



## COMMUNITY

**News in Brief for August, 2009**

### Military Security Zones and MLPA

By Bob Bertelli

Hopefully you all are aware that this Sea Monster called MLPA is coming to a reef near you, and in the case of Bodega Bay it will have happened by the time you read this, although implementation might not come until next spring. Several years ago, a version of this was introduced to the Northern Channel Islands. Despite what the "experts" are telling us, we all know the socio-economic effects were significant and the fishing pressure on the open areas has increased without the management changes needed to address it.

Without the aid of a lightning bolt coming from somewhere, MLPA will alter our seascape for many years to come, most likely in a negative way. However, this is only part of a saga that has become large and complex, with many players, from multiple governmental agencies, NGO's, fishery groups (sport and commercial) and a public that is often confused and misled by an agenda driven press. Just about everyone has a "dog in the hunt"!

*-Cont. on pg. 5*

### A New Beginning for the California Sea Urchin Commission

By Peter Halmay

The Sea Urchin industry has had four referendums to decide the fate of the California Sea Urchin Commission and the results are very revealing. The processor sector of our industry was unhappy with the Commission and their recent vote reflected this as their 87% approval, in 2005, slid to a 45% approval in 2009. Divers also were not entirely pleased with the Commission as their 87% approval in, 2005, slid to a 61% approval in 2009.

This means that the Commission has embarked on the second 5 years as a **Diver Only** Commission needing to prove its value to the dive community.

The California Sea Urchin Commission has made agreements with three individual processors so that they may provide funding for issues that concern us all: MPAs, sea otters, and increased taxes. However, divers now also have an opportunity to work on projects that lead to increased profitability of the divers' businesses.

*-Cont. on pg. 4*

### Reinventing the Sea Urchin Commission

By Vern Goehring, Executive Director

Much has been written and spoken about changes facing a diver-only Commission. I do not want to repeat them or debate whether this change is a good or bad development.

Lately I've tried to frequently remind myself of what an English Theologian said many years ago: "Everything is what it is, and not another thing." Avoid overanalyzing situations trying to find hidden meaning or agendas. Just get on dealing with what comes our way while trying to keep our eyes on long term goals.

*-Cont. on pg. 3*

## **REPORTS FROM THE PORTS**

*Beginning a new series of reports from each Commissioner's region. If you would like to contribute to a Report from the Port, please contact your region's Commission member.*

### ***Ventura Port Report/Opinion***

Guest Author: Chris Miller

CSUC Ventura Commissioner: Dan Williams

### **On the Synergy Group**

A great deal of controversy is brewing around the issue of how private money is being or should be used to shore up the unfunded mandates of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). With this as a backdrop, scientists with the Sustainable Fisheries Group, at the University of California, Santa Barbara, are proposing a collaborative fisheries research program led by local fishermen called "Synergy".

The Synergy group is focusing on how to tap into private money to initiate local harvest plans for fisheries, a step towards regional management. So far the group has received broad criticism from some local fishermen who perceive this as simply a funding mechanism for Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQ's), Catch Share's, and/or Exclusive Exploitation Zones.

Some also have concerns that the new funding may carry with it basic conflicts with the interests of many in the fishing communities, especially with some existing fishery organization's scientific programs.

With a downturn in the economy there is a limited availability of grant funds. Fishermen need to understand the path local programs take to work on fisheries management. Here are some questions that get to this issue:

1. What is the plan to integrate new efforts with existing fishery science programs?
2. What is the process for administering these funds thru UC and to fishery organizations?
3. How is existing CDFG management incorporated into the design of these programs?
4. Are there strings attached to the money?

All across the country we are seeing economic problems from *Market Guru's* magical formulas for increasing profits. The appropriate position maybe to stand up for practical solutions based on verifiable sustainable fisheries biology, not pie in the sky pots of gold.

### ***Santa Barbara Port Report***

CSUC Santa Barbara Commissioner Harry Liguornik

### **CSUC Annual BBQ**

Another great annual BBQ was held this year at Toro Canyon Park, about 60 people (family, friends, divers and processors) showed up for the event. A great BBQ was put on by Wes Carpenter and Rick Fellows; Andreas Martinez cooked another great Paella. Special thanks to Ryan Gordon for supplying the beer; Bill Heet for his help getting the raffle prizes together; and Bill Hooten for putting on an entertaining show. The raffle brought in a little over eleven hundred dollars this year - a special thanks to all the contributing businesses.



Bob looks dubious as Dirk and Bruce are likely talking about MPAs.

