

Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
C/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Attention: Melissa Miller-Henson

Renée Owens
Owens Wildlife Biology

La Jolla, CA 92038

Subject: South Coast Regional Stakeholders Group (SCRSG) nominations

I would like to be considered for an appointment as a member of the South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group. The following are some brief summaries of my areas of expertise that I believe would enable me to successfully carry out the duties and responsibilities of a stakeholder for this region:

Environmental Consulting

I am a wildlife ecologist who has worked as an independent environmental consultant in southern California since 1992. I have an advanced degree in ecology with a focus on marine mammal natural history and conservation. As an independent business I have worked with all types of institutions involved in land use and planning. I am familiar with the federal, state, and local environmental laws that apply to Southern California marine ecosystems, and am federally permitted to research several endangered and threatened species. My job and volunteer experience in this arena have provided me with many unique opportunities to successfully carry out complex projects that incorporate not only biological but also economic, political, and social resolutions that result in successful, sustainable land use combined with environmental conservation. These projects usually involve not only the typical requirements for environmental consulting - such as regulatory consultation, habitat assessment and mapping, conservation research, species surveys and monitoring, report preparation, environmental impact assessments - but also require specific skills in facilitation and education for successful cooperation and negotiation between private landowners, federal, state, and local government agencies, developers, academic and non-profit organizations, and other businesses and industries. In addition my experience covers a wide variety of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and species. Additionally, I have experience using QGIS (and other older GIS software) for my work and research.

Public Representation and Coordination

I have been a member of the Conservation Committee of the San Diego chapter of the Sierra Club for 17 years, and have chaired the Sierra Club Wildlife Committee for the past 9 years. I currently am chair of the Conservation Action Network of San Diego Sierra Club chapter, and I have worked as a volunteer biological consultant for this Club and other non-profits in California since 1989. My involvement with the Sierra Club has provided me with extensive leadership experience and the opportunity to develop working relationships with not only volunteers but also local interest groups, businesses, government agencies, politicians, and private citizens, locally and statewide, and has provided me with the responsibility and skills to be a representative for thousands of voices across Southern California (In San Diego, Imperial, Los Angeles, and Orange counties there are over 75,000 current Sierra Club members). Some of the many issues and projects I've been involved with over the years include fundraisers, coordination of media and tabling events, assistance in teaching workshops for understanding CEQA and other California environmental regulations, and public outreach and coordination between large members of local communities. As a consultant for the Sierra Club I not only speak for environmentalists but also many thousands of members interested in preserving marine habitats for the current and future generations' recreational use, including but not limited to diving, fishing, and kayaking. Additionally, I currently serve on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Wildlife Research Institute with headquarters located in Ramona, CA.

Community Biodiversity / Media Experience

I believe my unique international experience would enhance my role as a stakeholder: I lived and worked in Venezuela for several years where I conducted research funded by the federal Fish and Wildlife agency (PROFAUNA), the Wildlife Conservation Society, and National Geographic Television. My conservation and natural history research on large aquatic reptiles and other marine mammals was the subject of various documentaries hosted National Geographic, BBC, Discovery, and many other media agencies. Of key importance is the fact that whether one is conducting biological, media related or any other type of work in a foreign country, it is vital that one is capable of an extensive degree of understanding and cooperation between the many parties involved, whether private or governmental organizations, within and between foreign and local agencies. In the course of my research I assisted not only with obtaining the necessary permits and professional relationships to conduct all activities involved, but also helped to establish the wildlife preserve of Hato el Cedral in Apure, Venezuela, which is supported in part by tourism and provides employment for local citizens. Other related work in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama contributed to my experience of working successfully with very diverse cultures where comprehension of the unique needs and goals of all local community interests were crucial to any long term success, despite occurring in the absence of any or very limited regulatory laws. I feel some of my greatest contributions involved not only the participation in the design of conservation projects, but ensuring long term success through management plans that incorporated key social and economic dynamics of the community. I continue to speak for the Sierra Club and other conservation interest groups on various scientific issues for the local media of San Diego. I am also fluent in Spanish.

Education and Community Outreach

My teaching experience spans ages kindergarten through adult: I have a lifetime certification in adult education from UCSD Extension Program, was an instructor in Biology for Palomar Community College in San Marcos, CA, and was an instructor for Boston University's Tropical Ecology Program based at the University of San Fernando, Cumbaya, Ecuador. Instruction incorporated lecture and field study of various tropical habitats in Ecuador such as mangrove, estuary, Pacific coast tidal habitats, and coral reefs, including the Galapagos Island ecosystems. I also volunteered as education instructor and coordinator for the Emergency Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Lakeside, CA between 1994 and 2004.

In essence my goal as a stakeholder is to be a responsible voice for interested environmentalists who are also recreationists, local businesses, and citizens who share a love and concern for the fate of our marine ecosystems, and I would like to see them managed successfully to ensure the enjoyment of future generations. I have learned over the years that successful conservation cannot allow any sort of exclusionary approach with the expectation of long term success. A sustainable approach to conservation involves not only scientific expertise, but above all an understanding of all major interest groups involved, combined with the specific leadership and collaborative skills necessary to ensure success, especially under pressure of designated timelines. This is particularly true in a region like ours where the population is expanding and recreational and business interests continue to play a major role in the long term management of our natural systems.

I feel my experience demonstrates that I could be an attribute and successful part of the stakeholder process in establishing MPAs in southern California. I realize that the position requires a considerable time commitment, and as an independent business owner, my schedule is flexible and would allow me the freedom to fulfill these responsibilities. Finally, I am a former competing triathlete and continue to regularly enjoy swimming, kayaking, and diving along the San Diego county coastline, and am therefore personally committed to preservation of the local marine environment not only the purposes of long term wildlife conservation, but also as an avid outdoor enthusiast.

Thank you for your time and considering my application.

Sincerely,

Renée Owens