



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Memo

To: City Council
From: Erika Senyk
Date: 3/28/24
Re: Revisions to the

Staff revised language in the Agenda Report and Draft Letter Attachment of Item 7 I. for the March 28, 2024 City Council Meeting. Corrections were made to the terms of Marine Conservation Area, Marine Protected Area, and State Marine Reserve within the document texts.

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: March 28, 2024

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Proposed Expansion of Marine Protected Areas



Recommended Action: Authorize the Mayor to sign a letter opposing, unless amended, the petition pending at the California Fish and Game Commission, which modifies the California Marine Protected Areas Network to expand the Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve and establish a new Marine Protected Area at or near Pleasure Point.

Background: In 2023, a petition was submitted to the California Fish and Game Commission by the Environment California Research and Policy Center, a nonprofit political organization that lobbies for environmental legislation, and Azul, a Bay Area-based ocean conservation non-governmental organization, to modify the California Marine Protected Area Network to provide enhanced protections for the state's resilient kelp forests. The proposal includes the expansion of Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve (SMR) and the establishment of a no-take new Marine Protected Area (MPA) at or near Pleasure Point.

During the City Council meeting held on March 14, 2024, Mayor Brown requested that staff draft a letter expressing opposition to the expansion of the Natural Bridges SMR and establishment of a new MPA at or near Pleasure Point for the City Council's consideration.

Discussion: In the petition, Environment California has also proposed the creation of a Pleasure Point State Marine Conservation Area (MCA) as an alternative to an MPA. This alternative would allow for recreational hook-and-line fishing and spearfishing, striking a balance between kelp forest protection and recreation and low-impact subsistence fishing.

Staff recommends submitting the attached letter to the California Fish and Game Commission opposing the current petition, unless amended to propose a new MCA rather than MPA near Pleasure Point, preserving recreational activities while promoting environmental sustainability.

Fiscal Impact: None.

Attachments:

1. Draft Letter

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager

Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk, Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager



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

March 28, 2024

Opposition to Proposed Modifications to the California Marine Protected Area Network

Dear President Sklar and Honorable Commissioners,

I am writing to express our opposition to the Environment California Research & Policy Center's petition to modify the California Marine Protected Areas Network to expand the Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve and establish a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) at or near Pleasure Point, unless the petition is amended to allow for recreational hook-and-line fishing and spearfishing.

While we recognize the critical importance of nearshore kelp forests and the Marine Life Protection Act's adaptive management process, we believe the current proposal unfairly restricts access to public resources. Recreational fishing is a popular activity in northern Monterey Bay, and the proposed expansion would hinder the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy this coastal area.

Moreover, the expansion plan raises concerns about the economic impact on Santa Cruz County. Surfing, diving, and fishing are major draws for tourism, generating revenue for local businesses. Restricting access to these activities could negatively affect the economic well-being of our community.

In conclusion, we oppose the current petition to propose a new Pleasure Point State Marine Reserve unless amended to allow for recreational hook-and-line fishing and spearfishing. We urge you to consider the importance of this amendment, which would effectively balance kelp forest protection with the needs of our community.

We remain committed to collaborating with you to find a solution that safeguards the marine environment while ensuring continued public access and economic prosperity for Santa Cruz County.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristen Brown, Mayor
City of Capitola