



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Anglers Question Whether Fishing Ban Will Ever Be Lifted**

*State's plan would postpone assessments of California Marine Protected Areas*

April 4, 2016 (Sacramento, CA): After promising California anglers that Marine Protected Areas would be assessed after five years, on April 13<sup>th</sup> the California Fish and Game Commission will consider a controversial plan to extend the required assessments to every 10 years, leading anglers to believe that recreational fishing bans will remain in place for an indefinite period of time.

“There is no question that the passage of the [Marine Life Protection Act \(MLPA\)](#) has been the most controversial environmental issue California’s angling community has ever faced,” said Marko Mlikotin, executive director of the California Sportfishing League. “It signaled the state’s shift from a shared philosophy of conserving California’s natural resources to outright protectionism, with little regard to the interests of outdoor recreation and tourism, and recreational fishing’s economic benefits.”

As the MLPA established the framework for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), the state implicitly promised California anglers through the MLPA Master Plan that areas designated as off-limits to commercial and recreational fishing may one day be open to fishing. In fact, they were very specific in their promises. Scientific assessments would be conducted every 5 years, and as fishing populations were restored, so would recreational fishing. Over time, the [state established many MPAs](#) along California’s coastline, totaling over 850 square miles or over 16% of state coastal waters.

“Deadlines to conduct assessments of MPAs have come and gone, and so apparently have assurances that the state will keep its promise. The same state that did not have the budget to determine where MPAs should be established in the first place, never budgeted for the anticipated costs of conducting the required assessments every five years,” said Mlikotin.

[On April 13<sup>th</sup>](#), in Santa Rosa, California, the California Fish and Game Commission will consider a new Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) [Master Plan](#) that will extend these assessments from every 5 years to every 10 years, and from a more-specific regional assessment to a statewide assessment. As in the past, the plan does not include any meaningful funding mechanism to conduct future assessments.

The plan has taken on the characteristics of a political ploy to simply kick the can down the road, inviting speculation that DFW’s leadership has succumb either to political pressure to make recreational fishing bans permanent and DFW does not have the financial means to conduct the assessments, now or anytime in the foreseeable future. In the past, the state was dependent on private sector dollars to finance the framework for MPAs, and even

today, [DFW does not have the financial resources to adequately enforce MPAs](#). In addition, lack of funding is also being attributed to DFW's controversial decision to reduce trout stockings.

The plan could not come before the Fish and Game Commission at a worst time. It is functioning with only three commissioners and two vacancies after [several longstanding commissioners resigned](#) out of frustration. They say a relentless anti-hunting and fishing political agenda became tiresome. What's more, two recently appointed commissioners, who now represent a majority on the commission, have no institutional knowledge of critical fishery management policy issues or commitments made to California recreational anglers.

"We can only hope that the current commission feels obligated to restore faith with those they regulate, and hold DFW accountable for not conducting timely assessments. Absent any evidence that MPAs should be extended, they should at the very least change the proposed Master Plan to restore recreational fishing to hundreds of square miles of California's coast as the first step to honoring a promise made. If not, California anglers will have no reason to believe future commitments, further fueling an antagonistic relationship that was once a strong partnership," said Mlikotin.

**California anglers are invited to sign a petition, found on CSL's website, that calls for the California Fish and Game Commission to keep their promise to California anglers.**

The California Sportfishing League (CSL) is a nonprofit coalition of fresh and saltwater anglers, and small business owners devoted to protecting access to recreational fishing. Recreational fishing contributes over \$4.9 billion annually to California's economy, a major source of outdoor tourism and jobs.

For more information about California's leading recreational fishing organization and issues facing California anglers, visit [www.sportfishingconservation.org](http://www.sportfishingconservation.org) , [www.facebook.com/CASportfishingLeague](http://www.facebook.com/CASportfishingLeague) and [@CASportfishing](https://twitter.com/CASportfishing)

Contact: Marko Mlikotin  
[marko@sportfishingconservation.org](mailto:marko@sportfishingconservation.org)

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