

# Giant Pacific Octopus



Photo by Janna Nichols

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**Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting**

**June 7, 2013**

# Presentation

- **Objective: Present draft management options from advisory group process and summarize public comment received to date**
- **Background**
- **Process and schedule review**
- **Current management**
- **Management options**
- **Summary of public comment received**
- **Commission discussion**
- **Public hearing**

# Background

- Biology –
  - Range: California to Alaska and south to Japan
  - Depth: intertidal to 750M
  - Size: Weight range 40 - 100 lbs., average maximum length 15 ft.
  - Lifespan: 3-5 years; Up to 230 day incubation, females lay 20-100K eggs.
- Status –
  - Lack a formal status assessment
  - Biology and harvest management suggests GPOs are healthy in Puget Sound.
- Seacrest Cove Incident –
  - 10/31/12 – Giant Pacific Octopus legally harvested at Seacrest Cove 2
  - 11/8/12 – Director briefed Commission and heard public testimony
  - 12/21/12 – Commission briefing on three petitions to protect GPOs
  - 1/11/13 – Commission directed staff to develop options through public process.

# Process and Schedule

- March 2013: Convene GPO advisory group and develop draft options for consideration
- April 12, 2013: Commission briefing on draft options and recommendations – Commission refinement of options
- April 23-24, 2013: Public workshops on draft options for protection of GPO (Port Townsend and Seattle)
- April 15 – May 31<sup>st</sup>: Collected comments via website
- June 2013: Commission meeting and public testimony on draft options and recommendations
- August 2013: Commission action on draft options for protection of GPO in Puget Sound

# Current Management

- 9 Conservation Areas
- 16 Marine Preserves
- Hood Canal (MCA 12) closed to GPO and other species
- Harvest – Year-round, daily limit 1; Harvest by hand or instrument that does not penetrate the body; legal to retain if hooked while fishing
- Less than 50 lbs. annually



