

July 29, 2022

Has Our Sanctuary Kept its Promise to its Fishermen?

The answer is *no*; please let us explain.

Reflect back to 1992 when the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (“Sanctuary”) was proposed. While fishermen and most others agreed that it could help prevent offshore oil development, we had concerns about how Sanctuary authority might affect those of us who provide food from ocean resources.

There was also public discussion about how stakeholders would have a say in the new federal bureaucracy. Commercial fishermen and recreational anglers had killed two earlier sanctuary proposals over these concerns.

In response, fishermen heard that the new sanctuary would not threaten our livelihoods or create fishing regulations. It was a broad assurance, and repeated often by both elected and NOAA officials. We had nothing to worry about! Based on this, fishing leaders weren’t neutral, they supported it, even traveling to Washington DC.

This promise was never a free-pass from fishing regulations in general. Rather, it acknowledged that fishery laws, such as the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), already provided science-based management. Under the MSA, considered by many to be the best fishery law in the world, overfishing has ended on the West Coast, and several thousands of square miles of quality habitat are protected. It also acknowledged that Sanctuaries are not intended to manage fisheries—a complex task.

The promise is written into the Sanctuary’s Designation Document. If any problem arose, the Sanctuary would work with us for a solution.

Did the promise work out for fishermen?

No. The Sanctuary repeatedly wiggled out from the promise, to our detriment. Beginning in the late 1990's, Sanctuary leaders proposed habitat protections, claiming they weren't *fishing* regulations, though the one rule would be "no fishing" in those areas. Later, we felt disillusioned and betrayed when Sanctuary leaders used their influence to lobby the state to close many of our best areas. The state adopted most of the Sanctuary's recommendations. The no-fishing zones cost fishermen dearly. Ironically, the Sanctuary's plan violated the science principles of ecosystem-based management, as it displaced fishing into less productive areas. Sanctuary leaders could have worked *with* fishermen to make recommendations, thereby keeping to the spirit of the promise, but they worked *against* us.

Sanctuary leaders now claim that they have not violated the promise made to us, because it wasn't a Sanctuary rule. Needless to say, we find this revision of history to be disingenuous. Many of us witnessed Sanctuary representatives pointing out areas on maps they wanted closed.

A summary of this issue (with supporting documents) is in the article "Bait and Switch? Fishermen's Difficult Relationship with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary". Please google that.

Both recreational and commercial fishermen have also had difficulty in placing knowledgeable spokespeople onto the Sanctuary's Advisory Council, as Sanctuary leaders decide these appointments. Not allowing our representatives at the table violates democratic principles and is another betrayal.

Monterey isn't the only Sanctuary to have these problems. Similar promises were made in the Channel Islands and Stellwagen Bank Sanctuaries. Fishermen in those areas also feel that Sanctuary management cannot be trusted. In the Channel Islands, despite

objections, that Sanctuary did create a no-fishing regulation. These experiences have caused fishermen across the nation to resist proposals for new Sanctuaries, which is unfortunate, considering other benefits which Sanctuaries might bring, and the fact that fishermen have a direct stake in ocean health.

Recently the Sanctuary worked constructively with certain fishermen on potential changes to trawl/non-trawl areas off the Central Coast. This is encouraging. However, it is frustrating to hear Sanctuary officials claim that because, technically, they have not created Sanctuary regulations, they have not broken the promise, or harmed our livelihoods. If the Sanctuary truly wants to better its relationship with us, it should start by acknowledging its responsibility for the ways the relationship has not gone well, and then keep to the promise in the spirit that it was made.

Commercial Fishing Leaders

David Kirk, President
Port San Luis Commercial Fishermen's Association
P.O. Box 1503, Arroyo Grande, CA 93421
salmonkirk@gmail.com

Jeremiah O'Brien, Vice President
Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization
388 Orton St, Morro Bay, CA 93442
t.jobrien@sbcglobal.net
(805) 441-7468

Mike Ricketts, President
Monterey Commercial Fishermen's Association
P.O. Box 1309, Carmel Valley, CA 93924
Seahawk85@comcast.net
(831) 659-2838

Tom Hart, President
Moss Landing Commercial Fishermen's Association
115 Douglas Ave, Boulder Creek, CA 95006
99hart@comcast.net

Mike Hubble, President
Santa Cruz Commercial Fishermen's Association
1191 Steinway Ave, Campbell, CA 95008
mariahfish@sbcglobal.net
(408) 866-0429

Kathy Fosmark, Co-Chair--Commercial
Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries
256 Figueroa Street, #1, Monterey, CA 93940
kfosmark@aol.com
(831) 373-5238

Recreational Fishing Leaders

Dan Wolford, Science Director, Coastside Fishing Club
16171 Jasmine Way, Los Gatos, CA 95032
dan.wolford@comcast.net
(408) 656-1524

Howard Egan, former CA Representative
Recreational Fishing Alliance

howa@howa.net

(831) 462-3509

Frank Emerson, Co-Chair--Recreational
Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries

501 Lighthouse Ave, #6

Monterey, CA 93940

Frank.t.emerson@gmail.com

(831) 277-0544