Ms. Melissa Miller-Henson
MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force
C/O CA Fish and Game Commission
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November 24, 2004

I am writing in reference to the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). I was one of the two people from San Diego on the original working group representing recreational anglers. I understand the theory behind MLPA legislation, however, I disagree with "how" and "how much" is needed to set aside to preserve fish stocks and habitat. I also question many of the scientific facts used to justify the claims. These are my four concerns.

1. In San Diego there are only two good locations to fish close to shore, the La Jolla Canyon and the Point Loma Kelp Beds. Fish congregate in these two areas because they are close to deep water and are loaded with bait. These are the only two areas the original MLPA plan wanted to close to fishing in San Diego. Why does MLPA want to take the only places we can successfully fish from small boats?

2. If habitat is so precious to the MLPA supporters, why not create more artificial reefs? Florida and New Jersey continually create new marine life friendly reefs. The few artificial reefs in California are always ignored by MLPA planners. Other states know these man made reefs are fish collectors and are a benefit to the economy and the fish stocks. Marine life and fish breed in these areas and anglers spend money on boats and fishing tackle to fish these reefs.

3. If I do not go fishing tomorrow do I have to pay to not fish? MLPA has fishermen paying the costs of having someone monitor the no fishing zones to enforce the no fishing ban. Enforcement of the no-fishing zones is a hidden MLPA cost that will continue forever. The two and a half million-dollar donation from an environmental group to hold meetings and pay their favorite consultants is small change when compared to the expense of monitoring no fishing zones forever and ever. Where is the estimate for the ongoing expenses of MLPA and have we done a cost/benefit analysis of closures versus reef building?

4. In making fisherman pay to not go fishing in the zones will the MLPA allow other users to enjoy them for free? Can divers or kayakers with their expensive equipment enjoy the no-fishing zones while a family can't fish in the area in their aluminum boat? All the meetings I attended had an element of the classes versus the masses. Fishing with bait is a primary source of fun for a large portion of California's lower social/economic groups. At all the MLPA working group meetings I attended these people were not represented. All the meetings were during the work week. I had to take the day off from work while the other attendees were being paid to attend by their consulting group, lobbying organization, government agency or university. Many of the working families in San Diego cannot afford expensive vacations. Their family fun consists of going out in their little boat, teaching the kids to fish and cooking it for dinner. With the high price of fuel being able to bring home supper covers the cost of the kid's outdoor adventure. If MLPA takes fishing away from these families how will this family fun time be replaced?

Melissa, I believe common sense is called for before we commit to closing large portions of our ocean. I think a financial analysis of the real benefits and costs of MLPA should be completed.

Respectfully yours,

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