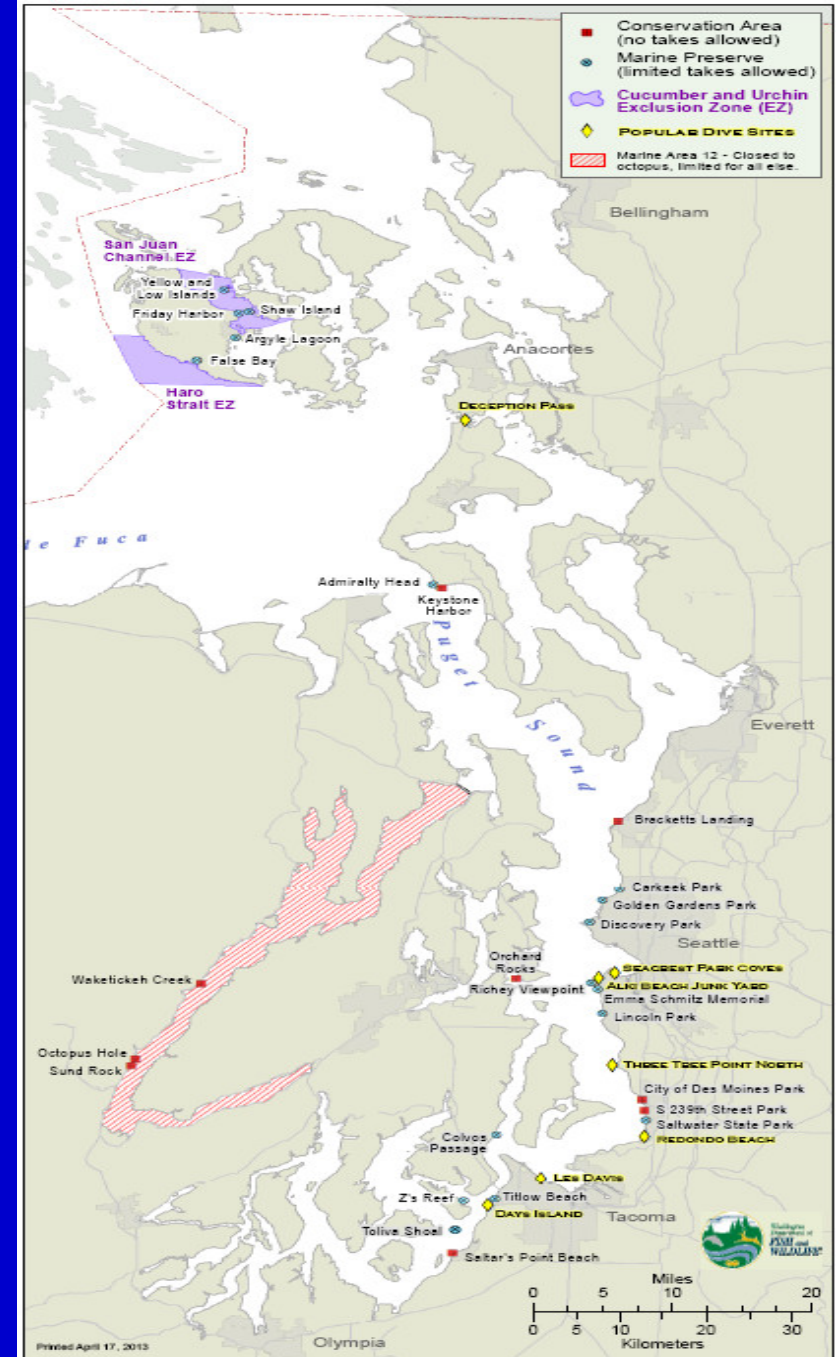
# Management Options

- Option A: Status quo – no changes to current regulations.
- Option B: Marine Preserve – no recreational harvest of ALL species
  - Redondo Beach
  - Seacrest Park Coves 1, 2 and 3 excluding fishing pier
- Option C: Marine Preserves – no recreational harvest of Giant Pacific Octopuses at popular dive sites in Puget Sound
  - Redondo Beach
  - Three Tree Point North
  - Seacrest Park Coves 1, 2 and 3
  - Les Davis
  - Alki Beach Junk Yard
  - Days Island Wall
  - Deception Pass
- Option D: Puget Sound closure to recreational harvest of GPO



# Management Options

- Yellow diamonds show location of 7 popular dive sites in options B and C



# Comments Received

Over 400 Comments received

Percentage of comments supporting option

Option A – 14%

Option B – 6%

Option C – 31%

Option D – 49%



# Comments on Option A

## Status Quo

- Support
  - Yes, should be managed according to abundance and harvest levels
  - Seems like few are being taken – could consider a catch record card
  - Consider outreach to dive community for voluntary protection
  - Going overboard on solution when it was just one incident
  - Use science to determine if protection from harvest is needed
- Oppose
  - Some level of protection is needed, rules must be same for everyone
  - Needs additional protection for viewing opportunities
  - Consider a size limit to protect adult females about to spawn
  - This majestic creature should be protected from any harvest

# Comments on Option B

## New Marine Preserve at Two Sites

- Support
  - Too little is known to allow a directed dive fishery
  - Request citizen support in monitoring, reports, and observations
  - Divers choose to dive to view wildlife
  - There is a lack of protection for the GPO and marine life
- Oppose
  - Resource appears to be in good shape
  - It is too broad and is not needed
  - We need more harvest opportunity not less
  - We need to manage for multiple purposes

# Comments on Option C

## New Marine Preserve at 7 Sites

- Support
  - Protection for octopuses is needed at popular dive sites
  - They should not be harvested in general public use spaces
  - Would provide additional protection and harvest opportunity
- Oppose
  - Many of the most popular shore dive sites are already no-take
  - Reef structure and support facilities paid for and maintained with sportsmen's user fees
  - They are not endangered so do not take away recreational opportunities

# Comments on Option D

## Puget Sound Closure to Harvest of GPO

- Support
  - To preserve a precious resource
  - GPOs draw divers from outside our region providing dollars to economy
  - See no reason for hunting this animal
- Oppose
  - We already have a number of no take areas
  - Several of these sites are fishing reefs created to enhance fishing
  - No scientific basis for doing this
  - Don't take away fishing opportunities

# Questions



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# Public Hearing



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