as you may know, there's some interest from some Hollywood guys, and so I've been working hard on a screenplay for a feature-length film. I'm hoping to be "pitching" producers by this summer. So, who knows, perhaps someday we'll have a movie about our crazy way of life.

One of my goals these days is to educate people about sustainable fishing practices, using the urchin fishery as an example. Surprisingly, I've had a lot of success in convincing environmental types that many of our goals are the same: to have healthy kelp beds, and clean, sustainable fisheries for generations to come.

Anyway, if you're ever down there, scratching around, thinking, "I ain't nothin'," don't. You're one of an elite group, working in a sustainable fishery, and risking your life every day. You're an important part of California history.

By the way, the Steinbeck Center bookstore is now stocking the book — it's right there, alongside *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, and of course, *Cannery Row*.

Be careful out there,

—TOM KENDRICK: DIVER AND AUTHOR



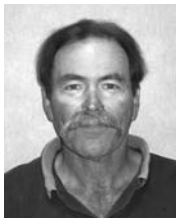
SEA URCHIN PUBLICATIONS

By Carrie Culver,
Marine Advisor, California Sea Grant, UC Cooperative Extension

At the last Sea Urchin Commission workshop, there was interest in pulling together existing information on the California sea urchin resource and identifying research and informational gaps. One publication that was mentioned was the summary from a Sea Grant workshop held in 1992; *Sea Urchins, Abalone, and Kelp: Their Biology, Enhancement, and Management*, editors C.M. Dewees and L.T. Davies. This publication includes abstracts from various studies, as well as summaries of and recommendations for research and management of the resource. Although this publication is out-of-print, it can be downloaded from the **National Sea Grant Library (<http://nsgd.gso.uri.edu/>)**. This website also provides links to other sea urchin publications. Another reference that provides a nice overview of the sea urchin fishery and biological information is *California Living Marine Resources: A Status Report*, editors W.S. Leet, C.M. Dewees, R. Klingbeil, and E.J. Larson, 2001. Printed copies of this 592-page report (it covers more than sea urchins!) are available for purchase through **California Sea Grant (<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/SeaGrant/SG018.aspx>)**. This report, along with updates, can also be downloaded through the **Department of Fish and Game website (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/status/>)**.

WOLF OR LAB RATS

BY BOB BERTELLI, DIVER SAN PEDRO



The Commonweal-Ocean Policy program, largely funded (think millions) by the Packard Foundation, makes this statement under its Program Highlights:

"Many of our projects since 1997 have used California as a laboratory for applying new approaches to ocean management and science." (underlining added) Yes, they think of us fishermen as lab rats!

Of what value are a few lab rats, destroyed in pursuit of their perception of the greater good? As I stated at our recent Sea Urchin Commission meeting, they (the environmentalists) do not care about you or your familia; you are just rats in their lab trials!

What they do care about is grabbing as much hard ocean bottom as they can. If it destroys any of us, or all of us – too bad. If their present experimenting with M.P.A.'s does not work or proves harmful to our existence, they will simply move on to other "political" science experiments!

Now, there may be a few fishermen who are rats, including a few urchin divers, but I don't think any deserve to be treated as "lab rats". Our recent assessment rate vote shows that most of you are willing to step up with your wallets to fight the good fight. The funding increase to 3 cents is just a first step, there is more to be done:

1. Spend all funds wisely and set aside a percentage of the new monies for a tactical reserve.
2. Deploy and direct our staff and other contract personnel efficiently.
3. Improve internal communication among divers, processors and other fishing groups.
4. Tone down our internal disagreements, so we can fight external "enemies" that are well-funded, well-organized, well-connected, and highly motivated.
5. Be positive, get more involved, understand the issues, and work together as a team.

There is one more thing, Do Not Behave Like Lab Rats! If you do not understand that, have someone explain it to you. I do not know what animal is on your totem. I am sure we have some lions, tigers, gorillas, monkeys, and a handful of sharks among us.

As to the Law of the Jungle, Kipling wrote "For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack!" The Orca is the sea wolf. As always, the choice is yours - behave like lab rats and suffer their fate, or behave like the wolf?

Win or lose, I hope we will let'em know they've been danced with.

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ELECTIONS 2008

The term of office for elected Commissioners is two years, beginning and ending in even numbered years and coinciding with the sea urchin permit license year. Therefore, current terms expire at the end of March (79051 Food & Agriculture Code). Under its Bylaws, the Commission has the authority to establish election procedures and schedules (Bylaws, Article VIII (A)).

The schedule for 2008 elections is as follows:

February 1- 29, 2008	Nomination period
March 14, 2008	Ballots will be mailed
April 4, 2008	Ballots must be postmarked not later than this date
April 11, 2008	Final tally will be completed
May 9-10, 2008	Commission Meeting; new members will be seated



COMMUNITY wants your input!

Send articles, industry updates, quotes, photos, conference information, web sites, or cartoons related to the sea urchin industry to us at:

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CALIFORNIA SEA URCHIN COMMISSION

MISSION *Ensuring a reliable, sustainable supply of sea urchin products to consumers and enhancing the performance of California's Sea Urchin Industry.*

2008 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 6-11	Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting, Seattle
April 9-11	California Coastal Commission Meeting, Santa Barbara
April 10-11	Fish & Game Commission Meeting, Bodega Bay
May 7-9	California Coastal Commission Meeting, Los Angeles
May 8-9	Fish & Game Commission Meeting, Monterey
May 9-10	California Sea Urchin Commission Meeting, Monterey
May 15	Ocean Protection Council Meeting, Sacramento
June 8-13	Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting, Foster City
June 11-13	California Coastal Commission Meeting, Sonoma
June 26-27	Fish & Game Commission Meeting, Sacramento
July 24-25	California Sea Urchin Commission Meeting, Santa Barbara
July 26	Sea Urchin Industry Meeting, Santa Barbara
July 26	Sea Urchin Industry BBQ, Santa Barbara
Oct/Nov	California Sea Urchin Commission Meeting, Los Angeles