

Public Testimony of Bruce Monroe
Chair – Sierra Club Marine Protected Area Task Force
Before the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

San Pedro, CA
April 18-19, 2002

My name is Bruce Monroe and I chair the Marine Protected Areas Task Force of the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has over 700,000 members and, concerned about the global ocean, we advocate for its protection and that of its sealife and, thereby, human health as well. Using science-based advocacy, research, and public education, we inform, inspire, and empower people to speak and act for the ocean. We encourage them to steward ocean habitats near where they live.

The Sierra Club has a more than 30 year history of advocating marine reserves, in addition to parks and refuges. Now with our global ocean in crisis, we strongly support the Oceans Act as a way to save it. Over 11,270 beach closures and advisories around the country because of pollution with California an undesirable leader. Forty percent of our fish populations overfished according to assessments by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Numerous species of whales, dolphin, sea otters, manatee, sea turtles, seabirds and shorebirds on endangered or threatened species lists with causes ranging from loss of habitat caused by human activities such as coastal development, pollution from urban runoff, entanglement in ghost nets and fishing gear, collisions with boats and ships, changing food webs because of global warming. To address these and other critical issues affecting our global ocean and its sealife, it is essential that the Commission act now to identify and promote environmentally sound management practices. To be indifferent to these issues or to act slowly will certainly mean that our children will pay the price for that indifference to the wild place we call the ocean.

The global ocean is the planet's largest and most complex ecosystem. In spite of all our technological and scientific advances we still do not understand its complexities. We need adequately funded research to be able to better understand the complexities of the ocean. We need marine reserves, ocean wilderness, and the rapid implementation of Executive Order 13158, especially in urban areas where dead zones in our estuaries are multiplying and enlarging. We need a moratorium on coastal development before the limits of growth are exceeded.

West Coast challenges such as accelerating coastal development, urban runoff, oil and gas activities, mining, logging runoff, collapse of commercial fisheries, attacks on Marine Protected Areas, and the inability of the federal and state agencies to successfully grapple with the challenges facing our oceans, all point to a need to consider new policies and management structures.

In regard to overfishing David Pauley of the University of British Columbia's Fisheries Centre has said "If this crisis is solved, it will be because the government perceived a mandate from the public to do something about it. The public doesn't reach out into the ocean – governments do. People need to raise hell to get governments to intervene". Since the global ocean is no single nation's property, it suffers from the "tragedy of the commons". That must stop! We, the United States, must set an example to all nations by adopting and enforcing policies that truly protect Mother Ocean.

Thank you.