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 Russian RIVERKEEPER
 San Francisco BAYKEEPER
 Monterey COASTKEEPER
 San Luis Obispo COASTKEEPER
 Santa Barbara CHANNELKEEPER
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 Los Angeles WATERKEEPER
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 Inland Empire WATERKEEPER
 San Diego COASTKEEPER

June 17, 2015

Governor Jerry Brown
 State Capitol, Suite 1173
 Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: (916) 558-3160

California State Legislature
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814
Via email to individual offices

RE: California’s Marine Protected Areas Impacted by Santa Barbara Oil Spill

Dear Governor Brown and Honorable Members of the California State Legislature:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our deep concern regarding the potential **impacts of the Refugio oil spill on the state’s recently adopted network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and the importance of comprehensively addressing impacts to MPAs in future clean up response and restoration efforts.** In the immediate aftermath of the spill, attention to this devastating incident along the pristine Gaviota coastline has been justifiably focused on areas directly offshore from the oil spill and the popular Refugio State Beach and El Capitan State Beach. To date, potential impacts to several MPAs both up and downcoast from the spill have received significantly less attention.

Completed in 2012, California’s network of marine protected areas is the largest in the United States, containing a wide range of marine and coastal representative habitats and ecological communities. Impacts from the Refugio Oil Spill will likely undermine the intended benefits of the MPAs to the marine ecosystems that support the state’s booming tourism, recreation and fishing economies by degrading the

health of ocean habitats, negatively affecting species diversity and productivity, interfering with scientific study of the areas and precluding recreational use and enjoyment by the public.

As shown in the map below, the extent of the Plains All-American oil spill has reached the Kashtayit State Marine Conservation Area to the north and covered the Naples State Marine Conservation Area and Campus Point State Marine Reserves to the south, fouling these special areas that have been set aside for long-term protection. Shortly after the Refugio Oil Spill, unusual tar balls and other evidence of oil has been observed on beaches throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties, raising concern that the spill's effects may ultimately extend far beyond the originally mapped area of impact and affect many additional MPAs.

We appreciate the Office of Spill Prevention and Response's (OSPR) efforts to update its spill contingency plans to acknowledge the presence of MPAs along the coast. We recommend that the state specifically call out the affected MPAs as sensitive ecological habitats meriting priority attention as part of the Refugio Oil Spill response and restoration. **We urge that the Natural Resource Damage Assessment conducted for the Refugio Oil Spill recognize the special value of the impacted MPAs, adequately quantifies damage to these MPAs, and requires sufficient and appropriate restoration to offset the loss of ecological benefits and public use of these areas, as well as comprehensive monitoring to fully assess any long-term impacts of the spill.**

California's considerable investment in monitoring of its MPA network may assist in assessing impacts of the Refugio Oil Spill. Initial baseline monitoring of the South Coast MPAs was just completed, with much of this effort supported by \$4 million in Proposition 84 funds. This state investment established a baseline to measure ecological and socioeconomic changes related to MPAs and also to provide a reference from which to measure broader ocean health. Citizen science monitoring programs can also provide important data on potential oil spill impacts.

The Refugio Oil Spill will have tragic and lasting effects along a beloved stretch of California coastline including several ecologically important areas that were recently protected specifically to ensure a sustainable and thriving ocean for future generations of Californians. Unfortunately, in light of the spill, the state may need to recalibrate expectations of MPA health and recovery. While nothing can be done to reverse the impacts of the spill, we are relying on your leadership to make sure everything is done to sufficiently monitor the affected MPAs and restore them to greatest extent possible.

Sincerely,



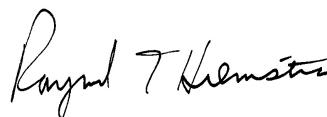
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