*(Editor's note: In future issues, we hope to print reports from each respective port region of the CSUC.)*

**Executive Director's Report (from pg. 1)**

We've all heard of people and organizations reinventing themselves. Studies reveal that many people have 3-4 career changes in a lifetime, often requiring additional education or training. There are stories of people in their 60's or 70's going to law school or starting up a new business to fulfill a long-standing dream.

Businesses that can reinvent themselves stick around for decades, even centuries, becoming household names for generations of consumers. They see preferences and needs changing and their leaders are able to move large, often cumbersome organizations to change also.

While the Sea Urchin Commission itself may not have a long history of accomplishments, the sea urchin fishery does and this history should serve us well as we go forward now. As challenges surfaced in the past, participants in the fishery often, but not always, were able to work together toward a solution. This led to one organization after another - the familiar alphabet of entities: DSUAC, SUFAC, CUPA, SUHAC, SUPAC.

The Commission has done a lot of different things - tried on a lot of jackets. Some seemed to fit fine and others not so well. It has done some promotional work participating in events to introduce more of the public to sea urchin; it has engaged in government relations advocating for or against state and federal legislation or policies; it developed best practice standards and tried to focus on the importance of temperature; it continued resource data collection efforts (larval settlement and Barefoot Ecologist) begun under earlier arrangements; it engaged in public relations to promote sea urchin as well as advocate policy issues; and it set up an organization with by-laws, policies and procedures, and communications tools that should make going forward easier.

Everyone recognizes that a diver-only Commission needs to revisit long term goals and decide which activities best fit a reinvented organization. Some expected this to happen quickly; they're disappointed that it's not already completed.

However, everyone should be assured that the process of reinventing has begun. The elected Commission members and others in attendance have spent considerable time on this at meetings in April and July. Additional discussions are taking place on the docks and at local port meetings. All of this is good, even though not all ideas will be pursued.

More opportunities for divers statewide to contribute to this re-invention are being planned (see other notes in this newsletter). Everyone is encouraged to contribute. We need to consider what has been done or attempted that got us to this point, what legal parameters may affect the Commission, and what resources are available to us. Not all resources need be money in the bank. We are rich with potential volunteers, opportunities exist to partner with public agencies and other fishery groups, and creative thinking may reveal additional financial resources as well.

*"Everything is what it is, and not another thing."* So let's get on with the next phase of the California sea urchin fishery, there is no time to waste.

*Can you find the uni in these pictures?*



*A New Beginning...(from pg. 1)*

The first step is to perform the following tasks in consultation with diver representatives so that new planning is based on facts and not opinions or suppositions:

- ✓ Gather all data/information developed by the Commission thus far from its inception and make it available for review.
- ✓ Look at the industry status and an analysis of the business environment in which the California Sea Urchin Fishery is situated – past, present, and for the next 5 years.
- ✓ Perform a market analysis using clearly defined assessment methodology (i.e. sea urchin products-related market concerns, including the changing aspects of business targets with respect to restaurants, distribution network, and others most germane to the CSU industry).
- ✓ Define a vision of the industry, i.e. where we as an industry want to be 5-10 years into the future.

The second step would be to convene diver representatives, approximately 4 to 5 from each port, in an all-day facilitated workshop, “A DIVER BUSINESS WORKSHOP”. The attendees should represent the diversity of constituents, and opinions in the dive community

Based on the results of the analysis and the workshop future activities of the Commission may include:

- ✓ Explore alternative business models (direct marketing, pre-harvest delivery agreements, vertical cooperation),
- ✓ Support direct marketing projects (brochures, PR etc),
- ✓ Market development of C grade product and shells,
- ✓ Develop a data collection and management program for business purposes,
- ✓ Develop quality standards prior to processing,
- ✓ Develop a sustainable fishing brand identity for California Sea Urchins through a California Sea Urchin Commission Certification,
- ✓ Begin demonstration projects and celebrate successes,
- ✓ Develop funding to buy-out divers not using their permits, and
- ✓ Explore flexible fishing closures based on demand.

The Sea Urchin Commission is well positioned to empower divers seeking a change in the business model, however, the Commission’s role is to supplement, not replace, local initiatives. This is a grassroots effort to revitalize our industry and it depends on the involvement of a critical mass of divers. You are urged to comment on this outline directly to your Port Commissioner, or at the next Port meeting in your area.

### **UPCOMING PORT WORKSHOPS ON THE FUTURE OF THE COMMISSION**

The recent changes to the Commission bring the potential for new directions and opportunities to its work. In this light, the Commission is organizing workshops to take place in each CSUC region beginning at the end of September.

