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Recreational Fishing Alliance

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RFA CALLS FOR A NATIONAL BOYCOTT OF SAFEWAY SUPERMARKET CHAIN
Campaign To Educate Corporate Giant On Anti-Fishing "Greenwashing"

Recreational fishermen are being urged to *Stay Away From Safeway!*

According to a recent [press release](#) from Safeway, the corporate grocery giant is openly endorsing California's Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) initiative under which large areas of state waters are being closed - possibly forever - to public fishing access. The Recreational Fishing Alliance's (RFA) California chapters are asking anglers on every coast to help send the message to Safeway that we have a right to fish!

"Apparently Safeway has gotten some bad advice from the people in the ocean protection racket, a community to which the California-based mega-corporation is now donating profits," said Jim Martin, West Coast Regional Director of the RFA. "Safeway says it is supporting groups that make a difference like the Food Marketing Institute's Sustainable Seafood Working Group, the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions and the World Wildlife Fund's Aquaculture Dialogues, but it's little more than corporate greenwashing."

In official statement, Safeway said "An important part of being a responsible seafood business is to not only limit the impacts of where we are fishing, but to set aside areas where we are not. Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) are important to ensure the biodiversity and productivity of our oceans. In California, Safeway is a proponent of the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative (MLPA), which balances the use and conservation of living marine resources through a statewide network of MPA's."

Martin said groups under the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions umbrella includes Ocean Conservancy, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, are all organizations that have been most dedicated to closing our fishing access to the oceans, bays and estuaries of California through the MLPA Initiative. RFA believes strongly that once these groups have achieved their goals in California, they will be working overtime in every other coastal state to create a network of no-take zones that bar "injury," "harm" and "harassment" of fish stocks in large areas of the nation's marine waters.

"Safeway would apparently rather have the public buy farm-raised fish and seafood caught by foreign countries outside of U.S. waters, countries with less stringent controls on fishing effort than we enjoy in California, instead of being able to catch a few fish for the table our families as recreational or subsistence fishermen," Martin said. "California anglers have been outraged to learn that the money they spend at a Safeway grocery store might end up in the hands of extremist, anti-fishing groups like the NRDC and the Ocean Conservancy."

Martin and other West Coast RFA activists have been busily pushing back on the blanket marine reserve efforts now being conducted by Safeway's beneficiaries, arguing that this is not about whether science-based area closures should or should not be a part of the nation's fishery management system, but rather a large corporation throwing its support behind ex-Governor Schwarzenegger's highly-charged MLPA Initiative.

"The MLPA proponents keep telling business leaders and media outlets that MPA's work and that they successfully rebuild fisheries, but the science doesn't actually support that," Martin said. "These marine protected areas have to be distinguished from science-based area closures, restrictions along spawning grounds for example, but the MLPA Initiative didn't take any of those concerns into consideration. Even the hand-picked and privately-funded advisory team for the MLPA agreed that fishery management controls were the deciding factor in fisheries sustainability," he added.

Martin added that much of the scientific discussion regarding the MLPA Initiative was lost in the debate and rhetoric, perhaps by design. "The MLPA Initiative is currently under judicial review in two court cases, on issues ranging from allegations of an illegal arrest of a participant in public meetings, to secret meetings in violation of California's open meeting law, the Bagley-Keene Act," Martin said, explaining how California's anglers are most angry about the how the MLPA Initiative has gone through by way of privately-funded "public" stakeholder meetings resulting in the promulgation of regulations that affect everyone's lives.

"It's not just about fishing, but many human activities have been banned under the MLPA Initiative in California, like kayaking, sailing and other non-fishing activities," Martin said. "As fishermen we're angry about being labeled the problem when big corporations like Safeway and Hewlett-Packard refuse to join us in calling for less water diversions to agribusiness and less heavy metals from the semiconductor industry in San Francisco Bay," Martin added, calling recreational fishermen "the original conservationists" as evidenced by their frequent calls for stronger fishery management and habitat conservation.

"The nation's anglers need to understand what has happened in California under the guise of marine life protection through this MLPA Initiative, and we need to stand up together to get this message out to corporate entities starting with Safeway who are financially supporting our demise in the recreational fishing industry," said RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio. "Proponents of the no-take zones including NRDC, Pew Charitable Trusts, Ocean Conservancy and Oceana have been making extraordinary claims for marine protected areas, but the analysis shows that these claims are mostly bogus."

Donofrio said RFA plans to send a letter to Steven A. Burd, the Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer of Safeway, officially informing the supermarket giant of RFA's intention to support a nationwide boycott of the chain. "It is our hope that Mr. Burd will stop and recognize that our rights to open access of a public resource are being taken away by preservationist smoke and mirror rhetoric, and that by financially supporting the anti-fishing groups Safeway is actually supporting these attacks on our recreational fishing community."

RFA is urging all its members, recreational anglers, divers and anyone who cares about sustainable fisheries to "Stay Away From Safeway" until the company reverses

its position on the MLPA Initiative and ceases funding towards radical anti-fishing advocates like NRDC and the Ocean Conservancy.

"If you want sustainable fisheries, you need both fish and fishermen; you can't have one without the other and use the word fishery," Donofrio said, adding that cultural heritage and traditions are being greatly risked by the MLPA Initiative. He also pointed out that no-take zones have proven costly to coastal communities. "The California Department of Fish & Game estimates an annual cost of \$35 to \$40 million for its part in managing these zones, while a recent socioeconomic analysis shows that these arbitrary no-access zones will subtract millions of dollars from coastal economies and fishing communities through lost access to the public, lost revenues to small, local commercial and recreational fishing businesses, and the tax-base of coastal counties of California."

"These aren't short-term losses, they are as permanent as the marine reserves themselves. Safeway is really impacting their future bottom line by supporting the MLPA initiative, as their coastal customer base is already reeling financially by the lost access," Donofrio added.

"If Safeway is betting that the saltwater anglers of America will continue shopping at their stores while they arbitrarily cut off our public access to our public resources they are greatly mistaken," said Martin. "In California, we already know how this ends up, and it's time to educate anglers about corporations like Safeway that steal our fishing heritage through their support of an anti-fisherman agenda." Martin added that California's Indian tribes and tribal communities retain long-held, federally-recognized harvest rights to California's ocean waters, and that the RFA-CA remains a strong supporter of tribal sovereignty.

"We also see the non-commercial, subsistence harvest of marine resources by the general public as a basic human right, established under the public trust doctrine, and we plan on letting Safeway know what their beneficiaries in the environmental community think of our basic human rights as Americans," Martin added.

To download a letter to sign and send to Safeway expressing your support for the *Stay Away From Safeway* campaign, go to www.joinrfa.org/Press/SafewayLETTER.pdf.