

**MEETING AGENDA**  
**Recreational Abalone Advisory Committee (RAAC)**  
**Saturday March 14, 2015**  
**10:30 am – 3:30 pm**

**Location:** Stephen G. Benavides, Professional Accountancy Corporation, 1910 E Warner Ave #2-F, Santa Ana CA 92705

**Conference line:** 916 274 2971

**Contact Person:** Ian Taniguchi, Senior Environmental Scientist, 4665 Lampson Ave #C, Los Alamitos, CA 90720 - 562 342 7182

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**Committee Web Page:** <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/raac/index.asp>

**1.0 10:30 – 10:40 Introductions and announcements – Taniguchi**

1.1 Attendees: Members: Ian Taniguchi, , Steve Benavides, Pete Haaker, Rocky Daniels, Brooke Halsey, Carol Rose (secretary), Ed Schulze (alternate), Jack Beallo (guest/public), Jerry Kashiwada (CDFW)  
on phone- Josh Russo, Brandi Easter, Steve Riske, Jack Liikins, Bill Bernard, Kevan Urquhart

1.2 thank Steve for hosting

1.3 The minutes of the last meeting were approved unanimously.

1.4 agendas available

**2.0 10:40 – 11:30 Budget 2015/16 and abalone dedicated account – Ian**

2.1 Draft budget for next fiscal year – 2015-16 not much change, but as observed at last meeting, if expenses continue same – Abalone Dedicated Fund will be out of money in 2-3 years; therefore, it is necessary to reduce expenditures. Ian and Jerry salaries have been reduced to 80% from ab fund with the remaining 20% from another source

2.2 Ian had a conversation in January with Marine Region Managers to discuss the fund balance issue. A goal was set to reduce account expenditures by 15% in the current Fiscal Year (2014/15) as well as next FY (2015/16). A 15% reduction will equalize expenditures with current income from report card sales. If sales continue to drop then further reductions in expenditures may occur. Besides the reduction of salaries, other expenditure cuts need to occur to achieve the 15% reduction.

2.3 The letter to Director discussed in November Minutes asking for clarity on some budget line items was not written as questions were answered subsequently in a follow-up teleconference with several RAAC members. The summary of that teleconference was appended to the November Minutes.

2.4 The past discussion of raising the report card fee was revisited in light of the abalone fund balance issues. The Department's position on raising report card fees is to "wait and see" for the outcome of the red abalone Fishery Management Plan (FMP) before considering recommending changes to fees. There was no further discussion of increasing the report card fee by the committee.

2.5 The issue of abalone dedicated funds for recovery in south was raised. The original bill that created the account was written to put more boots on ground and increase science. Abalone fund covering only salaries which is not what was intended. Concern for funding of productive roadside checks where violation rates found – mostly paper work violations, they do indicate poaching caught.

2.6 A question was asked about the total expenditure last fiscal year. The figures are now likely available according to Ian. A request was made to have the final expenditure figures available for comparison with the budget for last year. – Ian will get for Committee.

### **3.0 11:30 – 12: 00 Red abalone FMP development (Taniguchi/Kasiwada)**

3.1 Angler Survey Results – Survey ended last week on March 6. The Department tried to encourage as much participation in the survey as possible with press releases and there were several news media articles about the survey.

The Department's survey goal was to reach all segments of the abalone fishery including rock pickers who are often difficult to engage. This is mainly due to a lack of organized group or contact points that is similar to what the diver portion of the fishery has. So the Department randomly picked 1500 abalone

fishers from the list of abalone report card purchasers and sent post cards asking them to take the survey. The survey could be filled out online or on paper if requested although the online survey data was easier to tally.

The resulting database of survey data had lots of duplicates which may be due to multiple 'clicking' of the submit button. The database was first cleaned of the duplicates and preliminary numbers are 1745 surveys total (1724 electronic surveys and 21 hardcopy); 344 of the surveys were done by people who were contacted by post card for a 23% post card return rate and 14% of post card receivers were rock pickers as opposed to 11% were rock pickers overall.

### 3.1.1 Return summary by county:

Sonoma: 18.9% of survey returns from Sonoma County but only 10% of card sales were from Sonoma. The survey had a much higher interest in Sonoma County than any other county.

