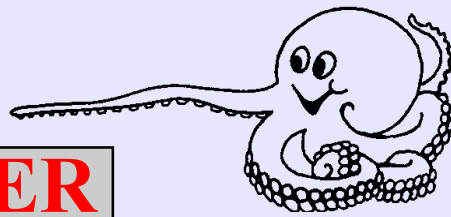
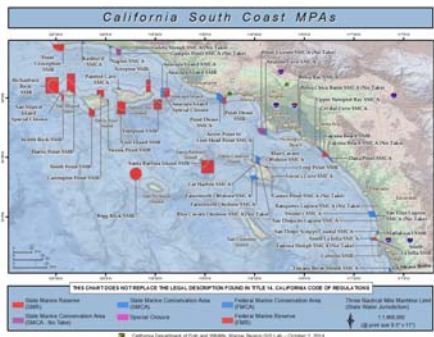


THE REEF SEEKER



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.
P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
Phone & text: (310) 652-4990
web: www.reefseekers.com
e-mail: kenkurtis@aol.com

September - 2021



REVIEW OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

As I mentioned last month, there's a very important process starting up shortly that will involve reviewing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in California and input in being sought from various ocean-user stakeholder groups. Some background first.

In 1999, the California Legislature passed the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) which mandated the creation of a network of MPAs to protect and strengthen California's marine resources. Funding for that effort ran out but was reconstituted a few years later and through 2012, a series of panels created numerous MPAs that covered about 16% of state waters up and down the coast. Creation of these MPAs was a collaborative process, involving literally hundreds of recreational, commercial, tribal, and other users of our oceans. (You can "use" the ocean even if you just go to the beach to gaze out upon the waves.) Stake-

holder groups laid out MPA boundaries and restrictions, these were forwarded to an appointed Blue Ribbon Panel for further review, refinement, and approval, and then that package was forwarded to the California Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission for final approval. The last of the MPA designations was completed in 2012.

One of the requirements of the process was that there be a review every ten years and we are now at that junction. During the initial process, I was part of five different iterations of what was called the Statewide Interests Group, which was made up of fisherman, recreational fishing boat operators, commercial fishermen, native tribal groups, and others. My constituency was considered to be divers and dive operators.

I have again been appointed to the review committee and this time our mission is to make sure that all interested parties have access to the process. Once again, I represent diving interests, both consumptive and non-consumptive. This time around, we will not be creating MPAs from scratch, but will look at existing MPAs, see what's working and what isn't, see what public reactions are to changes that have taken place in the last decade, and what adjustments need to be made going forward not only to keep the MPAs

effective, but also to keep them in line with the interests of the public who we serve.

I again want to emphasize that my role and that of the committee I'm serving on, is NOT to make actual recommendations but to ensure that our various constituencies are aware that this is going on and have the ability to have input into the review process if you should so desire. Regardless of how you may feel about MPAs, one thing I thought was really great about creating them was that the process was very open and transparent. There were lots of folks from various perspectives involved in the working group committees, meetings were open to the public, and then there were other meetings where public comment was not only encouraged but actively solicited.

I think the upcoming reviews will be equally transparent and open.

The process is still being developed but essentially there will be a series of public workshops, many through Zoom for the time being, to lay out for the various constituencies where we are, what we know, and to invite public comment. This is all still a work-in-progress but it's the type of thing where we want to hear what you have to say and it's a great opportunity to allow your voice and viewpoint to be heard. That doesn't

mean things will always break your way, but it does mean your ideas will at least have a somewhat of a chance.

I will keep you posted of more concrete details and meeting times but in the meantime, here's the initial announcement:

“Decadal Management Review: The First Ten Years of California’s Marine Protected Area Network

“In 2022, California’s Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network will mark the 10th anniversary of its completion. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is conducting a Decadal Management Review, which will result in a report reviewing the past ten years of the MPA Management Program, evaluating the performance of the MPA Network towards meeting the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act, and making recommendations for future adaptive management actions. The informational report will be presented at the December 2022 Fish and Game Commission meeting - no formal action is expected to be taken at this December 2022 meeting. In 2023, the California Fish and Game Commission will consider the content, findings, and recommendations in the Decadal Management Review and will determine whether to direct the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and implementation partners to pursue specific actions.

