

# **Exhibit B**

## **Public Correspondence**

**Public correspondence received as  
of February 10, 2021**

## Lisa Kingsley

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**From:** Ann Vileisis <avileisis@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 9, 2021 2:34 PM  
**To:** odfw.commission@state.or.us  
**Subject:** \_\|/\_ Potentially Risky URL in Email - Click Carefully \_\|/\_ Comment letter for Friday's ODFW Commission meeting re Agenda Item B: Red abalone recreational fishery closure extension  
**Attachments:** Ann Vileisis to ODFW Commission\_2.9.2021.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

**Categories:** Forwarded to Fish

Greetings!

Please find attached here a comment letter for this Friday's ODFW Commission meeting regarding Agenda Exhibit B: red abalone recreational fishery closure extension.

Please confirm that you have received this letter.

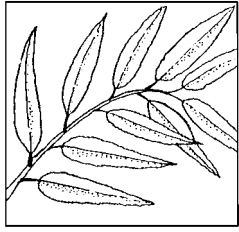
Much thanks!

Ann Vileisis

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### Ann Vileisis

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To: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission  
Re: Agenda Exhibit B: Red Abalone, recreational fishery closure extension  
Date: February 9, 2021

Dear Chair Wahl and ODFW Commission members:

As a South Coast resident and author of a book about the history of West Coast abalone recently published by Oregon State University Press, *Abalone: the remarkable history and uncertain future of California's abalone*, I am writing in strong support of the ODFW staff recommendation to extend the current closure of Oregon's recreational Red Abalone fishery.

As staff has indicated in its excellent report on the troubling conditions that have led to this situation, Oregon's Red Abalone currently fall below the established threshold of density needed for reproduction. These slow-growing, intermittently-reproducing animals are extremely vulnerable to environmental stresses and need a continued time-out from fishing to allow for recovery.

The proposed closure extension is in near alignment with action recently taken by the State of California to extend its fishing closure for another 5 years. Since we know that re-building Red Abalone populations will only occur on a decadal scale, I would ask, why not have Oregon's closure run in tandem with California's? Otherwise, this matter will need to be revisited in 3 years to avoid differential regulations that could negatively impact Oregon's Red Abalone.

This matter merits your attention in a broader context, as well. We often hear about the climate crisis in abstract terms, but the recent history of abalone is like a post card from the future already showing us what the climate crisis looks like in real time.

If you're not familiar with the situation south of Oregon's border, in just a very short period (2013-2017), a "Perfect Storm" of marine heat waves, epidemic disease, and related trophic cascade resulted in the collapse of northern California's long-stable kelp forests, the loss of a >\$30 million/year Red Abalone sport fishery, and put the future of these long-cherished animals at risk. (Abalone eat kelp.) These ominous kelp-die offs have fingered north into Oregon as well. We seem to be facing the unraveling of critical food webs in many places.

As I see it, abalone are sentinel animals that clearly demonstrate what havoc environmental stressors can wreak upon our marine life. Given the increasing likelihood of marine heat waves,

epidemic diseases, and ocean acidification, taking a precautionary approach with the marine animals we use for fisheries has never been more important.

In addition, the situation with Red Abalone and their lesser-known cousins—Flat Abalone—point to a troubling gap in our system for conserving wildlife. With ODFW’s primary focus on species that are fished and hunted, other animals slipping toward imperiled status don’t get the attention and support they need until they literally become threatened or endangered species—at which point conservation becomes far more costly and difficult.

As it stands, ODFW has limited data and means for assessing Red Abalone and even less for evaluating Flat Abalone—an animal that was commercially overfished in southern Oregon until about ten years ago and is now considered a state conservation strategy species. Through anecdotal reports, we are aware that Flat Abalone now faces dire conditions owing to kelp die-offs in many areas off Oregon’s South Coast. But with limited capacity for monitoring, ODFW does not really know how these already at-risk animals—and other, even lesser-known marine species—are faring in the face of unprecedented environmental stresses.

I commend ODFW’s marine invertebrate staff for seeking out external grants and collaborative research opportunities to learn more about the status of Oregon’s troubled abalone. Ideally, they could present you with more information about whether there is anything further—beyond the extended fishery closure—that needs to be done to shore up the kelp forest ecosystems that abalone and other marine life depends on. Might we need a set of managed kelp-forest oases to help conserve biodiversity and resilience into the future? What additional research and resources are needed moving forward so that ODFW has the knowledge needed to recommend precautionary and proactive steps, if need be, when you revisit this situation in 3 or 5 years?

It’s important for the ODFW Commission—as the body with official leadership responsibility to formulate policies to ensure that our State’s fish and wildlife are protected “for use and enjoyment by present and future generations”—to keep in mind what the plight of this one animal means on a broader scale. The recent history of our abalone gives another blaring wake-up call about growing risks and immense challenges to our cherished state’s fish and wildlife.

There are no easy answers, but I think that greater proactive attention to the resilience of our marine ecosystems will be needed. I hope you can find ways to support ODFW in giving these urgent issues the attention they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Vileisis".

Ann Vileisis