

MEETING MINUTES
Recreational Abalone Advisory Committee (RAAC)
Saturday, November 14, 2015
10:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Location: Marin Rod and Gun Club, 2675 East Francisco Blvd., San Rafael, CA 94902

Conference line: Toll-Free Number (in USA): 888-808-6929; Meeting Access Code: 9961539#

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

1. **10:30 – 10:40 Introductions and announcements (Taniguchi)** – thanks to the Marin Rod and Gun Club for providing the meeting venue.

Sign-in sheet for attendees.

1.1 RAAC Members Present: Ian Taniguchi, Chair; Brooke Halsey, North; Captain Steve Riske, DFW Enforcement; Rocky Daniels, North; Pete Haaker, Science Advisor; Doug Laughlin, new Central; Steve Benavides, South; Carol Rose, Secretary; Ed Schulze, alternate North; Nancy Caruso, alternate South.

1.2 Others Present: Dr. Laura Rogers-Bennett, DFW senior environmental scientist, Bodega Marine Lab (BML); Dr. Jim Moore, DFW senior environmental scientist, BML; Jerry Kashiwada, DFW environmental scientist; Dr. Cynthia Catton, DFW environmental scientist, BML; Sharree Christensen, warden; Josh Russo, public Watermen Alliance; Jack Beallo, public Red Abalone Divers; by phone – Jack Likins; Bill Bernard.

Discussion: standing rules apply and discussion of agenda items limited to Committee. Public comment at end.

2. **10:40 – 11:00 Abalone dedicated account budget update 2015/16 (Taniguchi)**

2.1 Budget outline submitted:

New budget – direction from superiors to cut budget 15% - allotment approximately \$654,000 – trying to match income with expenditures.

Report card sales 2015 – close to 2014 – end of Sept 2015 \$503,000 – 24,000 cards sold

2.2 Discussion:

Budget appears to have more than 15% cut for enforcement - idea to get funds from MLPA enforcement dollars

Expenditures \$117,000 – complaint from Steve Benavides - regarding moneys spent on office space, etc . Original intent to spend abalone card dollars on ‘guns and science’

RAAC needs to consider how to spend ‘own’ card money – no input currently. Suggests to shift dollars out of RAAC budget to state. Plan was to support science and guns – but not

overhead.

Proposal to look for Grants. Brooke Halsey suggests to research seeking grant funds for such items as additional check points; science gets grants why not others?

Moneys moved around to fit needs.

DFW must be in the loop.

Dr. Rogers-Bennett – often grants require matching funds and cannot be used to fund permanent staff.

Need promise any grant money will not subtract current funding.

Steve Benavides remarks: revenue declining. There is a limit in the original bill limiting overhead to 20%, discussion next meeting.

Need to sit down and discuss.

Stamp cost very stable.

Need clear vision of where money going.

Little moneys spent in south to restore resource.

Agenda item for next meeting.

Pete Haaker comments– increase abalone card cost?? Increase is on the table but only the

Commission has authority

General comment: two new commissioners - both are on Marine Resources Committee

3. 11:00 – 11:30 CDFW enforcement report 2014-2015 activities (Riske)

3.1 Written report submitted:

Overtime cap \$68,000, plus \$25,000 in additional funds transferred from MLPA for enforcement overtime.

Major take in past from Sonoma/Mendocino counties – 96% but now less take in Sonoma; more in Mendocino.

Changes in regulations now year old: reduced annual limit; reduced access (Fort Ross area closure), later start time (8 AM) lead to fewer rock pickers who generally favor earlier low tides.

Tag compliance good – some alteration issues.

ALDS - license automated system – limits additional cards and allows view of consistent patterns, duplication by drivers licenses, etc.

Citations – not much new – small group altering cards.

Check points 2015 – coordinated with warden training

Mid week check points – few minus tide weekends

Numbers down in Sonoma County – violations way down at Mendocino check point – same as last year.

