



Tracking Number: **(2023-24MPA-AM1)**

To request a change to regulations under the authority of the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission), you are required to submit this completed form to: California Fish and Game Commission, (physical address) 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1320, Sacramento, CA 95814, (mailing address) P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090 or via email to FGC@fgc.ca.gov. Note: This form is not intended for listing petitions for threatened or endangered species (see Section 670.1 of Title 14).

Incomplete forms will not be accepted. A petition is incomplete if it is not submitted on this form or fails to contain necessary information in each of the required categories listed on this form (Section I). A petition will be rejected if it does not pertain to issues under the Commission's authority. A petition may be denied if any petition requesting a functionally equivalent regulation change was considered within the previous 12 months and no information or data is being submitted beyond what was previously submitted. If you need help with this form, please contact Commission staff at (916) 653-4899 or FGC@fgc.ca.gov.

SECTION I: Required Information.

Please be succinct. Responses for Section I should not exceed five pages

1. Laguna Bluebelt Coalition

Name of primary contact person: Mike Beanan

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Email address: [REDACTED]

2. Rulemaking Authority (Required) - Reference to the statutory or constitutional authority of the Commission to take the action requested: Authority cited: Sections 200, 205(c), 265, 399, 1590, 1591, 2860, 2861 and 6750, Fish and Game Code; and Sections 36725(a) and 36725(e), Public Resources Code.

3. Overview (Required) -

- a. Extend the Laguna Beach SMCA no-take regulation down to the southern border of the City of Laguna Beach. This area is currently covered by the Dana Point SMCA, which only protects tide pool resources, not the offshore kelp beds.

4. Rationale (Required) -

The revised Petition is based upon input from the Orange County Marine Protected Area Collaborative (OCMPAC) and enforcement recommendations from participants. The revised Petition locates the southern No Take SMCA border to follow one East/West latitude line to facilitate a consistent offshore boundary. Laguna Beach has recently taken over enforcement of the South Laguna beaches all the way down to the City border. ~~Right now there is confusion due to the different regulations within one city.~~

This regulation change will make enforcement easier and more consistent because it will create continuity within the city, where the same rules apply to all beaches. All Laguna Beach lifeguards have received MPO training and enforce no-take rules for the



rest of the city beaches. This will result in an increase in outreach and enforcement effectiveness, which supports priority recommendation number 15.

High fishing and lobstering pressure are taking a toll on the remaining kelp beds in South Laguna due to overharvesting and substrate degradation possibly due to anchor chain drag. The Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 established new requirements for fishery management councils to identify and describe Essential Fish Habitat and to protect, conserve, and enhance these EFH for the benefit of fisheries. A 2002 update to these EFH regulations allowed fishery management councils to designate Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). HAPCs are considered high priority areas for conservation, management, or research because they are important to ecosystem function, sensitive to human activities, stressed by development, or are rare. The rocky reef and kelp beds in this particular area of South Laguna are slightly different than those in the rest of the city because of the steep drop of the cliffs into the ocean. This creates a unique microhabitat where water nutrients are mixed due to wave refraction off the cliffs.

There are kelp forests offshore in these areas that are desperately needed as habitat. One of the original design considerations for designating MPAs was to “Include within MPAs suitable rocky habitat containing abundant kelp and/or foliose algae” (CMLPA Master Plan for MPAs, Appendix F). ~~When the MPA boundaries were finalized in 2012, the kelp was at its highest extent of coverage since 1967 (see supplemental graph), so the total area of kelp forest was overestimated.~~ The kelp beds off South Laguna have been nearly decimated possibly by overharvesting and anchor chain drag and need to be protected. This, in combination with the potential for additional kelp decline due to warm water and recent wildfire events makes it imperative that we protect as much as possible. The Science Advisory Team (SAT) determined Laguna Beach’s MPA to be the minimum size for success.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act also requires action to be taken here. The south end of the no-take SMCA is visible from shore as a line of lobster trap buoys extending out from the cliffs and beach. One MPA watch volunteer reported 223 buoys off of Table Rock beach on 11/8/2023. This represents a virtual “wall” of dangerous trap lines that interrupt whale migration paths. Whales have been seen frequently traveling very close to shore along this stretch of coastline (see supplemental photo of Thousand Steps beach). A December 2019, [Men’s Journal](#) magazine article stated that in the preceding few weeks Dana Point Boat captains had logged more than 40 sightings of gray whale cow-calf pairs in the shallow coves of Laguna Beach. The lobster buoy lines likely create a dangerous obstacle for migrating whales, which are protected under the MMPA.

Residents in South Laguna support the extension of the no-take SMCA as evidenced by the attached letters of support from the Three Arch Bay Community Services District, Orange County Coastkeeper, Laguna Canyon Conservancy, Laguna Bluebelt Coalition, and the South Laguna Civic Association. They feel that it is not equitable to have only the north and central beaches protected. Please see the attached letters of support. The



Laguna Beach City Council also supports further analysis and participation in the process.

SECTION II: Optional Information

5. **Date of Petition:** 11/29/2023 **AMENDED 03/11/2025**
6. **Category of Proposed Change**
☐ Sport Fishing
☐ Commercial Fishing
☐ Hunting
☒ Other, please specify: MPAs, Section 632.
7. **The proposal is to:** *(To determine section number(s), see current year regulation booklet or <https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs>)*
☒ Amend Title 14 Section(s): [Westlaw regulations](#).
☐ Add New Title 14 Section(s): [Click here to enter text](#).
☐ Repeal Title 14 Section(s): [Click here to enter text](#).
8. **If the proposal is related to a previously submitted petition that was rejected, specify the tracking number of the previously submitted petition**
Or ☒ Not applicable.
9. **Effective date:** If applicable, identify the desired effective date of the regulation.
If the proposed change requires immediate implementation, explain the nature of the emergency:
This should be implemented as soon as possible. Ancient California Gray Whale Migration is currently being altered due to proliferation of nearshore lobster traps and rope buoys at the southern SMCA boundary.
10. **Supporting documentation:** Identify and attach to the petition any information supporting the proposal including data, reports and other documents:
(A) Map of proposed Boundary Adjustment.
(B) Letter of support from the Three Arch Bay Community Services District
(C) Letter of support from the South Laguna Civic Association
(D) Letter of support from the Laguna Bluebelt Coalition
(E) Letter of support from Orange County Coastkeeper
(F) Letter of support from the Laguna Canyon Conservancy
(G) ~~Graphic from "Status of the Kelp Beds in 2019: Orange & San Diego Counties. Prepared for the Region Nine Kelp Survey Consortium" by MBC Aquatic Sciences~~
(H) ~~Full Report: "Status of the Kelp Beds in 2019"~~
(I) Photo of gray whale at Thousand Steps Beach
11. **Economic or Fiscal Impacts:** Although no socioeconomic data is provided, there may be a fiscal impact on commercial lobster fishers due to reducing their fishing grounds. However, fishing effort will be closer to Dana Point Harbor to save fuel costs and use of ropeless buoys will be encouraged. With removal of lobster buoy lines as migration barriers, whale watching



