

COSEE-West
"Fisheries of the Southern California Bight"
Lecture, March 17, 2010

Misconceptions

"Whales eat lots of fish, so killing whales will help save the world's fisheries."

More and more research is showing that even though whales do eat fish, they do not really affect the world's fisheries very much. Some whales eat fish, some do not; some whales eat fish species that are commercially fished and some eat species that are not commercially fished; some whales eat predators of commercially fished species. Scientists have determined that killing whales won't help fisheries recover (Science magazine, Feb 13, 2009).

This argument is commonly made by those who would like to continue harvesting whales. **Check these out:**

"Will Killing Whales Save The World's Fisheries?"

by Bryan Walsh, Time Magazine, Health & Science, Feb 17, 2009

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1880128,00.html>

"Are Whales Eating All our Fish?"

WWF Publications, June 1, 2005

http://www.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/?13957

"The ocean is so huge; there will always be more fish in the sea! We have all these regulations to make sure of that."

Bag limits, rules, and regulations are an attempt to help maintain healthy fish stocks. However, changing environmental conditions, such as during El Nino/La Nina events, pollution, invasive species, habitat degradation/destruction (natural or manmade) and more all impact fish populations. In one unlucky year, a fishery could be affected by all of those issues and can collapse. Have you read a book called "Cod" or heard the story about the abalone in southern California?

A common catch phrase in the last few years of avid recreational fisherman has been "Limit your catch, don't catch your limit!" and voluntary catch and release has become more popular.

"There are no scientific data that show MPAs work."

MPAs have been studied in a variety of locations around the world, including California. On average, science shows that there are increases in the number of individual animals, average individual size, numbers of young produced, and even the total numbers of different species inside MPAs. In some cases, these increases are very large. Many people also question whether the types of responses seen in MPAs in the tropics would also occur in waters offshore California. In studies of temperate reefs (including those off California) the increases are not only as much as in tropical reefs, but sometimes greater; even very small MPAs off California have shown these same types of results, as have MPAs at the Channel Islands, which recently underwent the first five-year evaluation process. For more information on the Channel Islands review or to access MPA related literature, visit www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa and select the MPA Literature tab. (from the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative, Common Misconceptions about the Marine Life Protection Act)