Humboldt County had a slightly higher survey return rate of 7% compared to its card sales of 5.7%. In contrast to the other north coast counties, Mendocino had only 5.4% of the survey returns but 8.2% of the card sales.

The main Bay Area counties of Santa Clara (6%), San Mateo (4%), San Francisco (4%), Alameda (5%), and Contra Costa (6%) had a combined 25% of the survey responses but 31% of card sales.

3.1.2 Recent telephone survey data shows rock pickers numbers are down to 20% of fishery compared to nearly 30% in the early to mid 2000s. Using data from the randomly sent postcards indicate the rock pickers were down to 14% or only 3-4,000 rocker pickers last year. Rock pickers probably left the fishery mainly due to the 8 A.M. start time this year. A contributing cause has probably been the steady decline in use of the Fort Ross area in recent years for various reasons.

3.1.3 The survey included 6 questions to determine the importance to the survey respondents of full bag limit, fish whole season, catch annual limit, keep/increase public access areas, catch trophy size abalone, and being able to fish even if finding abalone is difficult. These priorities were rated 1 through 5 with 5 being extremely important and 1 not important at all. The most important was public access then full bag limit and being able to fish the entire season. The ability to catch trophy-sized abalone was also relatively important.

3.1.4 When asked to rank the above priorities, public access was ranked 1 by the most respondents. The priorities ranked last were 'other' and

ability to take abalone when difficult. Taking the annual limit and trophy abalone also were low in priority.

3.1.5 When looking at priorities individually, public access was rated extremely important or somewhat important by nearly 90% of the respondents. In contrast being able to take the annual limit was rated extremely or somewhat important by 34%.

3.1.6 The survey also asked for the level of support for 8 management measures with 5 being strong support and 1 being strong opposition. The measures were managing to maintain fishing opportunities or high catch rates, zonal management, lottery system, more frequent update of fishery status, increase size limit, re-open areas before full recovery, fee increase, and progressive fees which would involve multiple cards with different possible fee structures. The lottery was strongly opposed if it limited access for some people. More frequent monitoring was strongly supported. Increasing the minimum size was supported by divers and some rock pickers but there was also a number of rock pickers strongly opposed an increase in the size limit. Given fee choices of \$30, \$40 or \$50, \$30 was supported by about half the respondents with \$40 and \$50 each supported by about one quarter of responses.

3.1.7 The presentation given to the RAAC is appended to the meeting minutes. NOTE: The survey results presented to the RAAC are preliminary and may change as we thoroughly analyze the survey data details. The CDFW plans on posting a complete summary of the survey on the red abalone FMP website when it is done.

## 3.2 Next steps

3.2.1 The survey summary will be posted on the red abalone FMP website.

3.2.2 CDFW will use the survey information to craft fishery management goals and framework for the FMP. This will hopefully be done in April.

3.2.3 Once the FMP framework is drafted, the Department plans to have an informal workshop with a panel of external scientists to receive input and advice. The Department is still planning the external science input step, so there is no date set yet for the workshop. The RAAC would like to see the list of names on science panel, which will be provided by the Department once it is generated.

#### **4.0 12-1pm Lunch**

#### **5.0 1 pm – 2pm Central California RAAC nominations –**

5.1 The deadline for nominations was March 11, so nominations are now closed. The Department for geographic validity first vetted all nominees and several nominations were disqualified. There are 11 nominees, a record for the RAAC representative replacement process. The Department will plan on conducting general background checks of nominees as part of the appointment eligibility process.

5.2 There were a variety of nominations from established diver groups such as CenCal Divers, Sonoma County Abalone Network (SCAN), California Coalition of Diving Advocates (CCDA), as well as from individuals. Appointment to the RAAC is at the discretion of director of CDFW. In the past, RAAC has provided a recommendation to the director. Also in past, phone interviews were done with nominees by the RAAC but this may be difficult with so many nominations. There were suggestions from the committee to– weigh active participation in the fishery or if nominees have attended RAAC meetings. It was mentioned that Bill Bernard has attended meetings including today (by phone) and Jack Beallo traveled from Oakland to attend his first meeting. (Note: Kevan Urquhart joined by phone later in the meeting).

5.3 The Committee conducted an impromptu interview of Jack Beallo since he was at the meeting in person: diving for abalone 8 years – more interest in abalone fishery and management after die off. He is currently on SCAN board. No other dive affiliations.

5.4 There was some general support for Dennis Haussler who is well known in the sport diving community and the Cen Cal group. The consensus of the Committee was to conduct phone interviews of all candidates so they have equal opportunity to advocate for their appointment. Ian will coordinate setting a date for interviews and get the list of interview questions used in the past. He will send questions to the Committee for review and suggestions. Final questions will be available to everyone at this meeting.

Suggested interview date 3/28 or 4/4 starting at 10 am. The group settled on 4/4. Will request alternate date(s) from candidates if they cannot make it. The

final decision on appointments to the RAAC may take the Director some time to act on.

5.5 The RAAC can consider naming alternates for the positions.

## **6.0 2pm- 2:15 break – shortened to finish meeting more quickly**

## **7.0 2:15- 2:30 Abalone assessment updates**

7.1 2013 catch estimates. In previous years, the Fort Ross area was the top ranked abalone site with about 13% of the total abalone catch. For 2013, Fort Ross ranked 17<sup>th</sup> and will likely be lower since much of the area is now closed.

Van Damme State Park was the highest ranked site in 2013 with 7% of the catch. Salt Point State Park and Timber Cove had been among the top ten sites in the past but in 2013 Timber Cove ranked 14<sup>th</sup> and Salt Point ranked 16<sup>th</sup>. The 12 year average catch including 2013 for Van Damme was 16,800 while the catch for 2013 was 17,300. Moat Creek had the second highest catch at 14,400 for 2013 compared to an average of 10,600 over 12 years.

Card returns increased dramatically in 2013 with 55% returned!! In most years between 20 and 30% of cards had been returned but failure to return abalone card notices issued by the Automated License Data System greatly improved the return rate.

The total take for 2013 was 230,000. If poaching equals legal take then as many as 460,000 abalone might have been taken.

When data is finalized, presentations to this meeting will be on website.

The presentation on 2013 catch estimates given to the RAAC is appended to the meeting minutes.

## **8.0 2:30 – 2:45 Other Business**

8.1 Southern representative alternate – Steve wants to have an alternate and nominates Nancy Caruso as his alternate. Nancy is a marine biologist, a teacher, ab planting program, leads an active volunteer group, is good communicator, different contact group. Alternates can be important. She will attend next meeting. Known to Department biologists and they have positive comments. No current system for selecting alternates. No objections. Nancy Caruso was unanimously approved to be the alternate for Steve Benavides.

8.2 Other – Sonoma sites scheduled for 2015 surveys with Fort Ross the priority.

8.3 Other – FMP is top priority for the Department above all other activities.

8.4 Other – Last meeting discussed needing photo id in field. Letter sent, written by Rocky, to Director – no action.

**9.0 2:45 – 3:15 Public Expression** (please limit 3 min/person)

**9.1 Jack Likins** – Suggest/support fines for non-return of cards; wants to see Rocky's letter to Director regarding photo ID in field. Letter was personal not as from Committee member. Comment on fewer rock pickers – fewer because closure of Fort Ross and less abalone in accessible areas for rock picking. Take apparent interest in RAAC as critical to nomination process. Objects to comments about negativity. Continued concern with lack of communication. Wants access to wider communication.

**9.2 Brandi Easter** – interested in questions to be asked to nominees; letters of support should be sent to Director but Cc Ian – needed by 4/4 but sooner would be better; recommendations as addendum to minutes.

**9.3 Kevin Urquhart** – Applicant for seat - [Ian replies by describing phone interview process and date]

**9.4 Jack Beallo** – thanks members; thinks time for new younger faces.

**10.0 3:15- 3:30 Wrap up – next meeting, adjournment** Next meeting scheduled for November 14 in northern California.

*Carol Rose, Secretary*

Addendum: 2015 fall meeting is confirmed for 14 November at the *Marin Rod & Gun Club* which is at the western foot of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.