“In order to share information and gather input about the Decadal Management Review, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in collaboration with the Ocean Protection Council, will host public engagement events in

2021 and 2022. The first public engagement events will be a series of virtual Community Meetings, each focused on a specific audience including fishing interests, recreational users, nongovernmental organizations, researchers, MPA practitioners, and other ocean interests. Meetings will be public and will follow the same format and cover the same basic information, with highlights tailored to each particular group’s interests and priorities. The meetings will begin with a brief orientation to California’s MPA Management Program and the 2022 MPA Decadal Management Review, followed by a discussion of perspectives on priorities, definitions of success, and the roles of respective communities in state management of the MPA network. Tribes will also be engaged through separate engagements.

“To learn more about the 2022 MPA Decadal Management Review, including Community Meetings, please visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Management/Decadal-Review>. Questions and comments about the Decadal Management Review can be submitted to MPAManagementReview@wildlife.ca.gov”



TRIP CHANGE

We really have grown to love our not-on-the-weekend trips over to dive the Avalon Underwater Park. We’ve generally found that the Park’s not as crowded as it might be on a weekend and it just feels like a nice, relaxed pace that gives us ample time to get in three dives.

We go on these ventures generally once a month and will be going back in September but we’re changing the date due to a scheduled conflict that I have. So, rather than going on Wednesday (our “usual” day), we’re going over on Monday, September 27. We’ll be leaving out of San Pedro on the 8:45AM boat and will leave Avalon on the 6PM boat coming back.

Cost of the trip is \$160 and that includes boat, taxi to the Park, tanks/fills, and all the fun you can handle. If you’re interested in joining us on September 27, give us a call at 310/652-4990 or shoot an e-mail to kenkurtis@aol.com.

2022 DIVING VACATIONS

March 11-20 • Socorro

May 20-28 • Bonaire

July (??) • Indonesia

Fall (??) • Yap



ZOOM SEEKERS IN SEPTEMBER

We're still on the second Tuesday of the month but, because September starts on a Wednesday this year, this particular Zoom Seekers is as late into the month as it possibly can get.

But please makes plans to join us in a little under two weeks, on September 14 starting at 7:30PM for our monthly Zoom Seekers gathering. This month presents a special treat as our guest speaker will be Pete "NetDoc" Murray, who is the owner/operator of ScubaBoard.

ScubaBoard bills itself as the world's largest community of on-line divers with over 200,000 members (and likely even more who just lurk without signing up). It's got dozens and dozens of sub-forums, including one specifically aimed at Southern California divers.

Pete will give us some of the history of ScubaBoard, tell us how's it's grown, and give you some insider tips on how to best use the site. So whether you're a newbie to the site (or don't know about it at all) or are a longtime poster, make plans to join us Tuesday, September 14, starting at 7:30PM. I'll send out the specific Zoom link in TWARS a few days ahead of time.

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Sept. 1	--- CLASS ---	FISH ID	\$25
Thu.	23	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Mon.	27	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$160
Sat.	Oct. 9	Redondo (Vets)	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	20	--- CLASS ---	NAUI NITROX	\$75
Wed.	27	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$160
Wed.	Nov. 3	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night dive •••	\$25
Sat.	13	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation (single dive)	\$25

BONAIRE - MAY 2022

If liveboards aren't your cup of tea, how about a fabulous land-based trip to Bonaire, May 21-28 (flying late evening May 20). This is one of our "regular" Caribbean stops and we're looking forward to going back since we haven't been since 2018. (This trip was originally planned for 2020 but has been postponed three times now due to COVID.)