Some listed cases:

Father/son team caught in March – caught year before – also trespassing

Alterations on cards – court threw case out –

Son checked again – had scuba gear caught with over 30 abalones

Previous dismissal made them think abalone violations not considered serious, sold abalone in Sacramento

Cases in South –

Monterey, Carmel Bay – taking black abalone

Catalina Island – had taken abalone, fish, lobster – confiscated gear

Catalina west end – 6 abalone on board – one diver on scuba – wardens in water observed 1 abalone taken and found 4 additional abalone in game bag

8 pinks, 3 greens - dive gear confiscated.

Synopsis – numbers comparable to last year - 400 hours more last year – less overtime
CALTip good this year

Need more enforcement especially north coast and south too where abalone populations are showing some recovery.

3.2 Discussion and questions

Revenue from fines are not helpful –

- Courts have all records not the Department

- Tried to follow citations in Sonoma – confusion and lack of continuity

- Lot of assessments have fine money not just Department and local DFW Committee

- DAs direct moneys

- Varies by counties – not all counties have DFW Commission – (Sonoma/Mendocino do)

- Looking at audit?

- Fines are in Code plus bail schedule – up to judges

- Enforcement of fine payment not followed or enforced

So much money to be made from poaching

Also courts clogged – prosecutions not allowed

All offenses are misdemeanors

Policy for check points – courts have limits for prosecution - hoops to jump through
criteria – low tides, etc

Is there a state wide data base on abalone offenders – have to check county courts

No schedule for 2016 yet

4. 11:30 – 12:00 Red abalone Fishery Management Plan (FMP) development update (Taniguchi) see PowerPoint (PP) slides

4.1 Impact of 2014 Regulations

Regulation changes in 2014 supposed to reduce catch 25% - actual reduction 35% -
greater in Sonoma – in part to reduced access – closure Ft. Ross

Catch 2014 approximately 150,000 2013= 225,000

By county: 2014 Mendocino = 130,000 Sonoma – 30,000

39% fewer rock pickers bought abalone cards in 2014 – fewer due to later start time
data from phone survey and report cards; no solid data on poaching take

4.2 FMP Development

FMP Development Accomplishments so far

- Technical review 2013-2014

- Public workshops, tribal consultation, public input

- Angler survey Feb 2015

- July 2015 webinar – Essential Fisheries Information (EFI)

- Current - economic analysis – done by outside group

EFI Table

Need to better understand: Age/growth; reproduction; stock distribution; abundance indices

Have little understanding: Total mortality; climate change; oceanography

FMP Principles, Based on MLMA

Sustainability; ecosystem health; cultural/tribal importance; Adaptive management; socioeconomic importance

FMP Framework

Area based management
 More adaptive
 Smaller adjustments on shorter time scale – complex and intense discussion
 Issue of El Nino – warm water effect on red abalone
 Manage fishery by true TAC and TAC by area
 Includes additional data streams
 Build on density based management
 Add fishery catch, modeling, economics important and other EFI

FMP Timeline

2016 CEQA Phase II Workshops/Tribal Consult Draft Review Scientific/Peer Review

Actual draft FMP to Commission at April meeting 2016 – will see at next RAAC meeting

5. 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

6. 1:00 –2:15 Abalone Assessment Updates

6.1 2014 catch estimates (Kashiwada) see PP Slides

PP – catch rate down quite a bit – 250,000 in past – 36% reduction currently to 148,000

Card sales – noticeable drop in 2014

Fluctuation in catch not totally due to less cards – many factors

Automated License Data System (**ALDS**) – look at 4 years of sales 2011-2014

Only about 40% of persons bought annually – it is not a cohesive constituency

Various influences

ALDS data tied to actual take

38% of sales are to constituency who buys annually

Card returns around 60% - fairly stable – no penalty for no return

Could consider cap on sales???

