

March 11, 2003

Mr. Mike Ricketts & Ms. Kathy Fosmark
Chairpersons
Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries
P.O. Box 1309
Carmel Valley, CA 93924

Dear Mr. Ricketts and Ms. Fosmark,

Thank you for your letter about the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO) products and activities associated with sharing new scientific information about marine reserves. We welcome the opportunity to hear your perspectives and to share information about this topic. We wish to assure you that PISCO is dedicated to both creating new scientific information and sharing that new knowledge with a broad range of interested people in an honest and unbiased fashion.

Our recent booklet and video on the scientific aspects of marine reserves are summaries of the best scientific information available. These products focus squarely on the science and are intended to make publicly accessible the recent scientific information formerly available only in the peer reviewed scientific literature.

One reason we decided to produce "The Science of Marine Reserves" materials was simply that there has been so much new scientific information on this topic produced in the last few years. We believe that scientific findings should be readily available to interested audiences. Our goal was to distill the best available scientific information about a complex topic into a succinct summary for the interested public, policymakers, and resource managers.

The information in the booklet and video is based almost exclusively on the information in scientific papers published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature, much of it appearing very recently. For example the February 2003 issue of the journal *Ecological Applications* has devoted an entire Special Issue to The Science of Marine Reserves. This journal is published by the Ecological Society of America, one of the oldest and most respected professional scientific societies in the US. Papers are not published in the journal until they undergo rigorous peer review. Quite a few papers are rejected or significantly modified during this process. This Special Issue is just one example of the explosion of new scientific knowledge about reserves. Numerous other professional journals are publishing new information about reserves as well.

We believe that it is unreasonable to expect most members of the public to wade through the technical and jargon-laden scientific literature such as this entire special issue (though they are welcome to do so!). And yet, much of this information is of general interest to many non-scientists and needs to be presented to them in an objective and readily understood manner.

Our brochure and video present an accurate summary of the latest scientific information in an unbiased fashion. For every concern you raised in your letter, there is credible, well-designed research and synthesis of the scientific information available to backup what is in the brochure or video.

For example, several biological benefits of reserves have now been well documented. As stated in the brochure: "Reserves protect marine habitats in a particular place and the diversity of animals and plants that live in those habitats. Consequently, many animals and plants in reserves tend to live in greater numbers, grow larger, and reproduce more than their counterparts outside reserves." Most of these benefits are associated with the role of reserves for the conservation of marine ecosystems and certain species targeted by fisheries.

The materials do not promise a "one size fits all" solution with marine reserves. They simply state what has been learned about some of the benefits they provide. The brochure is carefully worded: "Research shows that marine reserves are one tool that can help to prevent, slow, or reverse negative changes in the ocean." (page 1 of brochure) "Marine reserves are one tool for managing ocean ecosystems, but they cannot protect oceans from all human influences. Reserves alone may not address such pervasive problems as pollution and climate change, and they may have fewer direct benefits to some fishes and mammals that move long distances. However, the most recent scientific research shows that marine reserves usually boost the abundance, diversity and size of marine species living within their borders." (page 1)

There are many areas where there is insufficient scientific information to provide clear guidance, especially in the realm of fisheries management. Obviously this is the topic that is of greatest interest to you and many others. Most of these areas of uncertainty are the topics of active scientific investigations, including many of our own. We focused the materials on areas where there is strong scientific consensus, not on defining the current and future research agenda. We would be happy to engage in discussion about any of these interesting, important but unresolved topics, but the purpose of the brochure and video was to share the new information where consensus is emerging.

We are keenly aware of the responsibility that comes with conveying scientific information to the general public and to decision-makers and we took great pains to represent the information accurately. We deliberately sought reviews of the brochure and video by other scientists with relevant expertise and a wide range of perspectives. In response to their comments, we revised the materials to ensure they were broadly representative.

We regret that Dr. Ray Hilborn feels his comments on the marine reserve booklet were ignored. He is incorrect in this judgment. As we illustrate in our response to his “Comment” (see attached), both the booklet and the video were extensively modified in response to his review. We respect that scientists will have differences of opinion on issues, which is why we claimed sole responsibility for the content of the booklet.

You express concern that the manuscript by Dr. Robert Shipp was not cited in “The Science of Marine Reserves” booklet. We were certainly aware of the existence of his unpublished manuscript when we created our document. We did not include it because we believe the Shipp report is erroneous in its analysis and conclusions. As you know, Shipp’s report is not a review of marine reserves *per se*. Dr. Shipp uses a set of rules to estimate how much a particular species moves as an adult, and concludes that species with extensive movements will not be protected by reserves (this is discussed on page 9 of the booklet). The methodology leads to misclassifications of species, such as classifying rockfish (which are generally sedentary) as “highly mobile” because the species as a whole occurs over wide geographic areas. Dr. Shipp suggests that 98% of fished species move too much to be enclosed in reserves. If this were so, reserves would not show such dramatic increases in abundance and size of the species protected within their borders (discussed on page 9 of the booklet). Additionally, if most species really are that mobile, then reserves will be neutral: as they move, the fishes will be available to be caught outside reserve boundaries. A number of scientists have already pointed out the serious and extensive scientific shortcomings in Dr. Shipp’s report. We append one of these documents here for your information.

Regarding the media briefings, we certainly did not intend to be seen as exclusive or divisive. The objective of the workshops was to create an opportunity for local news media and local scientists to discuss marine reserve science. PISCO was involved in two of the three workshops. Scripps Institution of Oceanography hosted the first workshop in San Diego. PISCO hosted the ones in Santa Cruz and Corvallis. The Ocean Wilderness Network (OWN) sponsored all three workshops; Scripps and PISCO provided the scientific expertise. Information about the recent polling conducted in California and Oregon was also presented by the pollsters to provide the journalists with a sense of their readership’s perceptions of marine reserves. PISCO’s role in these events was to coordinate the natural science presentations and manage local logistics.

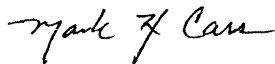
We have and would be happy to continue to provide the same information to fishing associations and organizations.

Let us assure you that it was not our intent to exclude journalists from the media events. We invited journalists from the major news outlets in Monterey Bay and Oregon. Our list was limited by the organizers’ awareness of news publications in each region. If any journalists from special interest group publications had expressed interest to us, we would have welcomed their attendance.

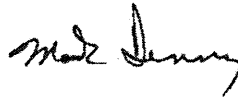
Those particular workshops were not open to the public due to space and resource constraints. Only members of local media and only few outside observers (primarily agency representatives who are working on marine reserve implementation in the given region) were invited to attend. The observers were invited to serve as resources in the event that journalists posed questions about management issues that the scientists could not address. In both the Santa Cruz and Corvallis workshops, all observers were welcome to ask questions (and did) with the ground rule that the media had priority due to time constraints.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the concerns expressed in your letter of January 6, 2003. We appreciate the openness with which you communicated the issues and we would be happy to have an ongoing, open dialogue on the topic of marine reserves. We would be pleased to work with members of the Alliance, and anticipate learning from the collective experience that the fishing community offers. It is our hope that PISCO can nurture and sustain a trusting and open relationship with the fishing community in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mark Carr
PISCO Principal Investigator, UCSC



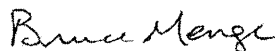
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Cc:

The Honorable Sam Farr

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

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