I never like to use the word "easy" when describing dives since any dive can turn tragic if you stop paying attention, but Bonaire is certainly a good choice for anyone looking for dives that are relatively non-strenuous. Water conditions are usually very good, currents (when they're there at all) are fairly mild, and with a variety of boat and shore dives in our package, you can choose how hard you want to work. In fact, the "shore" dive entry at Buddy Dive couldn't get any easier: Walk down a stairway and go diving. (And it's a really great reef to boot, which we generally try to dive every single day we're there.)

We will be staying at Buddy Dive in 2-bedroom apartments. (Singles are available for an extra charge.) We generally try to put only 3 people into each apartment (but sometimes may need to do four). Each apartment comes with a

shared vehicle so it's easy to go sightseeing or out to dinner. The overall package also includes 9 (sometimes 12) boat dives which we try to sked for the mornings. (We also usually have a boat just for our group.) That leaves the afternoon free for driving around the island to dive some of the other shore sites or to go sightseeing or just to laze about and relax. Over the course of the week, depending on how many shore dives you want to do, we get in 12-20 dives.

Airfare's still a bit up in the air but should be squared away after the first of the year. Out of LAX, the choices are American through Dallas, United through Newark (not sure yet about going through Houston as we have in the past), or Delta through Atlanta. Sometimes we need to lay over on the way back, sometimes not. We'll know more as the air skeds firm up.

Cost of the trip is \$2,250 per person. That includes breakfast daily at the resort, all diving, weights and tanks, shared vehicle, airport transfers, and crew/staff tip. Airfares fluctuate but generally run anywhere from \$700 – 1,100 for economy.

If you're interested in joining us or just getting on the "interested" list, give us a call at 310/652-4990 or e-mail to kenkurtis@aol.com. Bonaire beckons and hopefully you'll be able to heed the call.



LOBSTER SEASON LURKS

The season opens the Saturday before the first Wednesday in October. This year, that means Saturday, October 2, at 6:00AM. (It's been a few years since the season opened at midnight.) I'll do my annual safety reminders next month but I thought I'd share some interesting stats from 2019-2020 that I found on the CADF&W website:

TOP LOCATIONS

1. Catalina (15.6% of the catch)

2. San Diego Bay (13.3%)
3. Pt. Vicente to King Harbor (7.9%)

CATCH BY METHOD

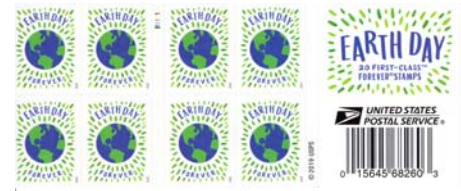
1. Rigid hoop net (47.9%)
2. Free-diving (21.5%)
3. Scuba-diving (21.4%)

CATCH/TRIP BY METHOD

1. Scuba (3.06 lobsters/trip)
2. Rigid hoop net (2.30)
3. Free-diving (2.08)

- Lobster cards sold (required to have in your possession) – 34,804
- Lobster cards turned in at end of season (required) – 17,563 (50%)
- Est average weight of each lobster caught – 1.6 pounds

If you'd like to explore more of these stats and get more info, you can go to the CADF&W website: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Invertebrates/Lobster>



POSTAGE WENT UP

This one caught me by surprise today (and I usually stay on top of this stuff). Not really dive-related but this will affect us all . . .

Postage for a First Class letter went up from \$0.55 to \$0.58 effective this past Monday (August 29). Additional ounces stay at \$0.20 per ounce.

Your Forever stamps are good for one ounce no matter what the rate goes up or down to. But I don't recall seeing anything in the newspaper or on-line about this so thought I'd pass it on.

PICTURE PAGE - Aquarium Fish

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2021)



Opaleye
(Blue Cavern)



P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



Giant Sea Bass trio
(Blue Cavern)



Southern Stingray
(Tropical Reef)



Horseshoe Crab
(Shark Lagoon touch pool)



Sailfin Snapper
(Soft Coral)