

Fred Keeley: For ocean to thrive, balance is in order

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By Fred Keeley - Special to The Bee

Fred Keeley is the Santa Cruz County treasurer and a former California state assemblyman for the 27th District. He is also an appointee of the secretary of resources to the California Ocean Science Trust.

On Sunday, the world celebrated Ocean Day – an event that, when it debuted in 1992, marked the beginning of a tidal shift in the way we view our ocean resources. On Wednesday in Sacramento, California will take ocean protection to the next step when the California Fish and Game Commission reviews proposals for unprecedented ocean protection on our north-central coast.

In previous decades, the water off California's coast was managed based on abundance – our ocean was viewed as vast and limitless, and the goal was to take advantage of its resources to the fullest extent. As California's population grew, so too did pressures on our state's fish and ocean habitats. By the 1990s, it was clear that our ocean policy should be based on the threat of scarcity. We began to understand that in order for our abundant fish and wildlife to remain plentiful into the future, thoughtful, science-based, precautionary management was needed.

State leaders responded by crafting legislation designed to keep our ocean waters vibrant for the next generations. This foresight led to the passage of two landmark laws, the Marine Life Management Act and the Marine Life Protection Act, in 1998 and 1999 respectively, which I helped author and move through the state Legislature. These two laws made it state policy to manage California's ocean riches sustainably and with a mandate of protection. As a result of that legislation, the state is now moving forward to create a network of Marine Protected Areas up and down the coast. Based on sound science and community input, these underwater parks will help protect our dwindling ocean resources.

By all indications, our oceans are at risk. Both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission have reported in recent years on the numerous, serious threats facing our oceans and the need to address those threats immediately. Marine scientists tell us that Marine Protected Areas, in conjunction with other efforts, can reverse the trend of diminishing ocean life. Making ocean management decisions in California is no easy job. Ours is a large and diverse coast, and there are many voices that must be considered. The California Fish and Game Commission has worked through these challenges to create science-based networks of Marine Protected Areas along the Central Coast and in the Channel Islands off of Santa Barbara. When the commission meets Wednesday, its task is to prioritize rebuilding and conserving special and threatened places in our ocean, and also to find a fair balance between conservation and use.

Fortunately, the commission can draw upon a successful public process and rigorous scientific input as it makes its decision. Over the past year, a stakeholder group made up of coastal community members, educators, divers, fishermen and conservation interests has worked diligently to develop proposals for Marine Protected Areas for the state to consider. In April, a governor-appointed blue ribbon task force carefully considered this input and recommended adoption of a middle-ground proposal that reflected the input of all stakeholders. The task force plan would greatly improve protection of California's coast with very modest estimated economic impacts on current ocean users.

If we do it right – and I am confident that we can – California's Marine Protected Areas will create a lasting legacy of ocean preservation that all Californians can look back on with pride.

But it isn't enough to set the standard – you have to get others to join you. That's why Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman have created a coast-wide partnership with Oregon and Washington. Together the Pacific Coast states are committed to a healthy, productive ocean for our children.

Here in California, we've shown foresight by recognizing the challenges our ocean faces and by creating good policy to face them. Now we need to follow up on the promise of the law by protecting our special ocean places and committing adequate resources for the long-term management and enforcement of our new marine protected areas. Together we can work to extend these protections to the offshore species and habitats of our state's national marine sanctuaries. After all, we have a responsibility, as stewards of this shared public trust, to leave our ocean in as good or better shape than we found it.#

<http://www.sacbee.com/110/story/1001184.html>

**Editorial: Capitol suffers drought of ideas
Chico Enterprise-Record-6/10/08**

We're about to get answers to two questions that get asked again and again in this state.

First, do we need new reservoirs in California, or can we really conserve enough water to make new lakes unnecessary?

Second, when cities and farmers both want scarce water, do farmers automatically lose?

We've been saying for years that the state needs to get serious about building off-stream storage reservoirs, like the one that has been discussed and studied for ages in the Sites Valley west of Maxwell.

That reservoir seems no closer to being built today than it was 10 or 20 years ago. Democrats in the Legislature staunchly oppose new reservoirs just about anywhere, even in a place like Sites where a river system would not be dammed. (Instead, water would flow into the reservoir from the Sacramento River system when runoff is high.)

Water, like most commodities, is all about supply and demand. As the state's population grows and the water supply does not, a train wreck is looming. Some people say we can conserve our way toward a bright water future, but that seems overly optimistic.

We may find out in the next couple of summers whether conservation alone will work.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a drought Wednesday, the first statewide drought declaration since 1991. Schwarzenegger said the state would speed water transfers to areas with the worst shortages, would help farmers who suffer losses and would help local water districts with conservation efforts.

The governor said he would name two "water czars," one to coordinate conservation and the other to speed water transfers around the state.

We're still not sure what all that means, but we have our suspicions — mainly, that Lake Oroville will get a lot lower as north state water is sent south, and that farmers stand a better chance of getting disaster assistance than their usual allotment of water used for growing crops.

This is where a coherent water policy would come in handy. Instead of pitting north against south, farms against cities and Republicans against Democrats, we'd at least feel better because the state is working on the problem.

There's no doubt conservation will help. But even if every household in the state cut water use by 10 percent, eventually we'll need to figure out how to store more water.

At the same time, we have to protect our food supply and the north state's agricultural way of life. Taking water from agriculture and moving it around the state only enables poorly planned communities. If people would quit building communities in arid places with no water supply, we wouldn't have a problem.

Let's hope this new conservation czar, whatever that is, can enlighten the masses. But until legislators get to work and approve more water storage, this problem won't go away. #

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