tours can resume in Laguna Beach (\$10 million estimated annual revenues to Dana Point economy). Less anchoring by CPFVs will reduce anchor chain drag damaging local reefs and kelp forests. ~~Estimated resident property values gain an increase of 20% from proximity to a fully protected MPA~~

12. Forms: If applicable, list any forms to be created, amended or repealed:

SECTION 3: FGC Staff Only

Date received: **March 11, 2025**

FGC staff action:

- ☐ Accept - complete
- ☐ Reject - incomplete
- ☐ Reject - outside scope of FGC authority

Tracking Number

Date petitioner was notified of receipt of petition and pending action: _____

Meeting date for FGC consideration: _____

FGC action:

- ☐ Denied by FGC
- ☐ Denied - same as petition _____
- ☐ Granted for consideration of regulation change

Tracking Number

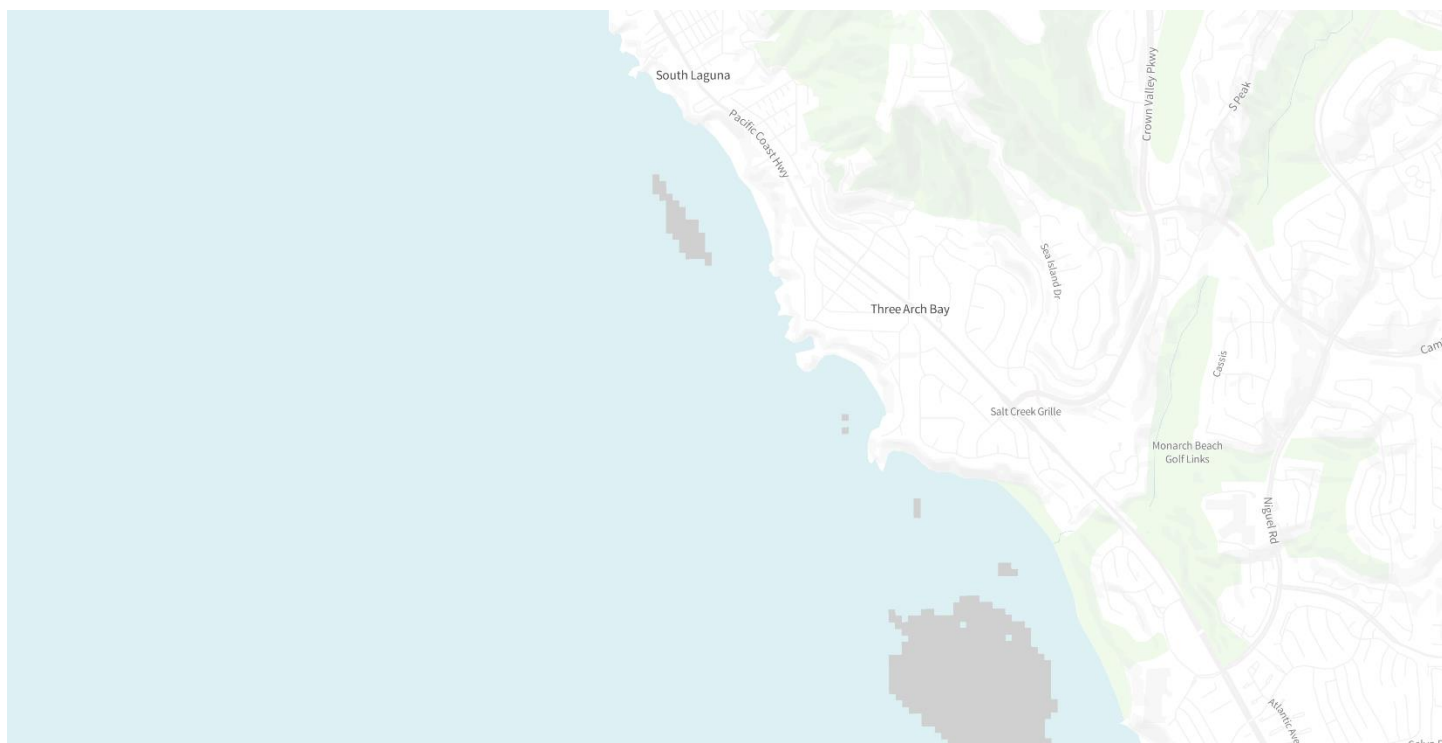


State of California – Fish and Game Commission

PETITION TO THE CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION FOR REGULATION CHANGE

FGC 1 (Rev 06/19) Page 5 of 6

Proposed SMCA No Take Rocky Kelp Substrate at Thousand Steps Reef – KelpWatch.org





Proposed SMCA No Take Rocky Kelp Substrate at Thousand Steps Reef – KelpWatch.org





California Fish and Game Commission
Marine Resources Committee
fgc@fgc.ca.gov

January 7, 2025

Subject: Revision to Laguna Bluebelt Coalition Petition 2023-24 MPA

Commissioners and Staff,

The Laguna Bluebelt Coalition seeks to revise the southern boundary for Petition 2023-24MPA to a No Take SMCA (State Marine Conservation Area) for citywide enforcement consistency and protection of essential sea life habitat between Palos Verdes and La Jolla MPAs.

The proposed revised No Take SMCA is within the jurisdiction of the City of Laguna Beach and has widespread support from community organizations and the City's Environmental and Sustainability Committee. Community support includes the South Laguna Civic Association, Three Arch Bay Service District, Village Laguna, Laguna Canyon Conservancy, Project O, OC Coastkeeper and many individuals.

