



## For Immediate Release

### California Delegation Shares Successes and Lessons on Marine Protected Areas with Global Audience

**Panelists will highlight milestones reached by north coast tribes and state through historic conservation of marine wilderness and protection of indigenous rights**

**Salamanca, Spain – 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013**—The California Ocean Wilderness Delegation – a group of California American Indian tribes, the California Natural Resources Agency, and fishing and environmental organizations – will convene tomorrow at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Wilderness Congress in Salamanca, Spain to share the remarkable achievement in marine conservation realized through a collaborative partnership and the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative, which established a network of marine protected areas along California’s 1,770 km shoreline – from the state’s border with Mexico, to its border with Oregon – approximately the linear distance from Salamanca, Spain to Croatia.

The delegation – which includes representatives of the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council and Smith River Rancheria of the Tolowa Indian Tribe, State of California Natural Resources Agency Secretary John Laird, California Ocean Science Trust, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and others – will share with a global audience the decade-long conservation achievement in the United States to establish the California statewide network of marine protected areas. The result is a vast network of 124 marine protected areas designed to protect California’s imperiled marine ecosystems and promote recovery of depleted marine life while preserving north coast tribes’ cultural ways of life.

For more than 20 affected tribes, this is the first marine regulation that recognizes the inherent right of tribes to maintain traditional subsistence ways of fishing and gathering finfish, shellfish and seaweeds in their ancestral territories, as they have for millennia. As InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council’s Chairwoman, Priscilla Hunter said, **“This is an opportunity to take these lessons and success stories to other parts of the world and work together on solutions.** The Sinkyone Council focused on working with the State of California to protect marine ecosystems while defending the traditional cultures of Native tribal peoples who depend upon their ocean environment.”

The delegation will focus on the success story of the Northern California region efforts that created 19 marine protected areas designed to protect marine life while also safeguarding the tribes’ cultural ways of life. The discussions will highlight how the innovative conservation approach utilized in this region offers a new model for partnerships among indigenous peoples, governments, scientists, and marine managers around the world. The tribes and the State of California set a precedent in the United States with the tribes playing a vital role in the

outcome and providing leadership in tandem with other stakeholders to create an historic marine network that recognizes the tribes' inherent right to continue their ancestral fishing and gathering uses without additional restrictions.

"We worked with the State and many stakeholders to achieve a different kind of conservation," said Executive Director of the Sinkyone Council, Hawk Rosales. "The tribes' cultural ways and spiritual beliefs informed every step of their engagement in this process. For tribal peoples, protection of the ocean and the traditional cultural use of marine resources are inseparable concepts."

Secretary Laird, who on October 8 will deliver the keynote address at the **Symposium on Science & Stewardship to Protect & Sustain Wilderness Values** agrees, "We worked to build trust between sovereign tribal governments and the State of California, and to integrate tribal cultural uses into the design of the new marine protected areas planned for California's north coast." "This process stands out as a model for empowering citizens and respecting tribal traditions while creating the first statewide network of 'Yosemites of the sea,'" added Karen Garrison, Co-Director of NRDC's Oceans Program.

On 4 October, the delegation will introduce their unique conservation story at the premier screening of a film entitled, *Stewards of the Wild Sea* (<http://youtu.be/GaMyDleOvuQ>). On 9-10 October, the delegation will conduct panel sessions on:

1. The structure, purpose and goals of the Marine Life Protection Act and its Initiative to reverse dwindling fisheries and conserve critical marine and estuarine habitats by establishing a statewide network of marine protected areas;
2. The collaborative planning process that brought tribes, the state and various stakeholders together for the first time to protect critical marine wildlife and habitats and indigenous peoples' ocean-based subsistence practices; and
3. Important lessons learned during the process of conserving California's ocean wilderness, and the applicability of both this process and the principles of traditional ecological knowledge to marine conservation efforts worldwide.

## BACKGROUND

The California Ocean Wilderness Delegation consists of tribal and state governmental representatives, and environmental leaders who helped design California's recently completed marine protected area) network. InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council is a consortium of 10 sovereign tribal nations, and the first-ever intertribal land trust. Smith River Rancheria of the Tolowa Indian Tribe is a sovereign California tribal nation located on the California-Oregon border that is leading efforts to establish west coast inter-tribal governance of marine resources. Working with environmental organizations, scientists, recreational and commercial fishing interests, and state and local agencies, Sinkyone Council, Smith River Rancheria and other tribes played pivotal roles in helping establish a critical marine protected area network designed to protect critical ocean wilderness and traditional subsistence gathering, harvesting and fishing practices vital to the cultural survival of more than 20 north coast tribal nations. This ecological and cultural success has marked a new approach by the State of California to working with tribal nations to protect their cultural needs and advance stewardship of native ecosystems and wildlife.

In 1999, California's state legislature enacted the Marine Life Protection Act to establish regional networks of marine protected areas along 1,770 km of shoreline to help reverse dwindling fisheries and permanently conserve marine and estuarine ecosystems to promote ocean wilderness. The Act's Initiative process, based on science guidelines, tribal engagement, and robust public participation, has produced the only statewide, science-based network of marine protected areas in the United States.