

# ODYSSEY



## CEN CAL DIVE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2026

CEN CAL ([www.cencal.org](http://www.cencal.org))

OFFICERS/DIRECTORS

**President**

Vacant

**Vice President**

Vacant

**Secretary**

Carol Rose

**Treasurer**

Larry Ankuda

**Skin Spear**

Vacant

**Scholarship**

Larry Ankuda

**Legislation/CDFW/Access**

Carol Rose

**Editor**

Carol Rose



### NOTICE:

A CenCal Annual Report was sent.  
Next meeting Wednesday January 28, 2026

*Last item in Odyssey is most interesting and important  
I would like to see CenCal take an official position*

### ABALONE SEASON CLOSURE CONTINUES

In a move to protect red abalone populations suffering drastic population decline, the California Fish and Game Commission, at its Dec. 10-11 meeting, extended the red abalone recreational fishery closure 10 years.

The Commission unanimously voted to adopt regulatory amendments to extend the red abalone recreational fishery closure in Northern California until April 1, 2036. The Commission determined continuing the closure necessary to protect red abalone and help facilitate its restoration.

California's red abalone population suffered a drastic decline, approximately 85%, following the 2014 kelp forest collapse triggered by a marine heatwave. The loss of kelp greatly contributed to this decline and the increase in purple sea urchin densities prevents kelp recovery, abalone's primary food source. CDFW will be supporting abalone restoration through the development of a statewide red abalone restoration plan including a robust and adaptive strategies to support abalone populations.

NOW – what you all need to know: closing a season takes a year of notice, meetings, discussion, data collection – just to close 1 year. While a closed season MAY be opened in the face of updated data, evidence and information. Any closure is not a total absolute.

And, remember there is ongoing serious, steady work to grow and plant sunflower starfish, grow and plant kelp. A trial starfish replant is noted later in this newsletter.

**IN ADDITION:** The Commission authorized public notice of upcoming potential regulation changes related to the **processing and donating sport-caught fish:** A discussion and adoption hearing is scheduled for Feb. 11-12 on proposed amendments to regulations regarding processing and donating sport-caught fish.



**SAD NEWS**

Long time diver, member and president *NorCal Skindivers Club*, the *Watermans Alliance* has died. He will be remembered as instigating, organizing and supporting the culling of sea urchins at Caspar Cove (Mendocino Coast).



**FIRST TEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL OUTPLANTING OF SUNFLOWER STARS IN CALIFORNIA MARKS MAJOR MILESTONE IN OCEAN RECOVERY**

In a historic California first, juvenile sunflower stars, reared in human care, were successfully placed into the ocean then retrieved- a pioneering field study aimed at restoring one of the Pacific's most ecologically vital and endangered marine species.

Sunflower stars have not been seen in central California since 2018 and are critically-endangered, so a milestone - a critical step to stop the decline of sunflower stars and restore balance to California's coastal ecosystems - recovery of kelp forests and dependent species.

The success of this project forms the next phase of restoration efforts as sunflower stars play a key role in maintaining healthy kelp forest ecosystems by preying on, influencing the behavior of urchins who overgraze and devastate kelp habitats. Since the outbreak of Sea Star Wasting Disease (SSWD) in 2013-2014, the sunflower star populations have collapsed, leaving California's kelp forests vulnerable, out of ecological balance and degraded.

Part one research project: 12 juvenile sunflower stars placed in an enclosed pod near Old Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey for five days. Water samples were collected to test the effectiveness of environmental DNA (eDNA)..

Part two: forty-eight juvenile stars, reared at Sunflower Star Laboratory and Cal Academy of Sciences, out planted in the ocean and monitored over four weeks, receiving regular feedings and health checks. In the one-month study, 47 of 48 (98%) juvenile stars survived the exposure to ocean conditions—an encouraging sign for future restoration efforts.



## **ICONIC OCEAN LINER S.S. UNITED STATES**

### **WILL BE SUNK ON LIVE VIDEO**

For those interested in watching the famed cold war carrier vessel *S.S. United States* take her final plunge into the sea will have multiple digital options. The conservancy group for the ship — built by Newport News Shipbuilding in the early 1950s — announced in a Facebook post a live stream and a professional documentary will be produced covering the tow-out and reefing of the vessel.

The vessel, which spent nearly three decades docked on the Delaware River, is slated to become the world's largest artificial reef when it is sunk about 20 miles off the Gulf Coast of northwest Florida.

