



bay restoration commission

STEWARDS OF SANTA MONICA BAY

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September 20, 2012

Agenda Item #3 a

To: Executive Committee, SMBRC

From: Shelley Luce, Executive Director

Subject: Discussion Regarding Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan

Action Requested of the Executive Committee:

Discuss issues regarding possible removal of bans on commercial lobster fishing in Santa Monica Bay and give staff direction for a draft resolution to be considered by the Governing Board at a future meeting.

Background:

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is currently developing a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the California spiny lobster. An FMP's primary purpose is to examine conservation and management measures that should be considered to maintain the sustainability of the resource and its fisheries and define the circumstances that would trigger taking conservation and management actions. Once adopted by the Fish and Game Commission, the FMP will replace all prior regulations related to the fishery, *where there are conflicts*.

The timeline for the spiny lobster FMP is as follows:

- 2012 – Develop draft FMP with input from the public and the Lobster Advisory Committee
- 2013 – Get public feedback on draft FMP, revise with input from the Lobster Advisory Comm.
- 2014 – Formal scientific and public review, present final draft to Fish and Game Commission
- 2015 – Fish and Game Commission starts CEQA process to adopt the FMP and regulations

The lobster fishery consists of three modes: commercial trap, recreational hoop-net, and recreational hand-capture (diving). The commercial fishery began in the late 1800's and has been regulated since 1900. Current regulations for the commercial fishery include a limited entry permit system, seasonal closure, minimum size limit, and gear requirement to minimize taking of undersized lobsters. Today, there are between 150-198 commercial lobster fishermen, fishing between 100-500 traps. Landings have been relatively stable since 2000 at ~660,000 lbs. Historically, the recreation participants were SCUBA divers and the recreational take was thought to be negligible when compared to commercial

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landings. However, current estimates of recreational landings range between 30-60% of commercial landings. Anglers using hoop nets have become a major component of the recreational fishery. New developments in the hoop net technology has made hoop nets more effective at catching lobster and allowed recreational fishermen to fish lobster at depths previously only available to commercial fishermen. Recreational regulations include a seasonal closure, minimum size limit, and daily bag limit.

Commercial fishery representatives on the Lobster Advisory Committee have asked that the removal of bans on lobster fishing within Santa Monica Bay, off the leeward side of Catalina, and within 750 ft of any pier, breakwall and jetty, be considered in the FMP. Their reasoning is that this would replace fishing grounds now included in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The following commercial fishing activities have been prohibited in the Bay since 1931¹:

- Commercial abalone fishing
- Fishing with traps for rock crab, lobster, and finfish
- Fishing with purse seine (bait or round-haul) nets when catch sold for human consumption
- Fishing with gill nets, trammel nets, and trawl nets
- Commercial fishing with slurp guns

The closure does NOT include:

- Harvesting urchin and sea cucumber
- Fishing with handlines or troll lines (rod & reel lines)
- Fishing with purse seine nets, bait nets, or round-haul nets when catch sold as live bait
- Fishing sablefish traps deeper than 200 fathoms (~350m)
- Fishing hagfish traps (bucket traps)
- Using hand held appliance (rakes, shovels, etc) to take mollusks, sand crabs, and shrimp
- Using spears, harpoons, and bows and arrows to fish for skates, rays, and sharks

The original arguments for the ban are not clear, but the sport fishing industry strongly favored the ban and believes it has benefited from it. There is evidence that this closure can improve catch rates and the size of the catch for some species, such as rock crab². The closure has also been used to measure the localized effect of commercial fishing on crab populations and could be used in the future to compare localized effects of recreational fishing to localized effects of commercial fishing to unfished areas in State Marine Reserves.

¹ Scofield, W.L. 1954. California Fishing Ports. DFG Fish. Bull. No. 96. Pp 123. Online [\[http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt667nb1cg&query=&brand=calisphere\]](http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt667nb1cg&query=&brand=calisphere) accessed on 9/12/12.

² DFG. 2003. Status of the Fisheries Report: Rock Crab. Online [\[https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=34395&inline=true\]](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=34395&inline=true) last accessed on 9/12/12



The SMBRC's mission is to "improve water quality, conserve and rehabilitate natural resources, and protect the Bay's benefits and values." The Bay Restoration Plan identifies the recovery of depleted fish populations as a goal (Goal 4: Protecting Natural Resources) and identifies two objectives toward protecting fishery resources: 1) establish an MPA network in southern California, and 2) establish additional regulatory measures, including the development of FMPs. In addition, staff has been discussing with members of the local fishing community including lobstermen regarding how to encourage local consumption of sustainable seafood caught by local fishermen.

Points for Discussion:

- Is a commercial fishing ban in the Santa Monica Bay supported by the Bay Restoration Plan?
- Would agreeing to allow commercial fishing in Santa Monica Bay be in conflict with our Bay Restoration Plan? Does this answer differ with the type of commercial fishing being considered?
- Is removal of the ban warranted due to newly created MPAs, although their effects are not yet known?
- Are there additional benefits to maintaining the commercial closure, such as research opportunities, that have not been considered?
- Will allowing one type of commercial fishing in Santa Monica Bay create a precedent to allow other types of commercial fishing in the Bay?
- How would allowing commercial fishing off the leeward side of Catalina or within 750ft of piers, jetties, and breakwalls relate or compare to allowing it in the Bay?
- If a continued ban on commercial fishing in the Bay is desirable now, are there conditions that if changed in the future would make commercial fishing allowable?