



The Pinniped Press
A Newsletter by Noyo Center for Marine Science Volunteers
August 2026, Vol. 5, Special Edition

Special Pinniped Press in Honor of Dobie Dolphin

Toni Rizzo

Dobie Dolphin, beloved Noyo Center volunteer and Pinniped Press (PP) contributor, passed on July 2, 2026, after a long illness. Her passing has left a hole in the PP team that will be impossible to fill. Dobie was always upbeat, kind and generous. She wrote interesting, accurate articles that hardly needed any editing, and she always completed them by the due date. I really miss her as a friend and enthusiastic Noyo Center volunteer. According to Donna Worster, PP contributor and Noyo Center board member, "As of July 2026, she had written twenty-one articles in the thirty-three issues we have published." Dobie tried to write positive articles about what people around the world are doing to protect and restore the marine environment and its inhabitants, but she didn't hesitate to call out the harms caused by climate change and commercial interests.

Dobie remained positive and upbeat throughout her illness. "Dobie was a joy and inspiration. Her fighting spirit and energy continued right up to her last email to me. Her sense of justice for humans, animals, and the ocean was as big as she was petite. She will be missed," wrote Wendi Felson, PP contributor and Noyo board member. Two days before she died, Dobie wrote from the hospital that she was working on her next article on restoration of the kelp forests on the Mendocino coast. Jim Rolfe, a PP contributor, has written an article on this topic, printed in this issue, as a tribute to Dobie.

Linda Francis, another member of the PP team, wrote, "Dobie was always so kind and thoughtful and friendly and huggable and such a good listener and always smiling and welcoming." "Her name must be a part of the Whale House," said Donna Worster. "She and I had a secret love for Betty [the blue whale that will be displayed in the Whale House]. A gracious lady with an iron will is part of Betty's history and should be recognized."



In Honor of Dobie Dolphin - continued

Together with Dobie's longtime friends in Albion, the Noyo Center is holding a memorial for her on August 23, from 2:00-5:00 pm at the Field Station in Noyo Harbor. Please join us to honor this remarkable woman whose spirit touched so many lives.

We are devoting this PP issue to Dobie, including articles about her, vignettes and photos from friends and family, and articles she wrote for the PP.



Dobie and Elizabeth Pippin at a Noyo Center event.

"Dobie was such a beloved part of the afterschool program this past year, and such a wonderful, warm presence any time I would cross paths with her. I always appreciated her calm, steady manner and deep respect for all living beings, whether helping young children to understand the ocean or regarding the wondrous lives of the creatures on display at the Noyo Center. I know that she really loved her communities, both here and in Mexico, and always wanted to do good work wherever she went. Seeing her walk into the Noyo Center always gave me a deep sense of steady peace, just knowing that she was there to help me with some group or another; she seemed to appreciate and cherish each interaction with the young kids, no matter how wild or unruly. She regarded children with the utmost respect and reverence for their individuality, their personhood, and their potential, and children seemed to become calmer and more introspect in her presence. It was like she brought a bubble of peace everywhere she went, and the people who were lucky enough to be near her had a chance to step into it and become more grounded, steady and affirmed. I deeply respect her and am honored to have been a small part of her beautiful time at the Noyo Center and on our planet. I'll really miss her. Thank you, Dobie Dolphin, for inspiring me to lead with kindness every day."

Reesha Katcher, Noyo Center Education Coordinator



Dobie and Alix Phillips at CasparFest.

Susan Heimowitz aka Dobie Dolphin: A chat with Dobie's brother Dan

Linda Francis

Dobie was born Susan Heimowitz in 1948 in the same Brooklyn Hospital as her only sibling, Dan, who had been born two and a half years earlier. The family lived in northern Manhattan in Morningside Heights, a white Catholic neighborhood near Harlem. Dobie came from a blue-collar family. Her dad had only a half year of college then worked in a factory, and later in an office job. Her mother worked in the garment industry, buying and selling clothes. Growing up, Mom wanted to control Dobie, however Dad was much more liberal and forgiving. When Susan changed her name to Dobie, both Mom and Dad were supportive of the change.