The City of Laguna Beach has submitted multiple letters seeking to participate in processing the Laguna Bluebelt Petition. In a December 10, 2024 letter to the Commission, Laguna Beach Mayor Rounaghi emphasized the "City looks forward to reviewing the State's assessment of Petition 2023-24 MPA" and "The City remains committed to actively participate and providing informed input...".

Presently, the southern area of Laguna Beach is inaccurately designated as within the Dana Point SMCA leading to confusion about place names and take regulations. The Petition will simplify the no take regulation for the entire city of Laguna Beach, address inaccurate place names and restore Laguna Beach as the correct jurisdiction for this area. The revised No Take SMCA boundary will be identified by the prominent bluff top outcropping at Three Arch Bay consistent with the Laguna Beach City Limits.

The Petition reflects the MLPA's Adaptive Management Objectives to:

- Protect the structure and function of marine ecosystems
- Improve native marine life populations, including those of economic value
- Ensure minimal disturbance while allowing for sustainable opportunities for recreation, education and research
- Ensure comprehensive representation of all key habitats, including unique habitats
- Use learning acquired through administration of the MLPP to adaptively manage the objectives, management measures, enforcement efforts, and scientific guidelines to inform management decisions
- MPAs function as a cohesive statewide network

Size and Spacing Considerations

The Science Advisory Team (SAT) spacing requirements determined Laguna Beach is an essential linkage for larval dispersal among Southern California's MPAs. Guidelines set a maximum distance and minimum size for each MPA.

Maximum Shoreline Distance: To ensure the persistence of a suite of species in an MPA network, the maximum distance between MPAs was determined to be within 50 -100 km (31 -62 miles). A network of MPAs 20 km (12 miles) in length met the upper boundary of the preferred size guidelines and led to population persistence for a larger set of movement combinations. With MPAs this large, decreasing spacing produced a more substantial effect. MPAs of 20 km (12 mile) shoreline length protected a much larger range of movement combinations when spaced 50 km (31 miles) apart (51.8%) than when spaced 100 km apart (21.6%). This increase occurred because persistence of populations with large mean larval dispersal was maintained through a network effect, rather than self-persistence. Laguna Beach's MPAs maximum distance are 50 miles from Palos Verdes MPAs and 72 miles from La Jolla MPAs to meet this goal.

In summary, bigger MPAs yield better results for protecting marine life. Laguna Beach is an excellent candidate when you combine community support and the City's present MPA enforcement measures to be able to achieve noteworthy success.

Minimum Alongshore Extent: To best protect adult populations, based on adult neighborhood sizes and movement patterns, Guidelines conclude MPAs should have an alongshore extent of at least 3-6 miles of coastline, and preferably 6-12.5 miles. Larger MPAs would be needed to fully protect marine birds, mammals, and migratory fish. Combined and simplified, the Guideline indicates that MPAs should have a minimum area of 9-18 square miles, or a preferred area of 18-36 square miles.

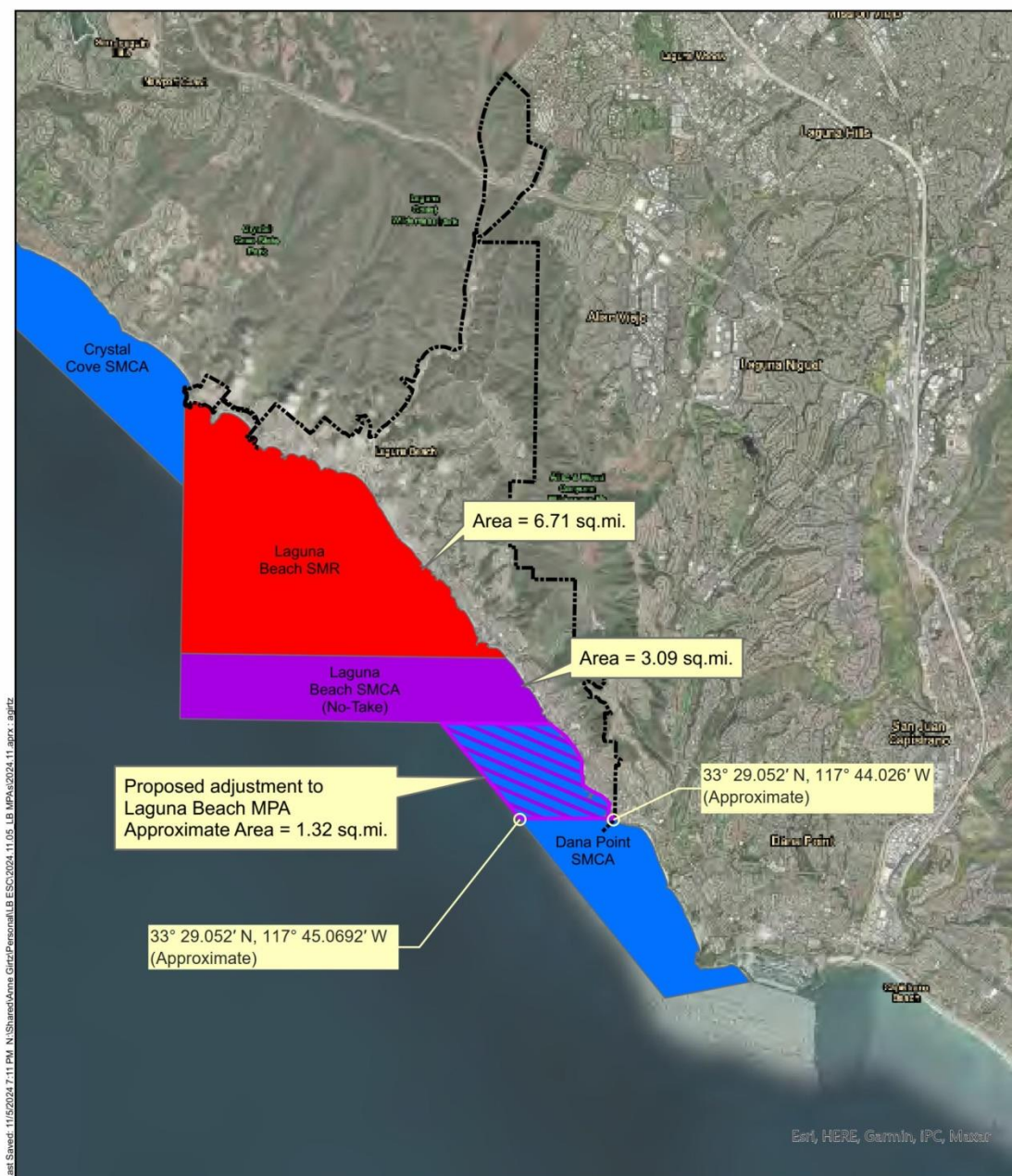
The Revised Petition to include full protection of all of Laguna Beach's MPAs is necessary to comply with SAT Guidelines since, once approved, it will protect 7 miles of coastline slightly within the preferred alongshore extent (6-12 miles). A fully protected Laguna MPA will also grow to 11 square miles, the minimum preferred area (9-18 square miles).

