

**CITY OF MORRO BAY**

**HARBOR ADVISORY BOARD**

**SYNOPSIS MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the City of Morro Bay Harbor Advisory Board was held Thursday, October 3, 2013 at 6:00 PM in the Veteran's Hall, 209 Surf ST, Morro Bay, California.

**ESTABLISH QUORUM AND CALL TO ORDER**

Present:	Members:	Gene Doughty Jeff Eckles Bill Luffee Dana McClish Lynn Meissen Jim Phillips (Vacant Seat)
	Staff:	Eric Endersby, Harbor Director Polly Curtis, Office Assistant

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**CHAIR AND ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRESENTATIONS**

Chair Eckles said the Morro Bay Community Foundation will hold a local event called, "Morro Bay Sings...ELVIS!" on Saturday, November 9, 2013 at the Community Center, for the benefit, "Every Child Deserves Recreational Opportunities."

Chair Eckles said that in view of the recent City Council potential personnel issues, he urged everyone in the community to strive toward unity and progress; to look for things in common as opposed to the differences; he said this is a small community and in a very real sense we are all extended family who live here; he urged people to move forward for the betterment of the City.

Mr. Doughty said there has been a lot of wind lately, and all mooring owners need to check their chaffing gear now and be sure they have good lines in preparation for winter storms.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Bill Martony voiced his concern over the vessel Shillelagh, docked at the North T-Pier.

**A. CONSENT CALENDAR**  
**A-1 MINUTES**

Mr. McClish asked for a change to his announcement that "Morro Bay Yacht Club" be changed to "Morro Bay Youth Sailing Foundation."

Chair Eckles asked that the Motion in Agenda Item D-1 show that it was made by himself and seconded by Mr. Luffee.

Mr. Doughty moved the September 5, 2013 Harbor Advisory Board minutes be approved with the changes. The Motion was seconded by Mr. McClish and carried unanimously.

## **B. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **B-1 Harbor Department Status Report**

Mr. Endersby briefed the Board on the following topics:

**Staff News: Badges for Reserve Harbor Patrol Officers**

**New Harbor Patrol Vessel**

**Recent Training:**

**Emergency Natural Gas Responder/Disaster Training**

**Lease Site News:**

**Safety and Awareness Meeting with Leaseholders Sept 12**

**Rose's Landing**

**Rocca's**

**Plover Fencing Removal**

**Derelict Vessels:**

**Shillelagh**

**AIS Landing Craft**

**Events:**

**Coastal Cleanup Day Sept 21**

**Harbor Festival Oct 5-6**

Discussion by the Board on the condition of the vessel Shillelagh.

### **B-2 Presentation of Status of Eelgrass in Morro Bay by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program**

Ms. Adrienne Harris, Director of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, presented the Board with information and graphs showing the critical condition of eelgrass in the estuary. Although eelgrass numbers do fluctuate naturally, the graph of monitoring since the 1960s shows levels as high as 452 acres in the bay, but has never shown a low of only 17 acres, where the number currently stands. The count of Black Brant geese fluctuates with the eelgrass because this is their number-one food source while the birds are here. Many commercially caught fish feed off of eelgrass, such as flounder, rockfish, steelhead and sand dabs.

Ms. Harris said eelgrass is sensitive to a number of things: changes in temperature, light, sediment levels, nutrient levels as well as desiccation at low tide, and that there are several factors which may be causing the current decrease of eelgrass. There has been an increase in red algae of 313% as well as a type of slime mold in 2012 which is acting similar to a disease known as "Wasting Disease."

Ms. Harris reviewed the MBNEP's active role to recover the eelgrass, which is a collaborative effort of several entities in the community. In August 2013 volunteers and divers planted 9,775 units of eelgrass covering 2.2 acres in the Coleman Beach area. This is the beginning of a five-step process which will include monitoring the eelgrass over the next five years. She said healthy eelgrass numbers means a healthy bay.

Ms. Harris said if people are interested in being involved in this project and others, as well as making donations, please go to their website at [www.mbnep.org](http://www.mbnep.org). The Board thanked Ms. Harris for her presentation.

### **B-3 Presentation on Commercial Fishing Gear Types by the Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman's Organization**

Mr. Tom Hafer, commercial fisherman, said he was requested by Mr. Endersby to present the different fishing gear types and methods used by commercial fishermen in the various fisheries. He said the presentations will move from shallow to deep water.

