

From: Bruce E Watkins <photobruce@comcast.net>
Sent: Fri, Feb 23, 2018 4:41 pm
Subject: need help with fish and game

Hi,

Divers in Northern and Central California have witnessed purple urchins taking over our reefs. This is a dramatic transition of kelp-dominated reefs to urchin-dominated reefs and resulted in the closure of the abalone season this year, and the loss of photogenic reefs in Monterey and Carmel Bays.

Bruce Watkins submitted a proposed rule change in November that would have allowed divers to take an unlimited number of purple urchins to restore our reefs. This proposal went down in flames.

Now Reef Check California and the Watermen's Alliance are in the process of obtaining a "Scientific Collecting Permit" that would permit divers to cull purple urchins and restore our kelp forests. Permission is difficult to achieve because the accessible urchin barrens on the Monterey Peninsula are in Marine Protected Areas and are off limits to taking urchins. The best way to overcome this resistance is for the Fish and Game Commission to hear from the stakeholders.

Please express your feelings on this issue by emailing comments to fgc@fgc.ca.gov on or before Wednesday, February 28, 2018. Please cc me on your email photobruce@comcast.net and we will keep you advised on permit progress.

Your comments should answer at least the following questions:

The name of your organization and how is it a stakeholder?

What are your observations of the urchin barrens and how are your diving activities impacted by the barrens/lack of kelp?

Do you support efforts to remove urchins and restore a kelp forest ecology?

Would your organization participate in removal activities and how would your organization contribute to this effort?

Thank you all!

Bruce