Once approved, the citywide and a fully protected MPA will comply with SAT Guidelines for preferred coastline and size. This will be complimented by local, well-established education and enforcement capabilities to support the continued success for Laguna Beach's MPAs.

Stakeholder Collaboration

The Laguna Bluebelt Coalition, a statewide model for MPA Collaboratives since 2009, has met with key stakeholders through OCMFAC including fishing groups, tribal representatives, game wardens and others to revise Petition 2023-24MPA to accommodate the local lobster fishery. By adjusting the southern SMCA to follow the east/west latitude line at the request of the Dana Point lobster group, placement of lobster traps is facilitated by a consistent GPS latitude line to avoid encroachment into the proposed southern Laguna Beach No Take SMCA.

Revised Boundary Map



Symbology

- City Limits
- - - SOCWA Effluent Transmission Line
- - - SOCWA Ocean Outfall
- ▨ Proposed Laguna Beach SMCA (No-Take) Adjustment

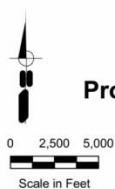


Figure 1
City of Laguna Beach
Proposed Marine Protected Area Adjustment

Laguna Bluebelt Coalition
MPA Decadal Review

Economic Considerations

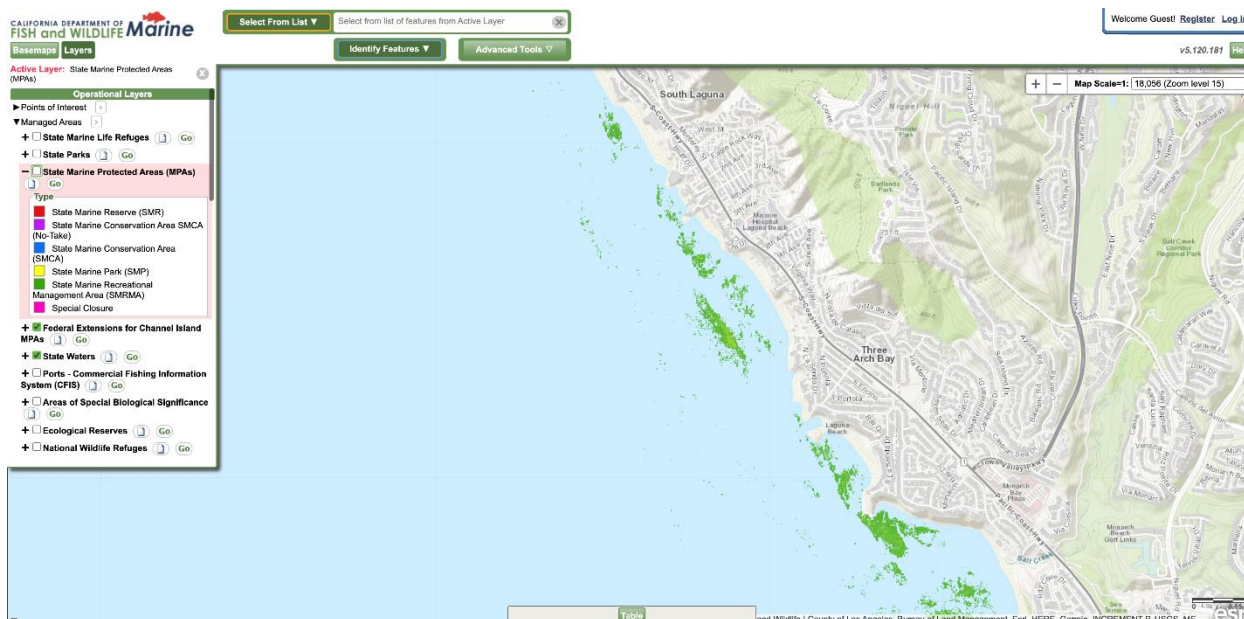
While commercial fishing businesses generally object to MPAs, it is worth noting that Dana Wharf has shifted operations away from fishing to pursue new economic opportunities as the Whale and Dolphin Watching Capital of the World – America’s first Whale Heritage Site. The designation of just over 1 square mile of a new No Take SMCA is just a fraction of the present Dana Wharf fishing grounds and will not measurably impact their annual sportfishing and whale tour revenues. Dana Wharf presently operates large fishing grounds spanning hundreds of square miles from Dana Point south to Camp Pendleton and west to Catalina and San Clemente Islands.

See: [The Ultimate Guide To Fishing In Dana Point, CA | Dana Wharf](#)

Essential Marine Habitats

With steep coastal bluffs, isolated coves and offshore reefs, Laguna Beach’s southern coastline provides unique habitats for coastal sea life nurseries. Kelp forests populate local reefs throughout the city while dolphin and whales routinely transit the area for foraging opportunities and annual migration.

Laguna Beach’s Essential Kelp Habitat



The City of Laguna Beach has a long ocean tradition and is committed to protecting marine resources. All Marine Safety Lifeguards are qualified as Marine Protection Officers to maintain a robust education and enforcement program.

The Laguna Beach General Plan and Policies recognize the value of coastal resources (see References).

The success of Laguna’s Marine Protected Areas over the past 12 years is clear evidence that sea life can be protected and restored in an urban environment. The City’s commitment to manage over 6 million visitors continues to educate and motivate compliance with all MPA regulations and policies. Revising

the southern SMCA boundary for full citywide protection will support the community's dedication to achieve the goals and objectives of the State's Marine Life Protection Act.