Mr. Hafer said he is a nearshore and spot-prawn fisherman with his 43' vessel the Kathryn H. The nearshore fishery is live-fish with about twenty local participants who catch five different types of fish: cabezon, greenling, gopher cod, grass bass and lingcod. The gear used is hooks or traps. The fishermen who use traps are regulated by the Fish & Game Department by nearshore permits and trap endorsements. He explained the difficulties and changes that occurred when the 29 Marine Protected Areas were designated on the Central Coast, in an area from Point Conception to Pigeon Point. Mr. Hafer described the various quotas and "waves" assigned to this highly regulated fishery.

Mr. Hafer said the spot-prawn fishery has been around since the 1940s and is now fairly heavily regulated, but there currently are not a lot of fishermen in this fishery. This is also a live-fishery with approximately 150-200 traps used at a depth of about 1,000 feet; it's a healthy and vibrant fishery out of Morro Bay.

Mr. Rob Seitz, commercial fisherman, said he runs the 56' trawl boat the South Bay and is in the West Coast groundfish trawl fishery. He described his gear as a funnel-shaped net that is towed across the ocean bottom at around 2,400' depth, gathering mostly sole and cod. He said he's a proud participant of the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program; the City is acquiring a Quota from The Nature Conservancy, which will keep the fishery local. The IFQ requires a federal observer onboard his boat 100% of the time during all fishing trips, which ultimately helps to keep the fishery sustainable. Mr. Seitz also said any gear type can be used in this fishery as long as it has been approved by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council; so hooks or pots, traps or nets are used.

Chair Eckles asked Mr. Seitz to explain the observer requirements. Mr. Seitz said an observer is subcontracted to the federal government; the first year of the program NOAA paid for 90% of the bill but now the percentage is 60-40% which means Mr. Seitz pays around \$200 per day. He said the federal observer basically helps prove that the fishery is legitimate and legal. He brings in 15-30,000 pounds of fish each trip; in 2012 he landed about 900,000 pounds of fish that went to local markets and restaurants.

Mr. Tom Roff, commercial fisherman for over 40 years, thanked the community for the wonderful support of the fishing industry. He said his 35-ton vessel is the Diane Susan, and he's in the drift/gillnet fishery.

Mr. Roff said all the Morro Bay fisheries are highly regulated and sustainable, and a vital industry here in Morro Bay. In 2012 the local fishing industry, which includes 90 active vessels, landed over 5 million pounds of fish in Morro Bay for a \$6.3 million dollar gross, which includes Dungeness crab, swordfish, albacore, squid, and king salmon just to name a few.

Mr. Roff described his drift/gillnet fishery and the strict regulations which began with the Marine Mammal Protection Act. He described his gear which includes 60 "pingers" that create an acoustic wall of sound to ward off marine mammals. He fishes 100 miles off the coast for swordfish, bluefin tuna, albacore, opah, thresher shark, among others, and that Morro Bay is the third largest swordfish landing on the West Coast. He recommended that people visit the Central Coast Cable Fisheries website to see the highly informative report by the MBCFO on the local fishing industry for 2012 and 2013.

Mr. Craig Barbre commercial fisherman since 1973, owns the vessel Preamble. Both he and his wife Marlyse primarily fish salmon and albacore; they are strictly trollers working out of California, Washington, Oregon, Canada, and Alaska. He said there are 8-10 boats out of Morro Bay that actively pursue albacore. His boat carries 26,000 pounds of fish, which he blast-freezes and sells directly to markets as sashimi; however, there are no longer facilities here in Morro Bay to support the current volume of this fishery nor are the buyers who have access to market the fish willing to come here. Canneries are no longer in the US either.

Mr. Barbre said the cycle for albacore had been very poor locally in the past 10-15 years, but the numbers have been increasing steadily over the past three years; so the fish seem to be coming back to California. He'd like to see the fishery return here so he can fish from home, but it would require a substantial freezer facility that would make this town more viable to the buyers as a hub for fishing.

Mr. Barbre said his second fishery is salmon, which he was able to fish locally for the first month and a half, and this has been the best salmon season since he began fishing, having 100-fish days and the price never falling. He said the ocean is the healthiest he's seen in years including giant balls of krill and baitfish. He described the dock for direct sales of fish to the public at Half Moon Bay, which is highly successful. He recommended that Morro Bay install a haulout facility, along with the freezer facility, and a direct-to-public fish sales dock, all of which would mean a boost for the local economy.

Mr. Bill Blue, commercial fisherman, said he's been fishing since 1974 and has two boats, the Brita Michelle and the Morning Light. He currently participates in the West Coast fixed-gear sablefish fishery, which is the most federally regulated fishery in the world. There are three segments of ways to harvest sablefish: 1. Open access, 2. Limited entry fixed-gear with permits or quota attached, and 3. IFQs. He reviewed the salmon closure and sablefish history and the changes in prices per pound. He agreed with Mr. Barbre that a lot more marketing could be done with freezer facilities in Morro Bay.