While most of the other kids in the neighborhood went to the local Catholic schools, Dobie and Dan went to public school in Harlem starting in elementary school and through high school. This exposed them to a wide variety of people and the experience of being a member of a minority. While it was a bit of a challenge for Dan, Dobie thrived. She was outgoing and friendly and had few problems adjusting. She was also very smart, indeed doing seventh and eighth grade in one year. She played the recorder when young and later the piano.



Dobie with parents and brother Dan.

Dobie was an early feminist. She grew up in a neighborhood of mostly boys. She wanted to join in on all the fun team games, particularly basketball. But no girls were allowed, so she was left playing "exciting" games like hopscotch with the other girls. She much preferred action, so bike riding gave her the equal opportunity to join in. Dan mentions being envious of Dobie; she not only had more friends, but was first to ride a bike. Highlights growing up included spending summers in an upstate New York cabin complete with a swimming pool, plenty of hiking, and Dobie getting to play basketball with Dan and others. Other good memories include taking the subway to the beach or other day trips to the country with family or groups of friends.

Dobie's brother Dan was the first in the family to attend college and got a MA in Clinical Social Work and became a psychoanalyst. Dobie also attended college, made life-long friends including Helen Jacobs, and took lots of classes but never graduated. Rather she heard the call from the Summer of Love in San Francisco and she answered. She and Helen joined a commune and headed back to the land.

While Dan and Dobie's lives went in different directions, they were always close. Dan's sadness at Dobie's passing came strongly through the telephone line from his home in Greece. And I could also hear the smile in his voice as he described his sister as one who was always independent and determined and lived her life on her own terms.

Dobie Dolphin

Helen Jacobs

"Dobie was one of my closest friends; we met when I was 17 and she was 18. During the last 7 years, when she moved back to Albion we lived within a 5 minute walk of one another and saw each other often. She loved volunteering with the Noyo Center. She was always thinking about her articles for the Pinniped Press or about various fundraising events she could be part of." Helen Jacobs

Dobie Dolphin was born in 1948. She grew up in Manhattan, moved to Northern California in 1968, and moved to Albion in 1970. She was an adventurer who felt she could do anything she set her mind to. On the Mendocino Coast, Dobie became a carpenter and a fisherwoman. She loved the ocean, and enjoyed kayaking, snorkeling, diving for abalone, and gathering edible seaweed.

Dobie Dolphin – continued



Dobie (right) with Helen Jacobs (left) and friend.

Dobie was also an activist. She protested the Vietnam War throughout its duration. In 1979 she went to the Diablo Canyon nuclear power facility to protest the power plant, which was dangerously close to active seismic fault lines. She was continually active in the movement to protect the coast from offshore oil drilling. Also, she traveled to Nicaragua to help with a building project.

Dobie spent many years camping on the beach at Tenacatita Bay in Jalisco, Mexico, and became active in the struggle to protect the beautiful beach from overdevelopment. She later moved to the small town of Rebasito (*El Rebasito de Apazulco*), just a few miles from the beach. There, she gardened, harvested coconuts and mangoes, and became a beloved part of the community.

In 2019 Dobie was diagnosed with cancer. She moved back to Albion to be close to friends and have access to medical treatment. She became involved in the Noyo Center, and volunteered whenever her health allowed. Dobie enjoyed writing for Pinniped Press, beach clean-up days, and all ocean-protection activities. She will be missed and will never be forgotten.

Volunteer Highlight: Dobie Dolphin

By Linda Francis

Note: Linda interviewed Dobie and wrote this article in October 2023.

Dobie's story starts with her name. In 1965 she found herself at Buffalo State University. Of the 12 women in the dorm suite, six of them, including Dobie were Susans. Dobie was the nickname given her to keep all the Susans straight.

Dobie headed to California in 1967 and was accepted into UC Berkeley but chose not to attend. She lived in the bay area making her way with temp jobs, selling the Berkley Barb, and renting a typewriter to type up master thesis. She hitchhiked up and down the coast and into the mountains. She enjoyed the iconic music venues of the era and the music greats of the day.