The Laguna Bluebelt Coalition appreciates the dedicated role of the Fish and Game Commission to serve as a global leader in advancing the State's recovery of sea life for present and future generations.

Mike Beanan

w/Laguna Bluebelt Coalition



Julianne E Steers, Sargo School

References

Laguna Beach General Plan and Policies

Action 1.1.1 Protect natural assets and open-space areas to maintain their role as “carbon sinks.”

Policy 4.1 Policy 4.2 Develop and adopt a program to protect sensitive coastal resources.

Action 4.1.1 Compile an inventory of the City’s coastal resources and prepare a Coastal Resources Protection Program.

Action 4.2.2 Enforce State’s Marine Life Management Act and identified Marine Life Protected areas within the City and local regulations for the protection of marine life and intertidal resources and to conduct educational and outreach programs.

Action 10.7.2 Periodically review the City’s Water Quality Control Ordinance and related policies for protecting marine resources and update as appropriate.

In cooperation with the State Department of Fish and Game, a Marine Preserve was created by the State in 1968 for a portion of the City’s shoreline particularly rich in tidepool life. In addition to the Marine Preserve, the State, in conjunction with the City, established an Ecological Reserve in 1974, creating, in essence, a marine sanctuary, or a protected “aquarium”.

Policies 2-A Encourage the expansion of the Marine Life Refuges and the designation of particularly unique or ecologically sensitive coastal areas as Ecological Reserves (such as seal and bird rocks), pursuant to the provisions of the State Department of Fish and Game.

2-F Develop a local enforcement program, pending funding availability, consisting of shoreline protection regulations and citation authority for Marine Safety personnel.

2-H Support restoration of offshore kelp beds.

41 Watershed Protection and Restoration Promote the protection and restoration of offshore, coastal, lake, stream or wetland waters and habitats and preserve them to the maximum extent practicable in their natural state. Oppose activities that may degrade the quality of offshore, coastal, lake, stream or wetland waters and habitat and promote the rehabilitation of impaired waters and habitat.

Develop an enforcement program for the protection of marine life resources.

Promote an expanded Marine Life Refuge.

Marine Resources: A small estuary occurs at the mouth of Aliso Creek. As recently as 1976 this estuary supported the Tidewater Goby, a species considered uncommon and declining in numbers due to habitat loss. A resource inventory included in the Orange County Conservation Element identifies the presence of the South Laguna Marine Life Refuge in the South Laguna area. The refuge, near the mouth of Aliso Creek, was given refuge status by the California Fish and Game Commission because the animal

populations in the rocky intertidal habitat had not been subjected to the collecting pressures that had occurred in other areas along the south coast.

From: Mike Beanan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, March 14, 2025 10:41 AM
To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
Cc: Ashcraft, Susan@FGC <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Petition 2023-24-R

Hi,

Please add my comments for the record in evaluating Petition 2023-24-R.

Thank you,

Mike Beanan

Laguna Bluebelt Coalition

[Laguna Bluebelt - Working Together for a Healthy Ocean](#)

Working Together for a Healthy Ocean. Support our New Marine Reserves Your support is critical if they are to succeed.

www.lagunabluebelt.com

Mike Beanan, Co-founder, Laguna Beach Coalition

Thank you for including us in the process to evaluate and, hopefully, approve Petition 2023-24-R to protect all of Laguna Beach's Marine Life.

Based upon stakeholder input, we have submitted a Revised Petition offered as a compromise to support and ease near shore enforcement along one, common latitude line. The original petition followed Laguna Beach's City Limits extending southwesterly from the shoreline. This made the determination of the offshore boundary difficult according to participants at a recent stakeholder meeting hosted by the Orange County Marine Protected Area Collaborative in Dana Point. While there is some debate about who made the suggestion, which led to an unfortunate misunderstanding, the revised petition before you is a smaller SMCA No Take than originally requested but still protects kelp and essential fish habitats.

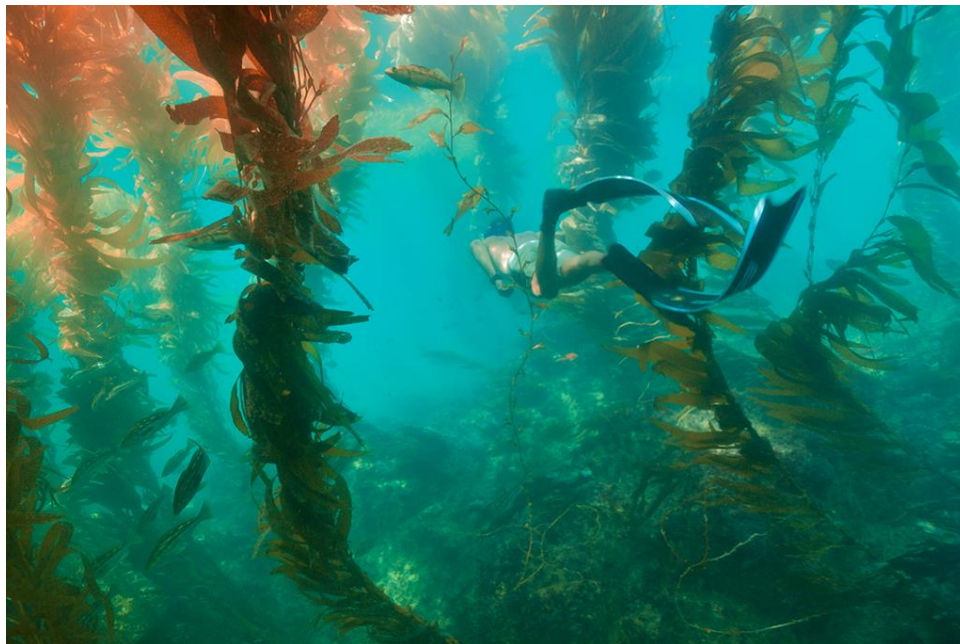
When evaluating the Petitions, I suggest we comply with and enhance the goals of the Marine Management Plan by increasing the coherence and effectiveness in protecting the state's marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage with full citywide protection. Fortunately, Laguna's unique MPAs have dramatically improved

recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems through coordinated enforcement by Marine Safety Lifeguards, Park Rangers and community volunteers working together to minimize human disturbance. Petition 2023-4-R is consistent with all of the goals for the Marine Management Act and legislative intent of the Marine Life Protection Act of 1999.