Mr. Blue also has fished for Dungeness crab since 1974, limited entry, and the bulk of the fishery participates normally from San Francisco north. This is a very sustainable fishery regulated by season/sex/size; so no way can the resource be fished out of existence, and it's a cyclic fishery. The last two years have seen as good crabbing locally as he's ever seen since he moved here. Mr. Blue explained in detail the Limited Entry Permit process, allotments, and regulations; he also must pay a daily observer on his boat.

Mr. Endersby asked another speaker, Mr. John Griesser, to step forward and discuss the marketing aspect of the fishing industry.

Mr. John Griesser, Executive Director of Central California Seafood Marketing Association (CCSMA) said all six of the members participate in the federal West Coast groundfish trawl program, a non-profit fisherman's cooperative association based locally. He said the mission is to build value and security for the members for their local fishing operations and their seafood products. CCSMA works to bring locally caught, wild seafood to consumers, to protect the health and productivity of fish stocks and habitat, and help to stabilize the fishing industry and activity in Morro Bay.

Mr. Griesser said he couldn't emphasize more the need for infrastructure in Morro Bay, which are aligned with marketing endeavors. He said the three main infrastructure needs are a freezer facility, a direct-sales fish dock, and a boat haulout. Each fisherman who spoke tonight emphasized the need for a boat haulout.

The Board thanked Mr. Griesser and all the fishermen for their participation in this important topic and their informative presentations.

Harbor Advisory Board member Bill Luffee departed at this time, 7:55. A five-minute break was then taken by the Board.

**C. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**C-1 Harbor Department Rules and Regulations: Change of Slip Regulations to Allow Qualified Commercial Fishermen to Keep Up to Two Different Vessels in Their Slip**

Mr. Endersby reviewed the item for the Board. Chair Eckles read the recommended change to Section 2, Paragraph A of the Harbor Department Rules and Regulations:

***A commercial fisherman with a qualified commercial fishing vessel, as defined, occupying a City slip may, at the fisherman's discretion, occupy said slip with a second qualified commercial fishing vessel owned by the fisherman in place of the first vessel provided that said second vessel is of an appropriate size for said slip, and that both vessels remain qualified commercial fishing vessels as defined. This allowance will in no way be used by said fisherman for the purposes of transfer of the slip to a second owner or owners of either vessel in order to bypass the commercial slip waiting list by the second owner or owners.***

Discussion by the Board. There was no public comment.

**Motion:** Mr. McClish moved that the Harbor Advisory Board recommend to City Council to approve changes to the Harbor Rules and Regulations to allow commercial fishermen with a second qualified vessel to keep either vessel in their slip without having to sublease or pay transient fees for the second vessel. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Phillips and carried unanimously.

**D. NEW BUSINESS**

**D-1 Proposed Change of Harbor Advisory Board By-Laws to Allow for Designated Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman's Association Seat to Have an Alternate Member or Members in Order to Ensure Association Attendance and Participation**

Mr. Endersby reviewed the item for the Board. Chair Eckles read the recommended language to be added to the Harbor Advisory Board By-Laws immediately under the list of member categories:

***However, the City Council and Harbor Advisory Board recognize the importance of the Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman's Organization (MBCFO) seat, and acknowledge that it is often difficult for commercial fishermen serving on the HAB to meet the attendance requirements due to the nature of their business. As such, up to two (2) Alternate MBCFO members to the Primary member may be appointed by the City Council in the same manner and fashion as regular appointments in order to stand-in for the Primary member in the event of the Primary member's absence.***

Discussion by the Board and Mr. Endersby on the number of alternates. There was no public comment.

**Motion:** Mr. McClish moved that the Harbor Advisory Board recommend to City Council to approve changes to the Harbor Advisory Board By-Laws that would allow for two alternates to the Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman's Organization (MBCFO) designated seat in order to facilitate full and complete participation of the MBCFO in Harbor Advisory Board proceedings. The Motion was seconded by Ms. Meissen and carried unanimously.

**E. DECLARATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Nov:** State Park Marina Operating Agreement  
State Park Marina Maintenance Schedule by Paul Gillen  
Rick Algert Presentation on ITQ  
Presentation by John Griesser on CCSMA
- Dec:** Morro Bay Clean Marina Certification  
Friends of the Harbor Department  
Liveboards Permit Status  
Planning for the Future of Power Plant

**F. ADJOURNMENT**

This meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.  
Submitted by,

Polly Curtis  
Harbor Department