During this time Dobie changed her last name to Dolphin. As a part of a protest against the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant she along with a cohort of protestors arrived by sea to reach the plant where upon arrival they all got arrested. Their lawyer advised them to give any name they wanted. Dobie picked Dolphin.

Dobie's protests and arrests continued at the Lawrence Livermore lab where she was arrested twice, once with 800 other women. Later, a \$99 flight from Oakland to Belgium caught her eye, so she was off to Europe and the Canary Islands for four months.

When not traveling or protesting, Dobie lived in the bay area. One day scootering on a Honda 90 during the People's Park days she got tear gassed and decided it was time to move elsewhere. Serendipitously she got a letter from a friend who lived in Albion.

Arriving in Mendocino County, she realized she was a country girl at heart and fell in love with the area. She moved into a small one room cabin with two others. She cobbled together work, from building homes that stand to this day, to fishing salmon in her own small boat. It was here her love of the ocean was born. Dobie spent over 25 years diving for abalone, fish and sea urchins, first with her mentor Alan Graham (aka Captain Fathom) and then in her skiff or kayak in the undersea gardens between Albion and Salmon Creek. Giant sea stars of every color, glistening kelp, and seals swimming up to her informed her life and work.

Dobie was active in the Ocean Protection Coalition working to protect the coast from offshore oil drilling. She was co-founder of BOND (Ban Ocean Nuclear Dumping), formed when the Navy proposed scuttling nuclear submarines off the Mendocino Coast.

Volunteer Highlight: Dobie Dolphin - continued

In the mid 1970s the Baja Mexico Road opened. Dobie drove to the tip of Baja, ferried to Puerto Vallarta, then south where the winds of fate landed her at the end of the dirt road to Tenacatita: a beautiful beach with a sea filled with fish, scallops, clams, and a weekly truck delivering ice and beer.

During this time, Greg Grantham, of College of the Redwoods, encouraged her to become a fishery observer for National Marine Fisheries Service in the Aleutian Islands. After surviving a three-week training, she was assigned to a factory fish vessel. Hard work, but three months gave her enough money to live in Mexico the rest of the year. After three years of working on assorted vessels, she bought land in Tenacatita where she moved permanently in 1999, until a blood disease required a move back to the states in 2019. While the disease is manageable, it requires a monthly shot keeping her away from her home in Mexico. With the support from her friends, she marshaled on and discovered Noyo Center. She is a monthly contributor to the Pinniped Press. This last year Dobie was able to return to her home in Mexico several times and is hoping to be able to spend more time there this winter. But she assures me regardless of where she is, she hopes to continue to write for PP and be a part of the Noyo Center community.



Remembering My Pal Dobie Dolphin

Weedie (Diana Wiedemann)

There are people who come into our lives for a season, and there are those whose friendship becomes woven into the fabric of our lives. Dobie Dolphin was one of those rare friends for me. For more than forty years we shared work, adventures, laughter, long conversations, and a deep love of the ocean. Looking back now, I realize that although we built many things together, the greatest thing we built was a lifelong friendship.

Dobie was born and raised in New York before making her way to California as a young woman. I met her after she settled in Albion in the early 1970s, but it wasn't until the 1980s that we truly became close. Playing together on a women's basketball team, we then started working together in carpentry and started building houses and before long we had settled into an easy work partnership. Each of us naturally found our role. Dobie became our expert cutter. I could hand her a page filled with measurements, and she would patiently sort through stacks of lumber, selecting just the right boards for each piece before making every cut with remarkable accuracy. It required an organized mind, a good eye, and complete confidence with numbers. Dobie had all three.

Remembering My Pal Dobie Dolphin - continued

She was intellectually sharp, and I always made use of that gift throughout our many adventures. Those bright blue eyes missed very little. She had a gift for mathematics and an ability to organize complicated information without ever making it seem difficult. More than that, there wasn't much ego involved. She simply wanted to do good work, and she took quiet satisfaction in doing it well. Working with Dobie was easy because she never made it about herself. We trusted one another completely, and that trust created a rhythm that made every project better.

