

## Manhattan Beach's war on the community's tradition of fishing: Guest commentary

By David Dickerson

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A famous American author once wrote, "There is certainly something in angling that tends to produce a serenity of the mind." Anglers understand this sentiment, for they have shared in this experience since the Manhattan Beach's pier was originally built nearly 100 years ago. Pier fishing is not only a way of life for many, but it invokes fond memories of childhood adventure, like the first time a father teaches his child to bait a hook, or the camaraderie one shares when fishing with their Cub Scout Pack. However, the Manhattan Beach City Council appears determined to bring the fine family tradition of fishing to a close.

In July, a shark attacked a swimmer after an angler hooked it and released it while fishing from the Manhattan Beach pier. While this was an extremely rare, and perhaps unprecedented, event, the media sensationalized the attack as if *Jaws* itself was systematically stalking local swimmers because of the presence of anglers.

In this media-charged environment, the Manhattan Beach City Council enacted illegal, onerous fishing regulations and announced its plan to petition the state to create a State Marine Reserve that would eliminate fishing altogether along the Manhattan Beach shoreline.

Ironically, neither of these proposals will serve the intended purpose of protecting swimmers. The stated purpose of Marine reserves is to protect an ecosystem, not to ban anglers. With the creation of a Manhattan Beach marine reserve, fish populations near Manhattan Beach's shores could increase and so could the number of predators.

The council's remedies also reveal an inconsistent application or double standard when developing policies intended to ensure greater public safety. Swimmers face far greater threat of accidental drowning than a shark attack. Yet the city has never proposed a single action that would block a swimmer's access to the ocean.

The City Council's inadequate grasp of state protections for anglers may be one of the many reasons why both the California Fish and Game Commission and the California Coastal Commission were so quick to demand that the city stand down. Both agencies provided a stern warning that recreational fishing is protected by California's state constitution, and the authority to regulate fishing rests with the state alone — not Manhattan Beach politicians.

So, before facing certain and costly litigation for infringing on our rights and the state constitution, Manhattan Beach's politicians really should consider the wisdom of another author who said, "The fewer the facts, the stronger the opinion." The City Council should stick to factual, legal actions and work with the state to protect the rights of swimmers and anglers who enjoy the waters around Manhattan Beach pier.

As one of California's leading sportfishing organizations, the California Sportfishing League will continue to fight the city's illegal and unprecedented attack on their community's fine tradition of fishing. We hope you join us.

*David Dickerson is president of the California Sportfishing League;  
[www.sportfishingconservation.org](http://www.sportfishingconservation.org).*