I am not unfamiliar with economic challenges. I grew up in a large working class family in Northern California surfing the cold, wild waves while diving for abalone with my brothers off of Gualala and Mendocino or fishing mountain lakes. Leaving high school and to avoid the draft, I joined the Navy, studied navigation and was assigned to SEAL Team One, as a Platoon Sergeant and sent to Vietnam. Turning 21, I got out, worked my way through college and earned a degree in Biology before being hired as Assistant Dean at UC Irvine to manage veteran programs. One of my first projects was a pioneering Handicapped Scuba Project for wheelchair veterans and others...now a worldwide opportunity for the physically challenged community to enjoy and explore underwater wonders.

I continue now to swim and free dive Laguna's remarkable MPAs while traveling and Scuba diving other MPAs. I encourage FGC staff and commissioners to visit and swim Laguna's MPA and see large Sheepshead and robust kelp forests free of sea urchin barrens.

As a Californian, I feel an opportunity and responsibility to protect and restore our natural heritage - an abundant ocean teeming with sea life. Please consider approving the Laguna Bluebelt's Petition 2023-24-R as part of your legacy for California's sea life protection.



ORIGINAL PETITION



Symbology

- City Limits
- - - SOCWA Effluent Transmission Line
- SOCWA Ocean Outfall
- Proposed Laguna Beach SMCA (No-Take) Adjustment

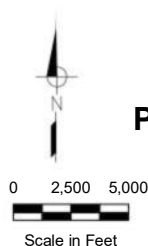


Figure 1

City of Laguna Beach Proposed Marine Protected Area Adjustment

Laguna Bluebelt Coalition
MPA Decadal Review



Tim Duong for DanaWharf.com



P.O. BOX 9668
SOUTH LAGUNA, CA
92652-7639
southlaguna.org

August 29, 2023

Commissioners and Staff,

Since 2012, with the implementation of the California Marine Life Protection Act of 1999, Laguna Beach has successfully managed a network of Marine Protected Areas as a statewide model of collaboration and appreciates the support of the Fish & Game Commission in that effort.

On the heels of annexation of South Laguna beaches coming under the purview of the City of Laguna Beach on March 1, 2023, we are requesting an expansion of the “No Take SMCA” provisions to extend throughout all Laguna Beach MPAs. In addition to alignment with Laguna Beach’s commitment to the national “30 x 30 Initiative Plan” to conserve 30% of America's land and waters by 2030, a citywide “No Take” provision will provide enforcement consistency and community equity while protecting South Laguna kelp reefs – key to carbon sequestration, rising sea temperatures and attenuating bluff erosion.

Multiple benefits will accompany extending the Laguna Beach No Take MPA from 7.2 to 7.9 miles: from Aliso Beach and Totuava Cove through Three Arch Bay (TAB) southwest to the Laguna Beach city limit, see attached map. TAB has exceptional nursery beds for marine life in its bays that are not protected under our current MPAs. For this reason, coupled with the decimating impacts of over-fishing in the unprotected SMCA along TAB during the past 10 years, the TAB Community Services District requested in May 2023 that California Fish and Wildlife Commission extend the No Take MPA through “the southernmost point of the city of Laguna Beach – Mussel Cove, also known as Three Arch Bay.”

The Laguna Bluebelt Coalition, Laguna Ocean Foundation through their education and outreach programs, the City of Laguna Beach’s Environmental Sustainability Committee, and the enthusiastic 100% support and collaboration of our City Council and Marine Safety Department have enabled us to be strong watchdogs and local stewards of our MPAs. Together, we have focused on habitat restoration, water-quality education, wildlife and resource protection, and networking.

Laguna Beach’s rocky coastline has been scientifically determined to provide ideal tidepool and kelp forest habitats as a vital genetic linkage for marine life between the Palos Verde Peninsula and La Jolla Cove. No Take MPAs in Laguna Beach have created increased sea life populations, support an expanding variety of ecotourism recreational opportunities, and have proven to be essential to mitigating decades of over-fishing.

Citywide MPA consistency will further improve ocean water quality by reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions from fishing boats traveling from Dana Point to Laguna Beach.

