



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
CALIFORNIA**



July 5th, 2024

Marine Resources Committee
California Fish and Game Commission
1416 9th Street, Room 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Agenda Item 2 - Marine protected area regulation change petitions evaluation process

Dear Members of the Marine Resources Committee,

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed binning process to sort through the numerous petitions currently before the Fish & Game Commission (Commission) and Department of Fish & Wildlife (Department). Our organizations support the strategy to place non-controversial petitions into bin 1 to efficiently address the varied recommendations and requests before the Commission, however we do not agree with all of the petitions currently placed into bin 1, and we strongly encourage the Commission to revise its current proposal.

Specifically, we request that petitions 2023-30MPA_1 (Big River SMCA restrictions) & 2023-31MPA_1 (Drakes Estero) be moved into bin 2. Both of these petitions seek to reduce or eliminate recreational harvest, yet neither provide scientific documentation for doing so. It is imperative that the Department has an opportunity to review and provide recommendations for both of these proposed restrictions so that the Commission has a scientific framework with which to evaluate the proposed closures. Once the Department has an opportunity to present the best available science and data with respect to these petitions, and if there is a clear need to reduce or eliminate recreational harvest to ensure the sustainability of the species present, our organizations will gladly support those changes to ensure the long-term viability of crustaceans, bivalves and the overall ecosystem in the respective MPAs.

Sincerely,

Devin O'Dea
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Chris Killen
All Waters Protection & Access Coalition

Wayne Kotow
Coastal Conservation Association California

Kevin Godes
Coastside Fishing Club