

**A STATEMENT FROM THE FISHERIES COMMUNITY
ON MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

February 28, 2008

The undersigned organizations strongly support scientifically based management of our marine and freshwater resources. They also support public access to marine and freshwater fishery resources for consumptive recreational activities where appropriate and under management systems for resource sustainability. We understand the concept of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a means to achieve specific conservation goals such as protecting specific areas of sensitive habitat and spawning aggregations, but believe that MPAs – especially no-take MPAs – should be just one tool among the suite of resources available for effective fisheries management. MPAs must be considered in relation to other, less restrictive management tools that maintain recreational fishing opportunity and support the American model of user-pay resource management.

As with any good fishery management decision, discussions about measures that restrict public access to public resources must involve an open public process, a solid scientific basis, and specific guidelines on implementation and follow-up. The establishment of any MPA, regardless of its level of restrictions, should:

1. Be based on the best scientific information available;
2. Include criteria to assess the conservation benefits of the restricted area;
3. Establish a timetable for review of the restricted area's performance that is consistent with the purposes of the restricted area; and
4. Be based on an assessment of the benefits and impacts of the restriction, including its size, in relation to other management measures (either alone or in combinations with such measures), including the benefits and impacts of limiting access to: users of the area, overall fishing activity, fishery science, and fishery and marine conservation.

Anglers are conservationists first and foremost and have a long history of making sacrifices for the betterment of the resource – supporting a variety of fishery conservation measures. These have occasionally included targeted time and area closures where the science has clearly indicated they are the best solutions to protect fish, spawning aggregations and sensitive habitat, among others. For example, on the West Coast there are a variety of Rockfish Conservation Areas that prohibit the take of rockfish. Additional measures exist outside of these conservation areas, including bag limits, size limits, and season limits, to further protect the rockfish complex in the Pacific Ocean.

Anglers and boaters play vital societal, economic, and conservation roles. Fishing is a traditional American pastime that introduces new generations to the great outdoors and reconnects others with outdoor activities. Angling and boating are also significant economic forces, with America's anglers spending over \$44 billion per year for licenses and equipment, and boaters supporting an industry worth \$39.5 billion per year. Through fishing license sales and excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat fuel, almost \$900 million of anglers' and boaters' dollars are provided to the states each year for local conservation and recreation. This important

system must be protected to ensure funding for fishery conservation is maintained. Its very success depends on angler participation and interest, i.e., the opportunity to recreationally fish.

It is a long-standing policy of the federal government to allow public access to public lands and waters for recreational purposes consistent with sound conservation. This policy is reflected in the principles of our wildlife refuges, national forests, national parks, and wilderness areas, and should be reflected in any decision to implement MPAs – especially no-take areas. The ability of recreational anglers to use public marine resources should be as strong as the ability of hunters and anglers to use public lands.

Sincerely,

American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association
BASS/ESPN Outdoors
Berkeley Conservation Institute
Center for Coastal Conservation
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Federation of Fly Fishers
National Marine Manufacturers Association
Shimano Sport Fisheries Initiative