

Message from the Executive Director

The 40th anniversary of Earth Day in 2010 initially promised celebrations and renewed efforts for a healthy environment. Instead, it will be remembered as the day the Deepwater Horizon sank into the Gulf, taking with it 11 workers and expelling an ominous oil slick to herald the devastation to come. What lessons from this tragedy can each of us bring to our stewardship of California waterways?

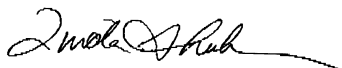
First, the Gulf disaster calls on us to face the widespread effects of our dependence on fossil fuels. Oil spills are just part of the damage; global climate change will profoundly impact fish and wildlife, water supply and quality, habitat integrity, and coastal infrastructure. California Coastkeeper Alliance took action in 2010 to advance state and national efforts to adapt to climate change, particularly to projected sea level rise along California's coast. The Alliance's adaptation efforts aim both to establish sustainable approaches to expected climate impacts and to serve as a constant reminder to decisionmakers and the public of the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions now.

Building ecosystem resiliency also helps combat climate change and other environmental threats. In 2010 the Alliance continued its efforts to build marine ecosystem resiliency through California's landmark Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), helping to advance the adoption of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Southern California Bight and working toward the adoption of a similar network along the North Coast. The Alliance also worked to stop pollution discharges into state's 34 marine "areas of special biological significance," which will improve the health of the MPAs that overlap these unique and sensitive ocean areas. The MLPA's Science Advisory Team found the biggest water quality threat to placement of Southern California MPAs to be intakes and discharges from coastal power generating facilities. In 2010, the Alliance successfully led a broad coalition to ensure the State Water Board's adoption of a strong Policy to phase out the use of these destructive power plant cooling systems. Implementation of this new Policy will both protect coastal ecosystems and advance use of more efficient, modern energy generating systems.

Finally, we each must consider how we move from reflection to personal action. One of the most essential methods for combating climate change and other environmental threats is to encourage individual environmental stewardship. To this end, the Alliance held several workshops in 2010 along the coast to educate interested people about state processes for identifying and restoring impaired coastal waterways. This effort not only resulted in a significant increase in public input into this clean water process, but it also built a network of new advocates ready to act as coastal stewards on other issues. The Alliance provided advocates with new tools for local enforcement action as well, in the form of online maps clearly identifying the most egregious water pollution law violators.

The Alliance celebrates the good work of California's 12 regional Waterkeepers, whose patrol areas span the coast from the Oregon border to San Diego. The Alliance's 2010 Annual Report provides detailed information on the Alliance's and member Waterkeepers' efforts and progress in shifting the tide of action toward a healthy California environment.

We look forward to working with you in 2011 and beyond to achieve clean, flowing waterways and vibrant ocean ecosystems for Californians, and for our future.



Linda Sheehan