



MARINE PROTECTED AREAS APPROVED IN SO CAL

State creates safe haven for marine life in Point Dume, Palos Verdes and Catalina

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (Wednesday, December 15, 2010) – The California Fish and Game Commission today approved a set of Marine Protected Areas for Southern California, as a part of the implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act. Today's decision is the final step in a multi-year collaborative process to establish a network of safe havens for marine life throughout the region.

Marine Protected Areas, or MPAs, consist of three levels of protection: fully protective State Marine Reserves, in which no fishing is allowed; State Marine Parks, in which commercial fishing is prohibited but recreational fishing is allowed; and State Marine Conservation Areas, in which commercial and recreational fishing are allowed in limited amounts. MPAs do not restrict access or any other kind of recreational use.

The network of south coast MPAs was created by a stakeholder group consisting of representatives from environmental and fishing communities, local government officials and educators. These MPAs cover about 16.5% of Southern California's coastline, leaving the vast majority open to fishing.

Locally, this network includes a marine reserve east of Point Dume in Malibu and a partial take marine conservation area off Zuma Beach, a marine reserve and partial take marine conservation area at Abalone Cove and Point Vicente in Palos Verdes, a partial take marine conservation area at Farnsworth Banks, and a marine reserve at Long Point and Wrigley for Catalina Island. By protecting the entire ecosystem in select Southern California waters, these MPAs will help restore marine life populations.

"Today is a historic day for ocean protection," said Sarah Sikich, Heal the Bay's Coastal Resources Director, who sat on the taskforce that was charged with drawing up the map. "The establishment of Marine Protected Areas in Southern California's waters will help safeguard our marine life and coastal heritage for future generations. In the long term, we all are going to benefit from larger, and more plentiful fish."

Following the Fish and Game Commission's decision, Southern California's MPAs join such ecologically diverse areas as California's northern Channel Islands, the Florida Keys and New Zealand in establishing safe havens for marine life to thrive and reproduce.

Heal the Bay a vocal active participant in the MPA process, representing the conservation community in the stakeholder groups and also providing a science-based perspective throughout the process.

Southern California's new network MPAs will take effect some time in 2011, following a period where local communities will be educated on MPAs. To see the map of South Coast MPAs, please visit <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/southcoast.asp>



About Heal the Bay

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.

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