“While the exact date and reefing location have not yet been released, both will be announced closer to deployment.” The ship has arrived in Mobile, Alabama, where contractors have started the process of ensuring it is safe for ocean life and poking holes in its hull to make it land up-right at the bottom. This process has been predicted to take a year to complete after which the ship will take its final journey to a location about 20 miles south of the Florida Panhandle region in the Destin-Fort Walton Beach area. The ship will be sunk in about 180 feet of water. The project also calls for a land-based museum of the S.S. *United States*' history.



## **WHITE ABALONE**

The white abalone captive breeding program at Bodega Marine Laboratory made an unexpected appearance on national television when it was [featured as a clue on Jeopardy!](#) — a fun reminder that conservation science resonates far beyond our field sites (and shoutout to Sheila for getting the answer right!).



## **BEST PUBLISHING ANNOUNCED** “*Scuba Storyteller*”

*Mostly Humorous Diving Tales by an Addicted AquaNut*” by popular dive industry author Gil Zeimer available for orders on Amazon.

The book contains 65 stories such as, “Warm Memories of Hypothermia”, “My First Time”, “Low Anxiety: Getting Narked in Belize’s Great Blue Hole”, “The Sun Also Burns”, “The Day I Rode a Manta Ray”, “Maui March Madness—Honeymooning With Humpbacks”, “Jaws at 50: This Shark Still Has Legs”, “My Dive Buddy Wears Diapers”, and much more.

**About The Author** Gil Zeimer is a local SF Bay Area, prolific diving writer, having penned more than 300 stories, articles, blogs, and newsletters over past 30 years: Alert Diver, Scuba Diving Industry Magazine, Scuba Diver

Life, California Diving News, Asia Diver, Dive Pacific, Undercurrent, inDEPTH Scuba Show, Scuba Times, Sport Diver, Dive Travel, S.F. Chronicle, Marin Independent Journal, Marin Scuba Club, and Red Sails Sports, and others.



## **THE TREATY THAT COULD SAVE THE OCEAN**

Starting next month, a new U.N. treaty allows nations to establish protected areas in the high seas—waters beyond national borders, which cover nearly half the planet's surface. These waters have long been vulnerable to overfishing, pollution, and other threats.



## **CALIFORNIA'S GRID IS CLEANER THAN EVER**

California is powered by 2/3s clean energy. We made big strides this year building our clean energy grid. The California Energy Commission approved the world's largest solar and battery storage project. That project builds on new records California shattered this year, with more clean energy capacity added to our grid than ever before. And we now have the most battery storage in the world, save China. If that weren't enough, California is now the largest economy in the world to achieve being powered by two-thirds clean energy.

Our clean energy progress got major attention at the UN Climate Change Summit in Brazil – a major contrast to the federal administration that was missing in action.



**\*\*NEW OFFSHORE DRILLING OFF CALIFORNIA\*\***

In late November 2025, the Trump Admin announced a draft plan proposing opening the California coast to offshore drilling. The State of California immediately gathered pushback from numerous lawmakers, environmental organizations and the Attorney General. Governor Newsom called the plan idiotic and said ‘California will not stand by as our coastal communities are put in danger.’

The plan identified 6 potential lease sale along California shoreline starting in 2027 and are part of a broad plan including 21 areas off Alaska and Gulf of Mexico totaling 1.3 billion acres. THE LAST FEDERAL OFFSHORE LEASING IN CALIFORNIA WAS 1984.

In June 2025, California Attorney Genl, Bonita and 9 other Attorneys General, submitted a letter urging the Federal Govt to exclude the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans from the Program citing environmental and public health risks. Argued there was no compelling need for risk marine and coastal resources.

California is far far too familiar with environmental ramifications of offshore drilling. The Santa Barbara 1969 catastrophic oil spill proved there is no way to drill for oil without causing devastating impacts to the coast – the risk is called ‘unacceptable.’ The spill damaged more than 90 miles of coastline and impacted at least 935 square miles of ocean. The spill dumped 4.2 million gallons of crude oil, but even smaller spills cause major harm.

California coast has one of the 5 most biodiverse and productive marine ecosystems supporting fisheries, tourism and coastal livelihoods.

BEFORE the proposed program’s second analysis and proposal stage, **it is subjected to a 60 day comment period** – opened Nov 24. Comments can be submitted online through the following, and other submissions may be viewed there.

**Regulations.gov** under Docket ID BOEM-2025-0483

Written comments may be mailed – in an envelope labeled: **Comments for the 11<sup>th</sup> National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program**

**And**

Addressed to:

-Ms. Kelly Hammerle, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (VAM-LD) 45600 Woodland Road, Sterling VA 20166-9216