There was another part of every workday that became legendary—Dobie's lunches. While the rest of us were lucky if we'd remembered to throw together a sandwich, Dobie would arrive carrying three quart-sized yogurt containers. One held an enormous salad, another was filled with leftovers from the night before, and the third always contained dessert. She loved good food, and I confess I looked at those lunches with more than a little envy.



Dobie (right) and Weedie.

Our years followed the seasons. We worked hard through the dry months of our Northern California climate, then packed my truck with kayaks, windsurfers, camping gear, tools, and food, and headed south to Tenacatita Bay, which is located 5 hours south of Puerto Vallarta. We drove for 4 to 5 days and upon arriving we hired help to build simple structures for shade (palapas) near the water and spent a few months kayaking, windsurfing, swimming, sharing meals, and living outdoors. Those winters still remain some of the happiest memories of my life.

The ocean was never just a beautiful place for Dobie. It became her workplace and ultimately her calling. While living in Albion, Dobie purchased a small fishing boat and fished off our coast for a few years. She later took classes in order to get certified as a trained fisheries observer. Next, she was hired in Alaska aboard a large commercial fishing vessel and had the courage to write and speak honestly about unsustainable fishing practices she witnessed. Protecting the health of the ocean mattered more to her than protecting her own position.

Dobie eventually made El Rebalcito her permanent home in Mexico, purchasing a home on the outskirts of town. She became fluent in Spanish because she genuinely wanted to engage with her new community. There she opened a small internet office in her home so the local community had access to the internet, and she was very active helping preserve the local governing Ejito (counsel) protect their lands from being taken over by corporations and shutting off access to the beach. That quiet generosity was simply part of who she was.

After returning to California following her 2019 diagnosis of multiple myeloma, she devoted herself to the mission of the Noyo Center for Marine Science, writing and educating others about the ocean she loved. What I admired most about Dobie wasn't any single accomplishment. It was the way she chose to live. She believed life worked best when it was kept simple: work hard, treat people kindly, help when you can, share what you know, respect nature, and leave a place a little better than you found it. Dobie remained true to herself and to her beliefs until the very end of her life. During her final week, she completed one last article about the return of the salmon—a fitting final gift from someone who never stopped caring for the ocean she loved.

When I look out across the Pacific, paddle a quiet river, or watch the changing tide, I know I will always miss Dobie's physical presence. But I also know I will continue to find her in the places she loved and spent her life protecting. I am deeply grateful that our paths crossed and that I was fortunate enough to call Dobie my friend. Her life reminds me that kindness, integrity, curiosity, and quiet dedication leave a mark that endures. Her work continues—in the people she inspired, in the friendships she nurtured, and in the ocean she loved so deeply. For that, and for the gift of her friendship, I will always be grateful. Here's to the "Wavettes"—I will continue to carry on your ocean inspiration.

"I've known Dobie for 50 years, was her neighbor here on Middle Ridge Road in Albion, and she was on the crew of four that built our house 40 years ago." Moonlight (Tom Wodetzki)

Hawaii University Hauls 84 Tons of Derelict Fishing Gear from Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch

By Dobie Dolphin

Pinniped Press, June 2026

The Hawaiian Islands face severe impacts from marine debris due to their proximity to the North Pacific Garbage Patch. Lost nets, tangled ropes, and buoys, known as abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear, are among the most destructive forms of marine debris. Made largely from plastic, they can drift for years in the currents, trapping marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds. When these wandering nets finally crash into Hawaii's reefs, they can scrape, smother, and kill corals that took decades to grow.

Who best to retrieve this derelict fishing gear than fishers working in the area where much of it collects. Hawaii University's innovative Bounty Project pays commercial fishers working in the area to retrieve this harmful fishing gear.

It's a simple idea; fishers reel in floating debris while they are fishing, and are paid by the pound for what they haul in. "Ultimately, it's really a win-win because it's fishers who are already out at sea," said Raquel Corniuk, research manager at HPU's Center for Marine Debris Research. "So it's very opportunistic whenever they come across marine debris. They can remove it and bring it back here and they can get paid for it."

"Seeing it firsthand, like that one net that was over 2,000 pounds," Corniuk said. "It took a flatbed. We had to rent a flatbed, drive down there, and it took hours to even load it on our flatbed from the harbor."



