



July/August, 2026

From Ken Bates

Co-Executive Director, CFRA



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There should be a serious debate about whether California should reindustrialize Humboldt Bay or instead direct massive heavy industrial development to already-industrialized Los Angeles Harbor. What we are talking about here is the proposed Samoa Heavy Lift Terminal Project and all of its long-term ramifications.

Before colonization, there was a string of major coastal marine estuaries in California that served as home and nursery to seabirds, fish, crabs, clams, oysters—everything that made California's coastal waters rich with life. These estuaries had many names, more recently known as San Diego Bay, San Pedro Bay, San Francisco Bay, Tomales Bay, and Humboldt (Wigi) Bay.

I grew up in San Pedro Bay, also known as Los Angeles Harbor. My grandfather and great-uncle were high-seas tuna fishermen. My father ran a marine electronics business in the harbor. During the summers, from elementary school through the end of middle school, I got to go to work with my dad—in shipyards, in Fish Harbor, in yacht marinas, and at massive industrial sites throughout L.A. Harbor. In high school, I was employed as a deckhand on working harbor watercraft. I spent most of my young life in and around the water and lived with L.A. Harbor pollution every day, including bay water coated with floating oil and industrial grime, bay water with strange colors and bad odors, pier pilings without even barnacles growing on them and air pollution that made our lungs hurt by late afternoon.

After high school, I ran a boat owned by an

environmental consulting firm. My job was collecting polluted water samples from pipes, drains, outfalls, and stormwater runoff infrastructure in L.A. Harbor's Main Channel, Cerritos Channel, Dominguez Channel, and the mouth of the L.A. River. The polluted water samples were taken back to the laboratory, infused with oxygen for a couple of days, and then diluted with "clean" saltwater so fish could be added and the rate of fish mortality recorded—a process known as a bioassay. Needless to say, few of the fish survived the test.

The massive, long-term pollution of Los Angeles Harbor, San Diego Bay, and San Francisco Bay did not happen all at once in a single catastrophic event. It accumulated gradually, one small increment at a time. Imagine a house with five long-haired dogs living indoors for ten years. They don't shed all at once; they leave a few hairs behind every day. At first, it hardly seems noticeable. But over time, those hairs work their way into every surface, crack, and crevice in the house. Pollution accumulates in much the same way. What begins as small, seemingly insignificant releases eventually builds into pervasive, long-lasting contamination.

Humboldt Bay will not be destroyed by a single massive pollution event, but by a series of small, daily, seemingly insignificant ones: a workboat spills five gallons of hydraulic oil; grinding dust laden with heavy metals blows into the bay; in the middle of the night, an offshore wind support vessel blows its stack, coating the bay's surface with carbon from burning bunker C fuel, yearly "maintenance" dredging that quietly destroys billions of Dungeness crab larvae or a foreign-flagged vessel that pumps out a small amount of

ballast water that just happens to contain an invasive species capable of wiping out Humboldt Bay's shellfish, its shellfish mariculture industry, and the 100+ jobs that go with it.

People may not know just how polluted Humboldt had been. In 1968, when I came to the area, I was repeatedly told that Humboldt County—especially the Humboldt Bay area—was the second most polluted county in California. Only Los Angeles ranked worse. It has taken the people of Humboldt County 58 years to put our estuary back on the path toward becoming an ecosystem and nursery capable of once again enriching our coastal waters and our lives.

California's other major estuaries are already wrecked. Let's take a moment to consider the future of the natural systems we seem hell-bent on destroying and keep industrialization on the scale of the Samoa Heavy Lift Terminal where it truly belongs—in industrialized L.A. Harbor. We can then keep progressing toward a clean Humboldt Bay, a rare place that supports flora, fauna, human enjoyment, and human livelihoods.

This Month's Pretty Photo



Do you recognize this spot of water?

Noteworthy articles

Discussions are heating up again in Humboldt about the proposed Heavy Lift Terminal. The Lost Coast Outpost has a good review here:

<https://lostcoastoutpost.com/2026/jun/26/we-have-get-right/>

And it's worth revisiting the CFRA's extensive piece on the likely environmental impacts of the terminal, which you can read here:

https://www.californiafishermensresiliencyassociation.com/_files/ugd/1298ad_5bd15c3ba7194fc18b2e173b907fb750.pdf

Waste from the shore represents a top threat to ocean environments, from sewage to oil runoff to trash. Here's an article from SFGate on trash making it to remote Santa Cruz Island, with a mention of the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara: https://www.sfgate.com/national-parks/article/channel-islands-trash-22245123.php?utm_content=hed&sid=686d2085868dafcc410c89c9&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=roundup&utm_campaign=sfgt%20%7C%20the%20daily&stn=nf

The Santa Rosa Press-Democrat reports on this year's limited salmon season. CFRA board member Dick Ogg features heavily (there is a paywall on this one): <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/2026/07/13/salmon-fishing-resumes-off-california-coast-for-first-time-since-2022-heres-what-that-means/>

The L.A. Times provides a current review of California policy on OSW (there is a paywall on this one too):

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2026-05-24/defying-trump-california-continues-to-bet-big-on-offshore-wind>

We've communicated a lot on OSW policy in the Golden State. The government policy site Governed published this broader look at how states across the country seek to continue their offshore developments.

https://www.governing.com/infrastructure/offshore-wind-faces-new-headwinds-states-arent-giving-up?utm_campaign=Newsletter%20-%20GOV%20-%20Daily&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8t28Z7E4uXDrEeB9amzQgUMJtban5m5m7ot_qJx8OZqwleQVdV59pD6EOlh9MzN_Hu5rGSo8KgmjtBbalNNo_pdKJnFQrwnsTZZ8uwnXehzpP94aw&_hsmi=

[427382044&utm_content=427382044&utm_source=hs_email](#)



An Interview with Ken Bates

Michael Kraft

We've been sending this newsletter out for two and a half years. Ken Bates writes a letter almost every time. We also profile a person in California commercial fishing about every time. This time, our profile is on Ken himself. He shares information about his younger days in his letter above. Here's some more recent info:

MK: How did you first become involved in the policy side of fishing?

KB: I was the first person to fish for herring in Humboldt Bay since World War II. This was in 1974. It was essentially considered a new fishery. I went before the Humboldt Fish & Game Commission for support. After that, I was asked by the then California Director of Fish & Game, a guy named Charlie Fullerton, to serve on a herring advisory group, a group on which I still serve.

MK: Why do you care about the future of commercial fishing?

KB: It's the coolest thing I can think of doing, including the cultural aspects. I remember growing up in and around the melting pot of San Pedro, where people from all over the world were there to fish. I still want young people to be able to go fishing.

MK: Where did you and Linda (Hildenbrand) meet?

KB: I used to eat at a restaurant called Vellutini's. Linda participated in the Farmers Market just outside. I didn't stalk her, but I did spy on her. I thought she might be married. One day, Mary Vellutini told me, "she's not married...go out and talk to her or we're not serving you lunch!" We fished together for the first time in 2010 and got married that same year.

MK: I hear that Linda pretty consistently out fishes you. Is that true?

KB: I have fished the West Coast from the tip of Baja California (tuna) to Bristol Bay in Alaska (sockeye salmon). She out fished me in both places. She's probably cheating.

Most Recent Board Report

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

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