

SLO SEA

San Luis Obispo Science and Ecosystem Alliance

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SLOSEA Management Action Memo

TOPIC: Take in Newly-Opened Rocky Intertidal Areas

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Action Opportunity

Resource managers (California State Parks and California Department of Fish & Game) have an important opportunity to protect and manage fragile rocky intertidal species in newly acquired areas. Immediate management action is desirable before significant expansion of public access and take occurs.

Situation

Several newly acquired properties on the Central Coast of California have relatively undisturbed rocky intertidal resources. These include Hearst, Sea West, and Estero Bluffs. In addition, the planned public access trail into the Diablo Canyon Power Plant reserve area will open an additional area of undisturbed habitat.

Some species such as owl limpets grow slowly and depend upon broadcast spawning. This necessitates numbers of mature organisms within close proximity in order to sustain viable populations.

Current DFG regulations permit a general bag limit of 35 invertebrates and allow as many as 10 pounds of mussels and 10 pounds of aquatic plants. At these bag limits, a small handful of people could legally decimate populations in these rocky intertidal areas over a weekend. Determined poachers could eliminate viable populations overnight.

SLOSEA Involvement

One of the six initiative areas for SLOSEA is the analysis of human access in the rocky intertidal areas. When we reviewed the research plans with the SLOSEA Advisory Committee and interested members of the public, multiple comments highlighted concerns about potential levels of both legal take and poaching in addition to the trampling issue under study.

Potential Management Actions

Discussions with SLOSEA's Advisory Committee identified several potential courses of action. DFG could review and potentially revise its regulations either to adjust bag limits overall or to provide restrictions in one or more of these relatively pristine areas.

Another possibility would involve State Parks taking the initiative to request protection in these areas that abut its property. The language in DFG regulations indicates that there may be some potential legal foundation for this request.

DFG wardens indicated a willingness to work with volunteer docents who might educate the public about protection of the species. The model would be similar to Friends of the Elephant Seals.

Next Steps

DFG will refer the issue of bag limits to the Marine Resource Invertebrate Project, which is reviewing overall regulation of invertebrates. Given the immediacy of the opening and potential delays in modifying overall DFG regulations, State Parks will need to decide whether it wishes to press for action related to the new opportunities for public access.

SLOSEA Collaborative Partners

Cal Poly Center for Coastal Marine Sciences ~ California Bureau of Land Management ~ California Coastal Commission ~
California Coastal Conservancy ~ California Department of Fish & Game ~ California State Parks ~
Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board ~ Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District ~
Los Osos Community Advisory Council ~ City of Morro Bay ~ Marine Interests Group of San Luis Obispo County ~
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary ~ Morro Bay National Estuary Program ~ NOAA Fisheries Service ~ Port San Luis Harbor District