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Subj: Oil industry lobbyist implements Schwarzenegger's war on the California Coast

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Photo: This could be the future of the California coast if Schwarzenegger's MLPA process continues on its corruption-ridden path.

[gulf_oil_disaster.jpg](#)

Oil industry lobbyist implements Schwarzenegger's war on the California Coast

MLPA Chair praises oil industry's 'safety record' as CEQA review begins

By Dan Bacher

The environmental review process has begun for the South Coast Study Region Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) developed under Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's fast-track Marine Life Protection (MLPA) Initiative, a privatized process overseen by an oil industry lobbyist who has praised the industry's "safety record" as the BP Deepwater Horizon oil gusher continues to devastate marine life and fishing communities in the Gulf of Mexico.

On June 29, the California Fish and Game Commission and Department of Fish and Game (DFG) together issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the controversial project that implements in Southern California waters Schwarzenegger's war on the California coast, fishermen and coastal Indian Tribes.

This project initiates the “scoping phase,” during which interested members of the public are “invited to help identify the range of issues and type of information to be considered” in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), that will be prepared in the coming months, according to a DFG news release.

“There are currently five MPA proposals under consideration for the South Coast Study Region, which extends from Point Conception to the California border with Mexico,” the DFG stated. “The proposals were developed with input from a regional stakeholder group, a science advisory team and a Blue Ribbon Task Force consisting of marine experts.”

“The currently preferred proposal, the Integrated Preferred Alternative (IPA), was selected by the Blue Ribbon Task Force,” the DFG announced. “The IPA is a hybrid of the other proposals. The DEIR will also look at three alternative proposals and the no action alternative or the status quo (the current South Coast Study Region MPAs with no suggested changes).”

Since only one public scoping meeting is scheduled for this “environmental review,” it appears that the Schwarzenegger administration, the worst in California history for fish and the environment, is doing the bare minimum to comply with the requirements of CEQA while railroading so-called “marine protected areas” over coastal communities.

The announcement failed to note that this rigged process on the South Coast was overseen by oil industry, real estate, marina development and other corporate executives that Schwarzenegger appointed to the Blue Ribbon Task Force to protect their interests from being impinged on in the creation of new “marine reserves.” The initiative is funded by the Resource Legacy Fund Foundation, a private corporation headed by executive director Michael Eaton.

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Reheis-Boyd now serves on the North Central Coast Task Force and served on the North Coast task force charged with implementation of the MLPA in one of the most overt examples of conflict of interest and corporate greenwashing in California history.

On June 22 in an op-ed on the Noozehawk website, Reheis-Boyd attempted to gloss over the public outrage over the BP Gulf Oil Gusher, the worst

environmental disaster in U.S. history, by touting the “very good” safety record of the oil industry
(http://www.noozhawk.com/opinions/article/062210_catherine_reheis-boyd).

“We realize that recent events in the Gulf of Mexico have shaken public confidence in our industry’s ability to produce oil safely,” she said. “However, our industry’s safety record around the world, around the United States and here in California has been very good. More than 1 billion barrels of oil have been produced from offshore California in the 40 years since 1970 and fewer than 22 barrels per year on average have been spilled during that time.”

Reheis-Boyd should try to tell the fishermen and residents of Gulf Coast communities now devastated by the daily carnage in the BP disaster about the “very good” safety record of the oil industry. Is Reheis Boyd, an oil industry superstar and Schwarzenegger’s “marine guardian,” out of her mind?

Even worse, Reheis-Boyd recently affirmed her support for new offshore oil drilling off the California coast in spite of the BP spill’s ongoing ecocide, in her commentary, “Gulf Oil Spill Comments,” on the association’s website, <http://www.wspa.org>.

“The tragic Deepwater Horizon accident in the Gulf of Mexico has resulted in California Governor Schwarzenegger’s withdrawal of his support for limited offshore oil development near Santa Barbara,” said Reheis-Boyd. “WSPA has not taken a position on specific offshore projects. But we have been vocal about our views that California businesses and consumers would benefit from development of the huge reserves of petroleum off the California coast, in both state and federal waters.”

Conflicts of interest are nothing new to Reheis-Boyd. On February 24, 2009, Consumer Watchdog and Public Citizen filed a detailed request for public records of the California Energy Commission, seeking communications between its professional staff and a politically appointed member of the commission’s board, James Boyd, whose spouse, Catherine Reheis-Boyd, was a state-registered lobbyist for the oil industry. The two groups previously sent a letter charging a conflict of interest by James Boyd.

“The relationship is clear conflict that should prevent Commissioner Boyd from leading a panel deciding the costs and benefits of fixing the unfair sale of ‘hot gasoline’ in California,” said Judy Dugan of Consumer Watchdog. “Gasoline and diesel fuels are a glaring exception to the usual rules of retail fairness. Buying hot fuel is the same as a buying from a butcher with a hidden finger on the scale. The unfairness is doubled when the oil industry has an inside pipeline to a government body that should protect the consumer, not create loopholes for industry.”