Catch by county - % reduction

-48% Del Norte/Humboldt

-32% Mendocino

-49% Sonoma

-56% Marin

Dramatic drop in Sonoma County from 100,000 in past years to 20,000

Mendocino County up and down and recently up

80% of catch now from Mendocino

top 10 sites	Ft Ross reduction	95%	Mendocino Headlands	17%
	Van Damme	9%	Arena Cove	54%
	Glass Beach	27%	Salt Pt	63%
	Sea Ranch	45%	Timber Cove	58%
	Moat Creek	37%	Elk	15%

Divers vs Rock pickers – dramatic reduction 40% - closure Ft. Ross & 8 AM start time

No data from 2010-2011 – no phone survey done

6.2. Abalone health (Moore) see PP Slides

Withering Syndrome moving north but colder water prevents infection

Phage effecting WS is a good thing – phage occurs from Mexico to far north CA

Phage appear stable – seen first 2006 – strange dynamic – encouraging

Spreading rapidly – all WS infected

Body condition Index

Map of shell ratio to body at San Miguel, Van Damme and Ft Ross/Salt Point
Generally poor conditions for abalone currently.

6.3. El Niño update (Rogers-Bennett) see PP slides

Issues of El Niño, etc. rather than just density – what is ecosystem doing to abalone

Need to pay attention to non legal sized abalone in north

2015 El Niño year

Kelp Forest and Abalone Monitoring Reveals Changes in North California

10 monitoring sites – Abalone index site surveys

Using AAUS volunteers (American Academy of Underwater Sciences)

2011-2015 – kelp forest impacts

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB), abalone/red urchin die off, sea star wasting, purple urchin explosion, warm blob*/kelp die off, 2015 El Niño

2015 El Niño is big and will have great impact

HAB impacted abalone, urchins, sea stars, gumboot chitons

Mortality by depth, greater in shallow water

Sea star wasting – *Pycnopodia* sea stars heavily impacted – virus caused

2015 Densities down to zero at sites: Ft Ross, Timber Cove, Pt Arena.

Small purple urchin explosion (60x population from 1999)

Red urchin also increased dramatically

Spawning even in warm water

Van Damme at 11°C/2014 now way higher 18°C

Kelp canopy missing - dramatic change from 2008 on north coast ie. Van Damme.

Weird barnacle situation – abalone covered in barnacles – not usual species.

Unusual species such as Hopkins Rose – more southern species now in north.

Reduced kelp canopy – abalone starving Oct. 2015 – shrunken in shell.

Impact of warm water, low food quantity and quality – no spawning.

Conclusions:

Monitoring established baseline.

Baselines are needed to assess impacts.

Questions:

Will current conditions persist as a new stable state?

Will purple urchins eat all the bull kelp sporophytes and prevent future kelp growth?

2015 El Niño could be bigger than 1982-83.

North kelp is annual; south is perennial.

New kelp, *Sargassum horneri*, non-native, taking over from *Macrocystis*.

*The Blob: large scale/vast pool of warm water off north coast of California; it is part of bigger pattern including California drought and east coast blizzards; affecting marine life and local weather.

6.4. Recreational abalone fishery socioeconomic analysis (Rogers-Bennett) see

Conservation Strategy Fund PP slides

Research into economic value of recreational abalone fishery using data from phone surveys, punch card sites (50+sites)

3 questions asked in Economic study of the fishery:

How much is this fishery worth to divers?
What's the abalone fishery impact on local economies
Explore willingness to pay higher fees
Fishery is worth \$44 million/year to the participants in the fishery
Local economic value \$25 million/year
Synopsis
Abalone worth \$1000/year to 30,000 people

Props up the economies of coastal communities
Substantial investment in sustainability (ie. biology, enforcement) worth it to avoid fishery collapse

7. 2:15 – 2:30 Break

10. 2:30 – 2:45 Other Business

10.1. Proposed green abalone recovery project (Benavides) See PP slides

Bill requirement to spend some funds in southern California. Most spent on San Miguel

Presentation by Nancy on Green Abalone

Started kelp forest restoration project
Growing kelp in classrooms by kids; 250 volunteer divers planting kelp
White seabass also grown in classrooms – 5,000 students
Green abalone – some in aquafarms in southern California
Some local southern California residents never seen/heard of abalone
Nancy Caruso got permit to put green abalone in classrooms
Pilot study on out planting large adult greens made possible by buying brood stock from aquaculture facility which was going out of business.
Previous stocking studies
1992 translocation – failed due to poaching
2013 translocation also failed – discovered greens very picky about location.
Project: out plant large, adult farm-raised greens. Passive out planting; isolation of reefs; multiple tagging; rigorous monitoring, monitor movement and temperature
Results -about half/half (40/40/20)

