

# POLICY Watch

## Government Affairs Update

**These items cover Government Affairs activities for March and April 2009.** For more information on ASA's Government Affairs activities, contact [Gordon Robertson](#), vice president and Government Affairs lead, x237, [Patty Doerr](#), director, Ocean Resource Policy, x244, or [Mike Leonard](#), Policy fellow, x230. Please visit [ASA's Web site](#) for more information.

### Update on National Park Service Lead Ban Announcement

In April, ASA staff and Government Affairs committee members met with William Shafroth, deputy assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; Department of the Interior; and National Park Service (NPS) staff to discuss the NPS's March 2009 announcement that stated the agency's intention to ban fishing tackle with lead components in national parks by 2010.

ASA stressed that any change in federal policy that affects the sportfishing industry needs to follow appropriate rule-making guidelines, including an evaluation of relevant science and an open public-comment process. The NPS announcement was made without prior consultation of the sportfishing industry or the millions of recreational anglers who fish in the national park system.

### North Carolina Hatteras Update

In April, ASA staff and member Bob Eakes, Red Drum Tackle Shop (N.C.), met with William Shafroth, principle deputy assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, at the Department of the Interior, as well as with other NPS staff, to discuss angler access issues in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area. The NPS is drafting a management plan for off-road vehicle access at the seashore after the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee failed to reach consensus.

### ASA Government Affairs Committee Meets in Alexandria, Va.

ASA's annual spring Government Affairs Committee meeting was held April 7–8 in Alexandria, Va. Committee members received updates and status reports on a wide range of topics including federal and state marine protected areas, precedent-setting state and local access issues and restrictions on lead fishing equipment, the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund reauthorization, invasive species and the 2008 Consumer Product Safety Protection Act.

The committee also held a special session with other recreational fishing and boating organizations to identify and discuss the challenges the sportfishing community will face during the next five years. The committee voted to support a salmon-hatchery reform study in California, develop an ASA and Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies working group to develop ways to increase industry's input into how state agencies use Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund money, the ineligibility of Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund money for fishing closures and provide ASA support for a Vermont bill to repeal the ban of lead sinkers in rivers and streams.

### California Marine Life Protection Act Funding Update

ASA and the Partnership for Sustainable Oceans (PSO) continue to raise the issue of how California intends

to fund the scientific monitoring and enforcement of the state's new marine protected areas (MPAs). PSO representatives attended the April Fish and Game Commission meeting where they asked the commission to examine the funding resources necessary and available to properly implement the law.

This step comes on the heels of the Coastside Fishing Club's annual meeting where California State Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez and ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson shared the podium providing remarks regarding the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) implementation process. Senator Florez announced his intention to hold an oversight hearing on the MLPA process. Here and in other public statements, Senator Florez has expressed his concerns about the implementation process, its objectivity and the funds necessary to properly implement the law. The original proposed MPA annual implementation budget of \$250,000 has now risen to approximately \$34 million.

### California Marine Life Protection Act Implementation Update

Phase III (Southern California) of the MLPA implementation continues. The South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (RSG) has held three workshops to draft its MPA proposal for the South Coast Study Region. The Science Advisory Team (SAT) has evaluated the proposals. The RSG is expected to meet again in late April.

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The PSO sent a letter to the Blue Ribbon Task Force expressing its concern that the SAT does not have the vital habitat data needed to plan the placement of MPAs in Southern California.

In regards to completion of Phase II in the North Central Coast, the PSO's Proposal 2-XA remains one of four North Central Coast MPA alternatives before the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC). The final vote continues to be postponed due to delays in completing draft regulations and accompanying environmental impact statements for each of the alternatives. The most recent estimate is that a final vote will occur at the August FGC meeting.

### **United Anglers of Southern California Rejoins the PSO**

The PSO is pleased to announce that [United Anglers of Southern California](#) (UASC) has rejoined the PSO, the coalition of recreational fishing and boating organizations formed to advocate for recreational fishing interests in the California MLPA initiative process. The PSO looks forward to working with UASC's newly elected president Steve Fukuto and the board of directors in the MLPA implementation process in Southern California.

### **Oregon Marine Protected Areas Update**

In March ASA sent a letter to the Oregon state legislature's Joint Committee on Ways and Means, stating that MPAs established in state waters should be accompanied by adequate state funding to properly enforce and scientifically monitor the areas.

ASA understands that legislation will be introduced in the Oregon legislature to fund both the Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council recommendation establishing two marine reserves off Oregon's coast and further study and discussion for four additional MPAs. This latest action is in contrast to the nine marine reserves that some groups were supporting. ASA will review the

bill to determine if it adequately funds the monitoring of the two reserves and provides for ample public input.

### **Salmon Fisheries in California and Oregon Closed for 2009**

For the second consecutive year, the Pacific Fishery Management Council has recommended that the California and southern Oregon recreational and commercial salmon fisheries be closed. The National Marine Fisheries Service is expected to make the decision official May 1, 2009.

Though projections indicate an increase in the number of fall run Chinook salmon, 2009 estimates barely meet the minimum conservation goal of 122,000 spawning fish. The Chinook's sudden decline has been attributed to drought, poor ocean conditions and inadequate hatchery management decisions.

### **Wallop-Breaux Reauthorization Update**

The Angling and Boating Alliance, which consists of members representing ASA, the [Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation](#), the [National Marine Manufacturers Association](#), the [National Association of State Boating Law Administrators](#), the [Marine Retailers Association of America](#), the [Association of Marina Industries](#), the [American Recreation Coalition](#), the [National Boating Federation](#), the [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#), [BoatUS](#), [Trout Unlimited](#), the [Coastal Conservation Association](#) and [Bass Anglers Sportsman Society](#) continues working to reach consensus on issues related to the reauthorization of the [Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund](#) (Wallop-Breaux).

In its April meetings, the alliance reached an agreement on funding allocation changes and will now shift its discussions into drafting bill text, strategies for Congressional outreach and reauthorization options. The U.S. [Coast Guard](#) and the U.S. [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) have advisory roles in the alliance.

### **ASA Sends Letter to National MPA System Director**

In April, ASA sent a letter to Joseph Uravitch, director, National Marine Protected Areas Center, requesting that the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee review and assess the 225 sites nominated for the [National System of Marine Protected Areas](#) to determine how they meet the eligibility criteria before they are included in the system.

ASA is concerned that the nominations did not include adequate information to make informed decisions about sites' inclusion. The nomination period, which closed in February 2009, was followed by a public comment period that closed on April 6.

### **National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Update**

In late March, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA) Update legislative team, of which ASA is a member, met to discuss strategies for reintroduction in the 111th Congress. The legislative team is contacting members of Congress to advocate for support of the bill and to seek additional sponsorship. The foundation for the NFHCA is the [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) (NFHAP). ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson sits on the NFHAP board.

### **ASA Staff Attends 74th North American Conference**

ASA and FishAmerica Foundation staff attended the 74th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference March 16-21, in Arlington, Va. The conference is one of the largest gatherings of fishery and wildlife officials and other fish and wildlife interest groups held each year. ASA attended a variety of committee meetings including marine fisheries; Farm Bill strategic development; legislative and federal budget appropriations; public access; energy and wildlife

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policy; fish and wildlife health; public access; angler and boating participation; fisheries and water resources policy; communications, outreach and diversity; and fish and wildlife trust funds. ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson made a presentation on the economic value of recreational fishing in reservoirs during a workshop on reservoir fisheries.

### **Discussions Regarding the Wildlife Heritage Act**

In March, ASA staff along with other conservation organizations met with Congressman Ron Kind's (D-WI) staff to discuss the reintroduction of America's Wildlife Heritage Act. The act, introduced in 2008 as

H.R. 7151, failed to pass before the 110th Congress adjourned. The bill seeks to sustain wildlife on America's public lands. Discussions centered on legislative terminology and intent.

### **FishNet Meeting**

In March, ASA hosted a FishNet meeting to discuss fishery issues within the conservation community. Discussion focused on offshore drilling issues, recent and expected appointment nominations, the National Angler Saltwater Registry, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act, MPAs, Wallop-Breaux reauthorization, the Clean Water Act and Alaska's potential Bristol Bay Pebble Mine.

### **Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act Workshop Held**

In March, ASA staff attended a multistakeholder workshop to discuss [H.R. 669](#), an act recently introduced in Congress that would establish a risk-assessment process to prevent the introduction and establishment of potentially harmful non-native wildlife species in the United States.

The workshop assembled stakeholders to discuss the act's language and utility. Of primary concern to ASA is how the proposed legislation may affect populations and stockings of established non-native fish species, such as brown trout, which serve as significant recreational and economic resources. ■