These workshops will be designed to inform divers of the current rules, regulations, and goals of the Commission, but *more importantly*, they will provide a forum for divers to offer advice and direction for the Commission as it becomes an organization representing the needs and wishes of urchin divers.

This won’t be a free-for-all: all commodity boards and commissions have to play by the rules of market capitalism and other regulations. Second, the Commission wasn’t able to obtain that leprechaun’s bag of gold, so we are also limited in what we can financially accomplish.

To help divers better understand our rules and limitations, the workshops will include information on relevant laws, and discuss ways in which divers can prioritize their most important needs.

So be on the lookout for the date, time, and location of the workshop nearest you. If you are interested in attending or helping to organize, please contact your local commissioner, or email [Joshua\\_stark@cal.net](mailto:Joshua_stark@cal.net)

**-Military Security Zones and MLPA (from pg. 1)**

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Navy are large players. They have the most money, control the most ocean and, right now, have the most political capital, but even their power is finite. Therefore, they have made an agreement with the State of California (MLPA) to close certain areas at San Clemente and San Nicholas islands to fishing. The good news at San Clemente is that we are losing areas that were already closed (Wilson's Cove) or slated to be closed (SWAT1). The bad news is that SWAT1 is our best area. The new security zones will extend out to 3 miles.

Things become a little more complicated at San Nicholas Island. Security Zone ALPHA is the most valuable to fisheries, however ALPHA is, by Federal Law, a closed security zone. Because the Navy's mission there has changed, they seldom enforce it, but that could change. Again, under the agreement with the State, DOD agreed to close ALPHA and enforce it, if ALPHA is on the final map approved by the Fish and Game Commission. However, we were able (and it was not easy) to convince the DOD/Navy to allow Begg Rock to be considered an alternative site. This is all they would put on the table at San Nicholas. So far, the Begg Rock option is winning....so far, but we have a long way to go and a very tough fight ahead.

MLPA for the South Coast Study Region has now started "Round 3" in developing alternatives and things are getting ugly fast. ALL THE PLAYERS know this is their last chance to get what they want and the best we fishermen can hope for are wounds that are not terminal.

Go to the MLPA web site at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa> for more information and the latest maps. Information on San Clemente Island can be found at: <http://www.scisland.org/schedules/schedules.php>.

**Parting Shot...** CSUC Commissioner Harry L. accepting a beverage of unknown origin from Bill Wooten at the CSUC Annual Bar-B-Que. Cheers, Harry! (All photos courtesy of Gary Harle.)

## COMING TO A COMPUTER SCREEN NEAR YOU: URCHINS ON YOUTUBE

Mark Manning, former urchin diver and critically acclaimed film producer who's works include *Road to Fallujah*, a participant at the Sundance Film Festival, has produced a short documentary for the California Sea Urchin Commission about the Marine Life Protection Act and the need for urchin management.

This film, produced at Mr. Manning's ConceptionMedia, covers the concept of MPA's, the effects of overgrazing by urchin on kelp forest ecosystems, and the controversy behind research used in the MLPA process to determine impacts by urchin on habitat. Jeff Maasen and Dave Rudie worked as the Commission's point-men for this project, providing valuable insight into its theme and focus.

Screened before the Blue Ribbon Task Force, the film drew quick replies from opponents such as the Santa Monica Bay Keepers. This type of response means it must have effectively hit a nerve.

You definitely should see this amazing short film. The footage and cinematography are beautiful, the narration is well-written, and the point hits home. The Commission is really hoping for this video to go 'viral', so check it out and send on a link to as many folks as you can!

You can view the video here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9uNOyK7O5>



**Upcoming Events**

August 20, 6:30PM	SB Harbor Commission, City Hall
August 22 & 23	Bodega Seafood, Art & Wine Festival, Watts Ranch, Bodega Hwy
September 1, 5PM	Southern CA Steelhead Plan Workshop, Santa Barbara, Fess Parker Double Tree Resort
September 3	Fish & Game Commission, Woodland CA
September 9 & 10	South Regional Stakeholders Group, Los Angeles
September 17, 6:30PM	SB Harbor Commission, City Hall
Late September-Early October	Port Workshops on the Future of the CSUC
September 30 & October 1	Fish & Game Commission, Woodland CA
October 6	North MLPA Science Advisory Team, TBD
October 20-22	MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, TBD
November 4 & 5	Fish & Game Commission, Woodland CA
December 10	Joint meeting BRTF and Fish & Game Commission, West Sacramento
December 11	Fish & Game Commission, West Sacramento

More fishing related events and meetings are posted at [www.fishcalendar.net](http://www.fishcalendar.net).



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