New Project:

Collect wild greens – massive grow out effort
Grow 100,000 abalone
Obstacles – cost \$2 million over 10 years
Building nurseries x 10 classrooms

Discussion – much interest – good presentation

Efforts are a combined effort many associated groups
January work shop – out planting and recovery plan – southern California - Long Beach
Interest to find money for Nancy's program
RAAC members get ideas to Steve Benavides and/or Nancy

11. 2:45 – 3:15 Public Expression (limit to 3 minutes per person)

11.1 Ed Schulze comments:
Supports \$30 card cost for guns/science

Suggest RAAC meet quarterly
Supports area based management
Sees need for penalty for not returning cards

11.2 *Marin Rod & Gun Club* invites RAAC back any time
Requests photo and information

11.3 Jack Likins – couldn't hear most of meeting
Ian requested Jack's comments in writing– attached**

11.4 Jack Beallo, *Red Abalone Divers*: disappointed Dennis Haussler not here, as well as he (Jack) not being chosen to fill the seat.

12. 3:15 – 3:30 Wrap up, next meeting and Adjournment

Spring 2016 Meeting March 12 in Santa Ana, CA.

After meeting closed: both Rocky Daniels (north) and Steve Benavides (south) announced their resignations from the RAAC. Letters of resignation sent to the Director, copies to Committee, have been received. Both wish to continue on Committee until replacements have been appointed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Rose

Carol Rose, Secretary

**** Written comments to the meeting submitted by Jack Likins (see 11.3)**

RAAC Meeting Comments by Jack Likins 11-14-2015

Procedural Comments

- Thanks to the Chairman (Ian) for sending out slides/handouts before the meeting. Having these documents made following the meeting by conference call much easier.
- The conference connection was very bad with a lot of background noise and echo, almost impossible to hear. Please improve the conference set up for the next meeting.
- I am disappointed that the members would not move to allow public participation during the meeting, especially since it has been allowed in the past. This seems particularly unfair considering several non-members (Carol, Nancy) were allowed to speak, at will, during the discussions.

Use of report card funds

- I agree with the committee that more funding should be directed toward enforcement.
 - With wardens' estimates that poaching is as high as 100% of the legal take, enforcement is low hanging fruit and, if their budgets are increased, will give the most return for money spent. It doesn't make sense that only 6% of revenue is spent on enforcement.
- There is no reason to raise card fees to participants, if the committee can't direct where the money is spent.
- According to CDFW Code Section 12009:
 - (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the money collected from any fine or forfeiture imposed or collected for the taking of abalone for any purpose other than for profit in violation of this article or any other provision of law shall be deposited as follows:*
 - (1) One-half in the Abalone Restoration and Preservation Account.*
 - (2) One-half in the county treasury of the county in which the violation occurred.*

Why isn't the abalone account getting their share?

- The idea of Abalone out-planting and the project proposed by Nancy Caruso is very good, but should not be funded with money collected from report card fees. It makes no sense to spend money on reestablishing an abalone fishery, if we can't manage or enforce the one we already have. According to Nancy, she suspects that her out-planted abalone may have been poached.

Abalone FMP

- What I heard from Laura's and Ian's presentations was that they wanted to be more "adaptive and responsive" by applying management changes in smaller increments, in more and smaller areas, and with less reaction time. This is impossible using the current transect density surveys that are only completed every 3 years, in only 8-10 locations and at a very high cost. We need better fishery evaluation methods and management triggers.
- The only cost effective way to cover more and smaller areas is the concept of using "Citizen Scientists", drawing from the resource of 25,000 recreational divers.
 - The concept of Length Based Spawning Potential Ratio (LB-SPR) is proven science that can, and should, be used as a powerful tool to manage the abalone fishery.
 - The RAAC should get involved and support this project that already been started by The Nature Conservancy and a group of recreational fishermen.