

Public Testimony of:

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Hello. My name is Peter Etnoyer. I am a staff scientist with the Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI) and a volunteer with the Surfrider Foundation Environmental Issues Team. I am here in Hawaii on vacation, actually, but could not pass up the opportunity to address this panel on some professional and personal concerns.

I would like to first address a comment made yesterday by Admiral Watkins regarding the education and internet technology component of government ocean programs.

Part of my responsibilities for MCBI is to assemble spatial databases that inform marine conservation efforts. These databases incorporate satellite altimetry, sea surface temperature, ocean color, fishing pressure, and even mammal, seabird, and turtle tracks into a single geographic information system that informs our conservation priorities. I think it is important that people realize that government data collection efforts benefit many sectors, ranging from the commercial to the non-profit.

I benefit greatly from the responsiveness and commitment of government employees at the Navy Research Laboratory, NASA, the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, and the Center for Atmospheric Research. As an American, I enjoy a special privilege in free access to taxpayer funded data. My colleagues in Canada, Mexico, and the Philippines enjoy no such privilege. Please continue to support and encourage these data distribution efforts. We have many successful models to build upon.

The second issue I would like to address is the issue of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and specifically, the designation of no-take zones within National Marine Sanctuaries. No take zones are a cost effective and efficient management strategy with demonstrated benefits for biomass increase and less demonstrated benefits for biomass overflow. The National Marine Sanctuary Program is the result of many years of

considerable effort, but unless these sanctuaries include substantial no-take zones, they represent little more than a sanctuary for commercial harvest.

As a Californian involved in the Channel Islands MPA designation process, I must say I am disheartened by the polarization between fishermen and environmentalists. We all want the same thing. We want more fish in the sea. We want sustainable fisheries.

No-take zones are not a new idea. They represent simple, common sense traditional fishing knowledge that is being lost in a decentralized, overcapitalized, global industrial fishing culture. Ask any fisherman (in private) what he or she would do to sustain a fisheries resource and they would tell you to:

1. Limit access
2. Limit destructive gear
3. Protect essential fish habitat

This commission needs to articulate quantifiable no-take targets for our National Marine Sanctuaries. Management needs a number, or at the very least, a range of numbers to guide this no-take zone designation process. Whether this number is 25%, 35%, or 50% of the total area within a sanctuary, defined quantifiable targets permit flexibility on how to distribute that percentage, but encourage stewardship and responsibility by setting a target.

The majority of the debate in the Channel Islands has focused on this number. Recreational sportsmen seem to have decided that their mission is to whittle away at this figure from 35% of sanctuary area to 20% of sanctuary area with an ultimate goal in a figure so low that the benefits of conservation will be limited to those isolated patches that somehow survived the designation process. Please address your science panel in regards to a responsible management target for no-take zones in national marine sanctuaries and include this recommendation in your report.

Finally, I wish to address an issue that came to my attention while working on this year's State of the Beach report for the Surfrider Foundation.

I am concerned that marine protection efforts stop at the water's edge, when it is the beach that we all grew up on, and the beach that bears the brunt of development pressure.

We had 1300 beach closure days in Los Angeles County and almost 900 in Orange County last year due to fecal coliform or elevated bacterial levels¹. You cannot go swimming within three days of a rainstorm near anyone of hundreds of ocean outfalls for wastewater in Southern California. If you do, you are guaranteed a sore throat, burning eyes, or an ear ache.

¹ Natural Resources Defense Council, "Testing the Waters: A Guide to Beach Water Quality at Vacation Beaches."

This is a major fundamental issue of water quality and I know it is very difficult to address because it is not a federal issue or a state issue. Wastewater management happens at the county and municipal level. I beg of you to find a way to include language in your congressional recommendations that reaches out to those communities, and encourages responsible wastewater management and water quality monitoring programs. Thank you for your time.