

**Statement to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department)**  
**By the Member Tribes of InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council**  
**Regarding Kelp and Seaweed**  
**For June 2, 2020 Webinar on**  
**Regulations Governing the Commercial Harvest of Wild Kelp and Marine Algae**

[Buffie will open by introducing herself in her Northern Pomo language.] My name is Buffie Schmidt. I serve as Vice Chairperson of the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians. I also am Sherwood Valley's appointed representative to the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council, which holds 4,000 acres of protected land along the Sinkyone coast.

The following statement is from the ten federally recognized Tribes comprising the Sinkyone Council. The participating Tribes are: Cahto Tribe of Laytonville Rancheria; Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians; Hopland Band of Pomo Indians; Pinoleville Pomo Nation; Potter Valley Tribe; Redwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians; Robinson Rancheria of Pomo Indians; Round Valley Indian Tribes; Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians; and Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians.

Each Tribe is sovereign, with inherent powers of self-government and self-determination. We are the original and longstanding guardians of our traditional lands and waters of the north coast region. This is an intergenerational responsibility and right: to protect, maintain, utilize, and revitalize the marine and coastal environments of our Tribal territories. This includes our diverse cultural ways of life and the kelp and seaweed that remain vital for the continuation of those ways of life. For countless generations, and despite numerous obstacles, we have maintained our vital relationship with marine, coastal and inland ecosystems. And, with the kelp and seaweed that are so vital to our peoples' nutrition, health, ceremonies, and other cultural aspects of life.

The Tribes are engaged in Government-to-Government Consultation with the Department regarding our concerns about kelp and seaweed. Our engagement is based on our cultural responsibility to tend and maintain these species for the sake of ALL life on this planet. Tribal gathering and tending of kelp and seaweed is vital for ensuring health, balance and abundance to the marine ecosystem. But Tribes' ability to practice cultural ways is hindered by antiquated laws and policies that ignore our role in the ecosystem and our inherent right to gather these species.

We, along with many others, are very concerned about the many threats to kelp and seaweed. We know they are being severely impacted by increasing pressures of harvesting, climate change, warming ocean waters, acidification, pollution, coastal development, purple urchins, and other factors. We are very concerned that the Department is unable to provide sufficient oversight or monitoring for commercial kelp and seaweed harvesting activities.

The currently proposed regulatory changes to commercial harvesting are a start, but the Tribes do not believe they go far enough. The Department must develop even more restrictive take limits, and address stewardship, monitoring, and enforcement needs regarding commercial harvest. We support longterm and comprehensive planning for better management of kelp and seaweed species. Our goal is for Tribes to be recognized as legitimate managers of marine ecosystems to better protect and revitalize kelp and seaweed species, and our cultural ways of life. The reality is that our people have been continually and successfully managing the ecosystems for thousands of years.

We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for listening to and considering our concerns.