

RAAC

March 24, 2018

3.0 KELPRR Project Update

3.1 Kelp recovery project update. Dr. Cynthia Catton gave an update on progress of Kelp Ecosystem & Landscape Partnership for Research and Resiliency Project (KELPRR). A more in depth description of the project and its goals was given in a presentation at the last RAAC meeting (See Jan. 2018 meeting summary and outcomes: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Invertebrates/RAAC>). The project update this meeting focused on the following:

3.1.1 Progress on CDFW recommendation of an emergency rule to expand the recreational purple urchin bag limit: CDFW is moving forward with proposing an emergency rule at the April Commission meeting to increase the recreational bag limit for purple urchins from 35 urchins to 20 gallons/day. This is equivalent to four 5 gallon buckets full of urchins and is considered a manageable recreational consumptive use amount per day.

3.1.2 Recreational diver opportunities to contribute to the project: The overall goal of utilizing recreational divers is to expand the purple urchin control efforts beyond just using commercial urchin divers and across a broader geographic area. A key feature to this expansion is coordinating and focusing harvesting efforts to both track removal and to maximize effectiveness of urchin removal. The following are harvesting activities and tools to expand and develop this arm of the overall project.

3.1.2.1 Effort coordination tool: the Nature Conservancy is spearheading the development of a website for divers to report their observations of purple urchin abundance by location (on a map). This reporting tool can help recreational divers determine where they should focus their urchin control efforts.

3.1.2.2 Coordinated recreational harvest events: RAAC member Josh Russo is organizing harvest events in Sonoma county for the Memorial Day weekend.

3.1.2.3 A broader scale of urchin control measures is being planned through a Scientific Collection Permit where urchin smashing could be utilized rather than physical removal. Josh and Nancy Caruso (RAAC members) are leading efforts to submit a proposal and application for an SCP. KELPRR partners are reviewing the proposal now.

3.2 Discussion of the project and issues. The following list are the issues and topics that were captured from the discussion.

3.2.1 At one time there was talk about applying for government disaster relief funding. Did this occur and who applied and for what. The commercial urchin industry did apply for such relief to the federal government but to date they have been unsuccessful.

3.2.2 At the last RAAC meeting there was discussion and proposal to recommend an emergency rule for unlimited bag limit for purple urchins. The RAAC did approve a recommendation to the director to lift the bag limit for purple urchins through an emergency rulemaking. That recommendation along with the other recommendations made at that meeting were forwarded to the director. CDFW prefers

that the allowance of unlimited take of purple urchins be done through the issuance of a scientific collection permit rather than lifting the recreational bag limit.

3.2.3 If urchin smashing is allowed, where and when is it appropriate to do it? The KELPRR group is working on determining these parameters. We want to avoid smashing urchins when they are ripe and close to spawning. The problem is that urchin gonad ripeness is highly variable throughout the year and by area so it may be difficult to determine where and when smashing could be used.

3.2.4 A comment supporting the progress of online citizen science tools was made and that interest in the webpage is growing.

3.2.5 A concern was expressed that not enough is being done to address the urchin/kelp situation. What is being developed is good but that process is slow and some worry that it may be too little too late. More opportunity to control urchins needs to happen in shallow areas so that remaining abalone have a chance. Action needs to happen now.

3.2.6 Another comment expressed is that long term engagement by stakeholders and the public is needed for this kelp restoration project to be successful.