

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
MARINE RESERVES IN THE CHANNEL ISLAND NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) held a lengthy discussion with representatives of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary regarding progress - or lack thereof - in establishing a marine reserve within the Sanctuary boundaries.

The GAP was pleased an extensive stakeholder process was developed and used - up to a point - in identifying potential marine reserve sites. However, the GAP believes - based on the information provided - that the Sanctuary abandoned the consensus process too quickly.

The GAP notes that general agreement had been reached on specific locations within the Sanctuary where marine reserves (defined by the Sanctuary staff as "no take areas") could be established. However, when the size of those areas met with disagreement, the consensus process was apparently discarded, and efforts are now being made to use a top-down approach.

The GAP believes a go-slow approach involving smaller areas where consensus had been reached would have resulted in a model system useful for looking at marine reserves throughout the West Coast. Evidently, this more reasoned style did not meet the goals of certain participants in the process, nor - evidently - the Sanctuary staff. As a result, a potential showcase is now a pile of scrap.

While the Sanctuary is free to continue its efforts within state waters, roughly half of the Sanctuary lies in federal waters and affects fisheries where the Council has jurisdiction. The GAP believes it is time for the Sanctuary to consider Council needs and priorities and not simply its own agenda. On several occasions during discussions with the GAP, Sanctuary staff characterized marine reserves as involving more than fisheries management. While this may be true, as a practical matter it is the effect of a reserve on fisheries, their management, and most especially those dependent on the fisheries which - if not handled properly - causes the most harm. Further, it is these issues that are under the jurisdiction of the Council. The GAP suggests the Council recommend to the Sanctuary staff that they go back and try again, perhaps with a little more practical recognition of the importance of user groups.

PFMC  
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