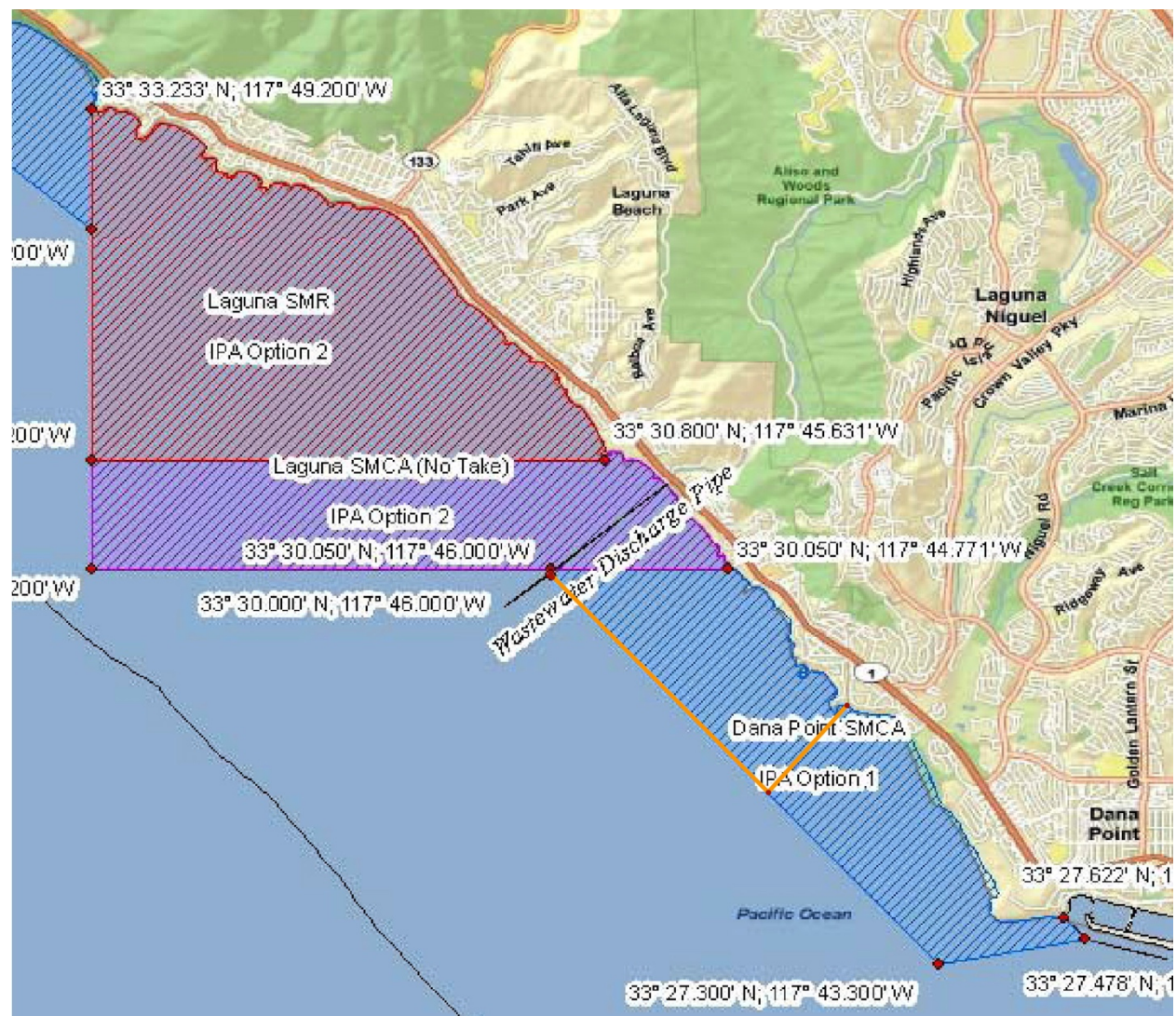
Climate change science recognizes the ocean as key to reversing negative anthropogenic climate impacts.

Thank you for your support of Laguna's Marine Protected Areas and for your consideration of an expansion of the network of No Take MPAs citywide which will increase protections to California's sea life populations and habitat value while benefitting us all.



Greg O'Loughlin, President
South Laguna Civic Association

Orange outline indicates the proposed No Take MPA extension to Laguna Beach's southern boundary.





P.O. Box 1383, Laguna Beach, CA 92652 • www.LagunaCanyonConservancy.org

November 22, 2023

California Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
Via email: fgc@fgc.ca.gov

RE: Support for Extending Laguna Beach's Southern MPA Boundary

Dear Commissioners,

The Board of Directors of the Laguna Canyon Conservancy (LCC) joins with our local environmental colleagues and organizations in support of extending the Marine Protected Areas at the southern end of Laguna Beach.

LCC believes a revision is vital to ensuring an increase in protection of California's sea life populations and ecosystems, as well as enforcing consistency of rules and regulations, along with community equity. It is also important to achieve the City of Laguna Beach's 30 x 30 contribution to protect 30% of the world's coastal marine areas by 2030.

As stewards of our wilderness, we hope the Commission will support the goals and requests of Laguna Beach's environmental groups to expand the network of No Take MPAs citywide and protect our coastal environment for present and future generations to come. Thank you in advance for making this critical step forward.

Laguna Canyon Conservancy is a non-profit, all-volunteer environmental organization founded in 1988 to Save and Protect Laguna Canyon. LCC members have been involved in expanding the South Coast Wilderness nature reserves of Orange County that now include over 22,000 acres of parks, open space, and marine preserves. For more information, please visit:

www.LagunaCanyonConservancy.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gayle Waite", written in a cursive style.

Gayle Waite
President, Laguna Canyon Conservancy

Cc: City Council of Laguna Beach
Jeremy Frimond, Assistant City Manager

March 9, 2023

California Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
fgc@fgc.ca.gov



**RE: Letter of Support for Citywide "No Take"
Marine Protected Areas (SMR and SMCA) in Laguna Beach, Orange County, California**

Commissioners and Staff,

With the implementation of the California Marine Life Protection Act of 1999, Laguna Beach has successfully managed a network of MPAs as a statewide model of collaboration, education and enforcement. To provide citywide enforcement consistency, the Laguna Bluebelt Coalition requests extending "no take" provisions to include all of Laguna Beach's State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCAs) to the southern City Limits.

Laguna Beach's rocky coastline has been scientifically determined to provide ideal tidepool and kelp forest habitats as a vital genetic linkage for marine life between the Palos Verde Peninsula and La Jolla Cove. The City of Laguna Beach continues to benefit economically and ecologically from Marine Protected Areas with experienced Marine Protection Officers (MPOs), community vigilance, marine life education and comprehensive fishing restrictions.

The South Laguna SMCA is characterized by steep bluffs and compact coves to create a unique coastal ecology with tide pools, deep rocks and kelp forests. Wave action and backwash energy from bluffs surrounded by offshore kelp forests offers a local mixing zone for marine mammal and sealife foraging. Annual migrations of California Gray Whales often use South Laguna Coves as a rest stop for mothers and calves. Laguna Beach's other No Take MPAs have increased sea life populations and currently support a variety of ecotourism recreational opportunities.

While most of Laguna Beach restricts fishing, South Laguna is a designated State Marine Conservation Area allowing recreational and commercial fishing. Daily, concentrated fishing effort in the South Laguna SMCA has unfortunately contributed to over-fishing during the past ten years by recreational fishers and commercial passenger fishing vessels (CPFVs). Expansion of Laguna Beach's MPAs is essential to mitigate decades of regional over-fishing.

Expanding "No Take" provisions for all City MPAs will contribute to the City's commitment to the national "30 x 30 Initiative Plan" to conserve 30% of America's land and waters by 2030. The March 1, 2023 annexation of South Laguna beach areas by the City of Laguna Beach requires "No Take" provisions for the South Laguna SMCA to provide citywide enforcement consistency and community equity.

