

# THE COAST NEWS

---

Del Mar tries to fend off marine reserve designation

8/12/09

by Bianca Kaplanek

DEL MAR — In 1999, the California Legislature passed the Marine Life Protection Act to redesign the state's marine protected areas to safeguard marine life, habitats and ecosystems as well as improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by those ecosystems.

For a state intent on ensuring the protection of its 1,100-mile coastline, it sounds like a great plan. For Del Mar, it could be disastrous. Two of the three draft proposals being considered would identify the county's smallest city as a protected area. One would include the city's entire shoreline. Del Mar could have the unprecedented designation of being surrounded by a marine reserve area.

The designation comes with restrictions that could impact sand replenishment, the ability of lifeguards to provide safety, beach cleanup and the tourist industry.

Councilman Don Mosier said the main premise of the proposal is to protect biodiversity and naturally abundant marine ecosystems. But the area off the coast of Del Mar is dominated by sand and it lacks the shallow rocky reefs and thriving kelp forests that attract a greater number and diversity of fish and marine life, making it an inappropriate marine reserve.

In a letter to the executive director of the Marine Life Protection Act task force, the city also noted that a protected area designation could prohibit the dredging necessary for the success of the ongoing San Dieguito Lagoon restoration project. The letter further stated the area off the coast of Del Mar has been identified as a prime source of sand for beach replenishment.

The "no-take" prohibition that would accompany a reserve designation would severely limit the success of beach replenishment projects that are critical to the area's tourism-related economy, the letter stated.

Because Del Mar beaches attract more than 2 million beach-goers annually, the city already provides marine protection services such as lifeguard patrols and beach maintenance. There is concern that a marine reserve designation could limit the ability to provide these daily services, the letter stated.

Until recently, Mosier said the city had little input into the process. He attended a July workshop in Santa Monica and a stakeholders meeting with Mayor Crystal Crawford and Pat Vergne, the city's community services director and chief lifeguard. As a result,

they said, task force members are beginning to pay the city some attention.

Longtime resident Tensia Trejo thanked Mosier “for taking care of us.”

“I actually think they are going overboard,” she said. “I know there is endangered species, but I think this bit of no fishing in the river — I’m against it. I grew up here.

“I fished on the pier. I fished on the beach. I fished on the river. And guess what? The fish are still there.”

Mosier said a final recommendation on the designated MLPA areas is due in December.