

SBFF Conservation Committee Report, 1/24/2024
Mark Rockwell, Chair

We had an active and full committee meeting on January 17, 2024, with 10 SBFF members attending, two were unable to make it. It was held on Zoom, as will our next meeting on February 15th, at 5:30 p.m. Contact Mark Rockwell if you'd like to attend; mrockwell1945@gmail.com

Our meeting started with a great and thorough presentation on Marine Sanctuaries, & Marine Protected Areas by Elizabeth Burns of Cal Trout. She is a member of our committee and club, and has brought a wealth of information on both marine and fresh water projects. At our previous meeting in November we discussed the proposed **Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary** (<https://chumashsanctuary.org/>). There is great committee interest in helping the Chumash Tribe get this sanctuary completed, and added to the other central California Marine Sanctuaries that dot our coastline. Currently, there are 15 sanctuaries along the California coast, encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of our coastal ocean waters. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is the federal agency that holds this special places in Trust for the American people, and protects the assets they hold, including fisheries. They focus on education, permitting for fishing & recreation, protection of cultural sites, and more. Once designated, all Sanctuaries are permanent.

A **Marine Protected Area (MPA)** is an area designated for long-term conservation and protection of sensitive habitats and threatened species. These were started many years ago as a way to protect special places where fish and other Marine animals thrived and needed for spawning and rearing. They are places that limit both recreation and fishing so the wildlife that use them can thrive. The MPAs that have been established have contributed to the recovery of many species, helping to stabilize populations that can then migrate into other locations where they can be fished for or observed. Marine Sanctuaries can authorize MPAs within their borders, and they serve as a refuge for species that need greater protections. The State of California has established many MPA along the coast primarily to provide protection for fisheries so they can maintain population levels that result in stable populations for all the public to enjoy. MPAs, unlike Sanctuaries, are established by local stakeholders, and are based upon the Marine Life Protection Act (<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/MLPA>). In all of the California MPAs, both Calif. DFW and NOAA work to together to accomplish the protections designated for those areas. The state does a review of goals and objectives for each MPA every 10 years, and they can be changed based upon changes made by stakeholders who live close to and use the MPA. That makes it unique to Sanctuaries.

We also took a look at maps of likely Southern California Steelhead tributary streams to the Santa Ynez River, the river that flows into and out of Lake Cachuma. Historically, this was one of the best Southern California watersheds for steelhead, and the committee is very interested in doing recovery work in this watershed that can contribute to recovery of this steelhead population - the most threatened steelhead population in California. Zaca Creek is a tributary that we know holds steelhead as they have been seen there in 2023. There are some identified barriers low in Zaca creek that could be modified to allow passage, and we are looking into them now to see what might be possible. Stay tuned for more info as we move forward.

We invite you to join us in our quest to help our environment and local fisheries and streams. Our goal is to protect our local watersheds, work with other local groups who do the same, and create opportunities to recover and stabilize historically popular and healthy fish populations.

Our next meeting is February 15th at 5:30 p.m. Contact Mark R. mrockwell1945@gmail.com