Climate change science recognizes the ocean as key to reversing negative anthropogenic climate impacts and the City of Laguna Beach is committed to a Climate Action Plan. Citywide MPA enforcement

consistency will improve ocean water quality by reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions from commercial fishing boats traveling far from Dana Point to fish in South Laguna.

The City Council proudly supports the Marine Protected Areas and City policies encourage expanding marine life refuges.

Thank you for your dedicated efforts to protect California's marine life and for considering our request to extend citywide "No Take" protection for all of Laguna Beach's MPAs.

Mike Beanan
Laguna Bluebelt Coalition

<https://www.lagunabluebelt.com/>

References:

<https://www.lagunabeachcity.net/home/showpublisheddocument/8148/637406985535730000>

City of Laguna Beach: Tide Pools and Marine Habitats

2A Encourage the expansion of the Marine Life Refuges and the designation of particularly unique or ecologically sensitive coastal areas as Ecological Reserves (such as seal and bird rocks), pursuant to the provisions of the State Department of Fish and Game.



3151 Airway Ave, Suite F-110
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
714-850-1965
www.coastkeeper.org

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

Re: Support for Laguna Bluebelt Coalition Petition to extend the no-take SMCA to the southern boundary of the City of Laguna Beach

Dear President Sklar and Commissioners,

OC Coastkeeper has the mission to protect swimmable, drinkable, fishable water and promote watershed resilience throughout our region. We have been actively working to support and implement Marine Protected Areas since the passage of the Marine Life Protection Act. We support the Laguna Bluebelt Coalition's petition regarding an extension of the Laguna Beach no-take SMCA boundary to the southern border of the city and urge you to approve this proposed boundary change.

Orange County beaches have some of the most beautiful beaches and coves found anywhere in the world. Visitation is high, and therefore the protection offered by the MPAs is vital. Most of the city is protected by the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve (SMR) and the Laguna Beach no-take State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA). However, there is a stretch of coastline that lies within the city limits that does not receive the same level of protection. Commercial and recreational fishing is permitted in these waters and residents are alarmed by the amount of fishing and the number of lobster traps that they see regularly. This area of the coastline has not been sufficiently studied to get scientific data on the impact of fishing, but local residents that spend substantial time in the water have noted a decrease in fish in the unprotected area.

These coves support vital kelp forest habitat, which is on the decline across the state. The rocky substrate that supports the kelp as well as the fish and invertebrates that utilize the kelp are impacted by lobster traps and anchors. The kelp is still present, but now fails to reach the surface. We must protect this habitat while it still has the ability to come back.

Another concern in this area is the whale migration route. Whales frequently come in close to the shore through Laguna Beach on their migration to and from the calving and breeding grounds in Baja California. During Lobster season, the whales run into a virtual wall of lobster ropes and buoys, which pose a serious threat to entanglement.

Extension of the no take SMCA boundary south will assist enforcement of MPA regulations by making the entire City of Laguna Beach a no take zone. The City of Laguna Beach has recently taken over management of all of the beaches in the city. Until last summer, the County of Orange was in charge of managing all of the beaches south of Aliso Creek. Now that

beach management is consistent throughout the city, the MPA rules should be consistent as well. This will make it easier for the public to identify where they can and can't fish, and for enforcement officers to do their job.

To help MPA enforcement, protect whales, and preserve the remaining kelp beds, we urge the commission **to extend the no-take SMCA boundary to coincide with the southern boundary of the City of Laguna Beach.** We enthusiastically support California's MPA Network and believe the MPAs are working to preserve biodiversity. In the case of Laguna Beach, the MPA extension will enhance the protection of vital ecosystems and create a more consistent and cohesive enforcement policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raymond T. Helmuth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Raymond" being more prominent than the last name "Helmuth".

Associate Director of Policy and Projects



THREE ARCH BAY
COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT
5 BAY DRIVE, LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA 92651-6780
(949) 499-4567 FAX: (949) 499-2352

May 1, 2023

California Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 944209

Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

fgc@fgc.ca.gov

RE: Letter of Support for Laguna Beach City-wide Marine Protected Areas including South Laguna, to the Southern Point of Mussel Cove, Orange County, California

Dear Commissioners,

Since 2012, with the implementation of the California Marine Life Protection Act of 1999, Laguna Beach has successfully managed a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a statewide model of collaboration, education and enforcement. To provide marine protection consistently throughout all of Laguna Beach, the Community Services District of Three Arch Bay supports an extension of marine protection via "no take" Marine Conservation Areas (SMCAs) to the point at the end of Mussel Cove, which is the southern border of Laguna Beach, in the community of Three Arch Bay (TAB).

Laguna Beach's rocky coastline has been scientifically determined to provide ideal tidepool and kelp forest habitats as a vital genetic linkage for marine life between the Palos Verde Peninsula and La Jolla Cove. The City of Laguna Beach continues to benefit economically and ecologically from Marine Protected Areas.

Three Arch Bay (TAB), which includes Mussel Cove, in South Laguna's SMCA, is characterized by steep bluffs and compact coves that create a unique coastal ecology with tide pools, deep rocks and kelp forests. Wave action and backwash energy from bluffs surrounded by offshore kelp forests offers a local mixing zone for marine mammal and sea life foraging.

While most of Laguna Beach restricts fishing, the southern end of Laguna Beach was only designated a State Marine Conservation Area, which allows continued recreational and commercial fishing. Unfortunately, the over-fishing during the past ten years by commercial and recreational fishermen, including commercial passenger fishing vessels (CPFVs), has devastated the kelp beds, fish population, and sea life across South Laguna. Expansion of Laguna Beach's MPAs is essential to mitigate decades of regional over-fishing particularly in South Laguna.

Thus, we request that you initiate and vote to provide an extended "no take" Marine Protected Area (SMR and SMCA) Citywide, across Laguna Beach, including South Laguna, to the Southern Point of Mussel Cove, Orange County, California. This would extend the existing marine protections throughout Laguna Beach, including the southernmost point of the city of Laguna Beach – Mussel Cove, also known as Three Arch Bay.

As a community, we are active stewards of our waterways and marine resources, ensuring quality management of our natural resources, and would appreciate the state's support of our efforts by extending the MPA to the Southern end of Laguna Beach.

Thank you,



Gary Rubel
President
Three Arch Bay Community Services District

Cc: City of Laguna Beach
Board Members of the TAB CSD