California Artificial Reef Perspective

National Artificial Reef Workshop
June 9, 2016 • Alexandria, Virginia

Eric Wilkins, Senior Environmental Scientist, Specialist
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Photo Credit Eric Wilkins
CDFW – Role

- Trustee and Responsible Agency
- California Environmental Quality Act
- Advisory Role to Other Agencies
- Office of Spill Prevention and Response

Source: CDFW
Historical Program

- CDFW Artificial Reef Program – Early 2000s

- Fish and Game Code Sections 6420 - 6425
  - Placement of artificial reefs in state waters
    - Enhance species and fishing opportunity

- Numerous artificial reefs created during the 1980’s and 1990’s
  - Guidelines were investigated

- National Artificial Reef Guidelines
Current Status

- Unfunded Program
- Efforts Unfinished
- Program Needs
  - Funding
  - Research
  - Scientific Plan
  - Policy Guidance

Photo Credit Eric Wilkins
California is now seeing numerous requests for artificial reefs.

- Mitigation
- Restoration
- Diving
- Fishing
- Kelp Harvesting
- Oyster Beds
- Dampening Impacts

Requests are not always consistent with Fish & Game Code.

Removal as mitigation.
Wheeler North Reef Example

Mitigation for San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (Songs)

- Impacts to San Onofre kelp forest
- Goal of 150 acres of kelp forest
- Natural rock and Concrete
- Three Phases
- Functioning reef but not meeting all mitigation goals.

Credit Dan Reed, Stephen Schroeter, and Mark Page
Need for state wide policy, guidance, and scientific plan

There are unanswered policy questions and research needs:

Policy
- Should fishing be allowed on artificial reefs or are they a protected resource?
- What is the context of artificial reefs in Marine Protected Areas?
- Rigs to Reefs and Ships to Reefs, how do they fit within our current policy?
- How do artificial reefs fit in the context of marine spatial planning and competing ocean uses?
- How do we trade one habitat, soft bottom that is important to halibut trawlers, for a different habitat?

Research
- What impact does the placement of the artificial reef have on existing habitat?
- What restoration of fish population goals can be set for mitigation that are realistic and a positive for the fishery?
- How can siting of artificial reefs be best planned in CA?
Thank You

Eric Wilkins
Senior Environmental Scientist, Specialist Marine Region

(831) 649-2813
Eric.Wilkins@Wildlife.ca.gov

Pt. Buchon habitat and marine life

Source CDFW