DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDER NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST
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SAN DIEGO, CA 92132-0058

IN REPLY REFER TO:
5090
Ser N00H/272
30 Nov 04

The Honorable Phil Isenberg
Chairman, California Marine Life Protection Act
Blue Ribbon Task Force
California Resources Agency

Dear Chairman Isenberg:

In my capacity as the Department of Defense (DoD) Region IX Regional Environmental Coordinator (REC), I coordinate environmental issues among the military services in California.

The military services have a critical interest in the protection and management of California's ocean and coastal resources as DoD relies on coastal and offshore areas to prepare for its national security mission. California's sea, land, and airspace are the gateways to our ability to conduct Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Army training from the sea to the shore and inland throughout California. Ocean resources also play a critical role in the research, development, testing, and evaluation of DoD weapons systems. The respective DoD services' contributions to California's coastal environmental quality and DoD's economic contributions to California are equally substantial. These contributions and our national security mission are directly dependent to our access to California's ocean and coastal areas.

On December 1, 2001, Rear Admiral Ruehe, then the DoD REC for Region IX, submitted the President of the Fish and Wildlife Commission a proposal for designation of a number of areas off San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). However, the events following September 11, 2001, have underscored the military's need to evolve to meet current as well as future military requirements as global threats change. Since the submittal, the tempo of operational activities and training in our Southern California coastal areas has changed significantly so that the initial proposal is inconsistent with the long-term needs of DoD's national defense mission. DoD has already experienced an increase in training delays, with a resulting mission loss at San Clemente Island, from the recent implementation of MPAs in the Channel Islands. Therefore, on behalf of all the military services in California, I am taking the opportunity, provided by the State's renewed interest in pursuing MPA designations, to withdraw DoD's initial proposal. DoD will provide a revised proposal once the military services have had the opportunity to assess the best means possible to protect our nation's security while meeting our natural resources stewardship goals.

As you may be aware, the Commanding General, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, testified to the California Defense Retention and Conversion Council opposing the establishment of a MPA off of the coast of Camp Pendleton because of concerns over current and future mission impacts. Additionally, the Commanding General submitted similar comments to the California Secretary of Resources and Secretary of the Environmental Protection Agency on Governor Schwarzenegger's draft *California Ocean Resources Management: A Strategy for Action (Action Plan)*. The DoD IX REC also testified at the public workshop on the Action Plan.

I note that not compromising the military's national security mission needs as a consideration on MPA issues is also consistent with the Governor's recent policy statement pertaining to the California Ocean Action Plan.

It is widely recognized that the coastal waters adjacent to military lands are among the most pristine in the state. These waters have remained as high quality habitat without MPA-type designation because the military takes great pride in its environmental stewardship. These coastal waters are critical to our national defense, and DoD has strong concerns over any future designations that may impede the conduct of military missions. I request that any future planning for MPAs in California should carefully consider the cumulative impacts of these designations on current and future military missions.

On behalf of the military services in California, we request an opportunity for DoD to brief the Task Force on the significance and contributions of the military in California and DoD's concerns over the designation of new MPAs as they relate to our national security missions.

My point of contact is Mr. Randal Friedman of the Navy's California Government Affairs office. He can be reached at (916) 557-5334.

Very respectfully,

J. L. BETANCOURT
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy