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From Ken Bates

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The world in and around commercial fishing keeps turning.

California fishermen experienced an actual if unremarkable commercial salmon season. El Nino and related weather/temperature impacts are already affecting state fisheries. Market squid have shown up off of Eureka, with seiners following, and our colleagues have been catching bluefin tuna offshore from the Bay Area.

Ocean industrialization pressures continue, as the articles we've collected below and our interview with the Sportfishing Association of California's Mike Conroy demonstrate.

The fishing industry driven Responsible Offshore Development Association (RODA) formed on the Eastern Seaboard to preserve East Coast commercial fisheries from negative impacts to offshore wind power development decided to shut down due to a lack of funding. The letter that we received from them stated that: "some larger seafood businesses that had historically funded RODA redirected their money elsewhere and that many fishermen and smaller businesses stopped supporting RODA financially because they believed offshore-wind development had slowed or that the major battles were over."

The Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization and the Port San Luis Commercial Fishing Association have filed a lawsuit challenging the California Coastal Commission's "Statewide Strategy for the Coexistence of California Fishing Communities and Offshore Wind Energy." The lawsuit contends that the Statewide Strategy violates the provisions of SB286 (McGuire), gives

ultimate control over impact mitigation to developers and disempowers California's fishing industry and its communities.

As the CFRA nears the completion of our second grant from California's Ocean Protection Council, we'll have our own decisions to make. It's clear that the need for unity among California fishermen in the face of access challenges remains. Our world's not going to stop turning anytime soon.

This Month's Photo



Market squid being landed at the Eureka Fishermen's terminal. This year's ocean conditions have brought a return of the little squid to North Coast waters, something not seen at commercial scale since 2014. The boat is the F/V Eileen.

(Last month's photo was of Yellow Banks at Santa Cruz Island.)

Noteworthy articles

We'd been hearing rumors for weeks. Finally, it was been confirmed that RWE has taken a Trump administration buyout affecting three offshore wind leases, including one off of Humboldt County. From the Associated Press: <https://apnews.com/article/trump-offshore-wind-energy-projects-fossil-fuels-d39aaf20d259d15d0777dcaec7aa3524>

Oregonians have proved sceptical of offshore development. Planners there have now developed a roadmap. From National Fisherman: <https://www.nationalfisherman.com/west-coast-pacific/oregon-planners-submit-roadmap-for-any-future-wind-power>

It's unlikely to become law anytime soon, but a bill introduced by Senator Alex Padilla demonstrates ways that wind leases shelved by the Trump Administration could be revised in a streamlined way down the road. From ECO: <https://ecomagazine.com/news/policy/us-senators-introduce-bill-to-protect-offshore-wind-leases/>

While this article is not California focused, there has been much discussion on how fish processors and buyers will be negatively impacted, but may not qualify for compensatory mitigation. From Seafood Source: <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/virginia-institute-of-marine-science-calling-for-seafood-industry-to-participate-in-wind-energy-survey>

Last but not least, Mike Conway of the Sportfishing Association of California recently had a paper on California's offshore future published by the Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust. We interview Mike below. You can find his paper here: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6a061c18dfdd61320ff2fbec/t/6a7cb9de4e54a44588b1a85d/1786558944076/MBFT_OffshoreReport2026_DI_GITAL_Final.pdf



An Interview with the Sportfishing Association of California's Mike Conroy

Michael Kraft

MK: Given your legal background, how did you come to be involved in fisheries? Or is it the other way around?

MC: I started fishing before deciding to go to law school. I worked on sport boats in high school and college, got a 100-ton masters license, ran charter boats, went to law school, and then worked for a tech company. After one transaction that went particularly awry, I decided I needed a break from corporate law. So, I went back to fishing.

I worked on commercial boats for a while and got exposed to how fishing communities were underrepresented in regulatory, legislative, and judicial processes. This was 15 to 20 years ago. I found myself fishing for 6 months and then working on legal/regulatory processes for 6 months. Understanding my unique background could support a livelihood, I decided to set up my business to work and for members of the fishing community in those processes.

MK: How do commercial fishing interests and sportfishing complement each other, and how don't they?

MC: The short answer is there are far more similarities than differences. Bottom line is that both of those user groups are dependent on access to the marine environment - albeit for different purposes. While many management measures apply differently to commercial fishing versus recreational fishing, we're all targeting the same resource, and all have an interest in ensuring the long-term viability of our industries. We should all share a vision of management of that resource. In California, the recreational and commercial industries have worked well together in management of those resources. That isn't the case in other parts of the

Country. In the Gulf, it is not uncommon for commercial, recreational and charter boats to intentionally work against one another. In California, we try to avoid structures where that type of infighting is likely and/or possible.

MK: What are your current concerns and aspirations when it comes to the access of fishermen to fishing grounds?

MC: My primary concern is retaining the ability to have that access. Our ability to access fishing grounds, resources, markets, etc...it's always being challenged and that remains so today: MPA petitions, the state's 30 by 30 goals, alternative uses of the marine space (both known and unknown), imports, lack of consumer education, are all things that will or could impact access. One potential alternative use being talked about is offshore data centers.

MK: What are the lessons learned from RODA (Mike served as West Coast Director of the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance)?

MC: The primary lesson is just because we're in a time and place where offshore wind is not a priority, it doesn't mean it won't be in the future. With the pausing of offshore wind activities, we are seeing increased focus on offshore mining, offshore oil and gas, aquaculture, etc., which offer similar challenges to offshore wind. One thing that has been concerning, is the speed with which some of the activities are being pursued. When dealing with offshore wind, the fishing industry was insistent about the need to slow down and do things the right way, rather than in an expedited fashion. With what we are seeing today, we may wish we had as much time to deal with possible oil and gas development as we had with wind.

MK: You recently published a paper called "Navigating California's

Offshore Future.” What are the top headlines you hope people take away from that?

MC: I hope readers get a clearer picture about what may be coming off California, the potential impacts of offshore mining/oil & gas (and the amount of unknowns), and the rapidly evolving timelines associated with processes being utilized. I think it important for the reader to focus on the parts of the paper that describe how to engage and comment effectively and intelligently.

MK: What’s your take on buybacks and the future of offshore wind development in California?

MC: There’s a lot of misinformation in how it’s being spun. The reality is these “buybacks” are functionally a return of the lease price to the entity holding the lease. In exchange, that entity gives up their lease but agrees to reinvest those in activities supported by the Administration. Personally, I think it’s a fool’s errand to say that offshore wind is done. Future Administrations could push for offshore wind. If they do, we could see it come back with a vengeance.

MK: What do you do for fun?

MC: What’s that?

I walk the dog a lot. I enjoy the outdoors. I’ve gotten back to a desire to go fishing again, even if it’s just with a pole. Not to sound trite, but I also enjoy hopping in the car with no particular destination in mind.

MK: Parting thought?

MC: If it’s not wind, it’s going to be something else. Recently, for example, I’ve found myself going down the marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) rabbit hole. There are elements to that which terrify

me. This is not the time to rest on our laurels.

Most Recent Board Report

All CFRA board reports are published. Here is the most recent one, for the second quarter of 2026.

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