The silence by the "Big Green" environmental NGO's over Reheis-Boyd's overt conflict of interest in chairing the South Coast MLPA panel is appalling. Real environmentalists - unlike ardent supporters of the MLPA Initiative such as the representatives of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Ocean Conservancy and the League of Conservation Voters - oppose big oil's inordinate influence on the corrupt MLPA Initiative.

The DFG press release also failed to mention that Schwarzenegger, under pressure from corporate polluters, has completely taken the "protection" out of the Marine Life Protection Act.

The MLPA, a landmark law passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Gray Davis in 1999, was intended to not just ban fishing and seaweed harvesting in a network of "marine protected areas," but to restrict or prohibit other human activities including coastal development and water pollution.

"Coastal development, water pollution, and other human activities threaten the health of marine habitat and the biological diversity found in California's ocean waters," the law states in Fish and Game Code Section 2851, section c.

Unfortunately, the Schwarzenegger administration has taken all other "human uses" and "extractive activities" other than fishing and seaweed harvesting off the table in the implementation of the MLPA process in order to implement his war on the oceans. The MLPA fiasco does nothing to stop water pollution, oil drilling, and wave energy projects or other activities from destroying fish and other marine life populations in California's coastal waters. The law would do nothing to stop an ecological catastrophe like the Exxon Valdez in Alaska or the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico from devastating the California coast.

In fact, respected environmental leaders such as John Stephens-Lewallen, co-founder of the Ocean Protection Coalition and Seaweed Rebellion on California's North Coast, say that the MLPA actually clears the path to new offshore oil drilling and the industrialization of the ocean.

"By setting up these no-take marine reserves and kicking fishermen, Indians, seaweed harvesters and other ocean food providers off traditional areas of the ocean, the Schwarzenegger administration is paving the way for offshore oil drilling," said Stephens-Lewallen. "Twenty-three percent of the nation's offshore oil reserves are off the coast of California. The Point Arena Basin off Mendocino is on track now to be leased for drilling by the Mineral Management Services."

"The Southern California Blue Ribbon Task Force 'Integrated Preferred Alternative' is devastating to fishing communities, but good for offshore oil drilling interests," he concluded.

The evisceration of the MLPA under Schwarzenegger should be no surprise. This is the same Governor that has presided over the collapse of Central Valley salmon, Delta smelt, longfin smelt, striped bass, green sturgeon and southern resident killer whale populations. This is the same Governor that is constantly pushing for the construction of a peripheral canal, an environmentally destructive project that would cost an estimated \$23 billion to \$53.8 billion.

Meanwhile, a broad coalition of California Indian Tribes, fishermen and environmentalists on the North Coast has united to defend tribal fishing and gathering rights from being stripped by MLPA officials. Members of local Tribes interrupted the MLPA Initiative's Science Advisory Team meeting in Eureka on July 1, demanding that they not be blamed for the decline in ocean fisheries.

"We gathered and harvested the ocean's bounty for thousand of years in a sustainable manner," said Frankie Joe Myers, a Yurok ceremonial leader and member of the Coastal Justice Coalition. "For California to blame Tribes for it's reckless mis-management of our fisheries for the last century is simply appalling,"

The MLPA is designed to protect ocean resources, but Tribal spokesmen say that it's "an attempt by the Schwarzenegger Administration to greenwash his legacy."

Schwarzenegger's war against the California Coast, fishermen and coastal Indian Tribes must be stopped. We cannot allow the "Fish Terminator" to greenwash his abysmal environmental legacy.

To Make Public Comments:

All five MPA proposals can be found at
<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/southcoastipa.asp>.

The DEIR will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and will analyze the five proposals. The NOP for the DEIR can be found on DFG's website at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/regulatorydocs_sc.asp.

Anyone wishing to provide written input on the scope of the analysis to be conducted and included in the DEIR for this project may send written comments by August 3, 2010 to:

MLPA SCSR DEIR
Department of Fish and Game
South Coast MLPA Office
4665 Lampson, Suite C
Los Alamitos, CA 92679

Comments may also be e-mailed to Thomas Napoli, Staff Environmental Scientist, at [tnapoli \[at\] dfg.ca.gov](mailto:tnapoli@dfg.ca.gov).

Members of the public may also provide comments verbally at a public scoping meeting to be held in Long Beach on July 23. The meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the following location:

Administration Building of the Port of Long Beach
925 Harbor Way, Sixth Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

A map to the Port of Long Beach offices can be found at <http://www.polb.com/facilities/maps/default.asp>.

All comments submitted will be used to help prepare the DEIR, which is scheduled for completion in early August