

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



Oil platforms play vital marine role

The July 21 editorial "Ripping Out the Rigs?" evoked the kind of rational thinking we hoped would prevail in 2001, when we and many other Californians concerned about the state of our marine resources pressed for passage of Senate Bill 1.

As the editorial noted, this practical, well-crafted legislation was vetoed by the governor at the 11th hour because he was pressured by radical elements of the environmental movement who care little about saving the millions upon millions of sea creatures that have made the platforms their home and breeding grounds. The governor acted because he needed "environmental credentials" to be re-elected and the "environmentalists" who oppose preservation of these habitat structures care only about tweaking the oil companies yet again.

Senate Bill 1 took exactly the same tack the editorial suggested -- a case-by-case examination of each rig during decommissioning to determine if the undersea structure should be preserved as artificial reef. You correctly urged that the debate move away from emotional anti-oil rhetoric and toward consideration based on merits and science.

The science recently received a major boost with the publishing of Dr. Milton Love's six-year study highlighting the benefits of the rigs as productive habitat. Repeated statewide polling in California shows a huge majority supports this concept. Notably, support was highest in the Santa Barbara region.

Because our ocean resources are at risk, we must think about possible solutions, and the two-dozen platforms that remain in place provide a critical option that, once lost, cannot be restored.

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