About 90 tons of plastic, including old fishing nets, have been hauled from the waters and beaches of Hawaii. Some of it has been turned into pellets to be added to asphalt and tested in paved road sections on Oahu. Courtesy of the Center for Marine Debris Research.

Hawaii University – continued

Hank Lynch, one of the commercial fishermen who participates in the program comments, “This isn’t fishing debris from Hawaii...much more than 90% of it is from somewhere else.” The debris drifts from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a large zone located between Hawaii and California where a system of rotating currents pulls floating material into a concentrated area.

To be eligible for the program, fishers must own or operate a federally permitted Hawai’i longline vessel or be a licensed commercial fisher in the state of Hawai’i. They have to provide photos, dates and GPS Coordinates of the derelict fishing gear reeled in, and it must be brought to land on Oahu. After all hauls are brought in, dried and separated, the material is recycled or repurposed.



Dobie at the beach.

Payments range from \$1.00 to \$3.00 a dry pound depending on what’s brought in. Since 2022, more than 77 commercial fishers have participated, logging in more than 690 recovery events helped by 2,100 volunteer hours, and 185,000 pounds of derelict gear has been brought to Oahu.

The money earned helps to diversify income for crews, and when they run into especially huge nets, boats sometimes call in other Bounty fishers to help hoist the load and then split the reward.

The Hawaii Bounty Project’s main funding source is National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Marine Debris Program. The project also collaborates with Hawai’i Longline Association and the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

What’s collected is turned over to Bounty Project’s marine debris team, promoting a circular economy that benefits both the environment and the local communities by transforming it into valuable infrastructure products, including research, energy, education and art. They use a process that includes detecting, removing, storing, transporting, sorting, and reporting. One of the projects being studied is using the plastic mixed with asphalt on roads.

A key question is whether wear and tear on that pavement might shed microplastics into the environment. “We’re extremely concerned about the shedding of plastics or other chemicals into the environment, because this can expose humans and animals to toxic plastic additives, leading to hormone disruption, chronic inflammation and reproductive problems,” says chemist Jennifer Lynch, head of the Center for Marine Debris Research at Hawaii Pacific University.

At the March 22 American Chemical Society meeting in Atlanta, preliminary results using a polymer-modified asphalt with recycled plastics shows no increased microplastic shedding after testing, and the asphalt remains largely intact. Road dust analysis reveals tire wear produces far more microplastics than recycled plastic pavement.

Bounty Project is a straightforward, innovative plan to help clean up the Pacific Ocean and make positive use of the abandoned gear.

“The sea clearly defined Dobie, as she worked to ensure it was known, respected and understood by us on its shore, and in at least two countries. She loved Noyo Center’s “Water” education program for local school kids, and helped with some of its after-school outreach.

Her writing for the Noyo Center was a serious commitment to her, even throughout her illness. We all benefitted from her lifelong enjoyment of and commitment to advocating and writing for the sea—fishing, diving, and observing species served to inspire and require her insights. A sidenote: On several occasions, I (surely not alone in this position), interrupted her in the middle of her Noyo writing and editing process. She invariably would tell me—‘back in touch in ___ hours’—however long it would take to ensure accuracy and readability. Committed and thorough in all her tasks...Anyway, but a smattering of the Dobie I knew... She had her own salmon fishing boat, did you know?” Julie Rumble

The Ethics of Listening to Whales

Dobie Dolphin

Pinniped Press, August 2025

Imagine if we could listen to whales and understand the meanings behind their haunting songs or rapid clicks? Maybe a whale is telling others in its pod about the giant squid it ate last night, or congratulating a mother on her new baby, or asking others what the food is like where they are, hundreds of miles away or complaining about the noise from ships and the location of a dangerous ghost net. We know whales communicate with each other, but what are they saying?



A mother humpback whale supports her calf. J. Moore/NOAA, under NOAA permit #15240.

Although indigenous tribes in many parts of the world have always communicated with whales and dolphins, it wasn't until the 1960's that the American military put microphones underwater, listening for Russian submarines. An engineer in Bermuda started hearing some strange sounds and he wondered if it could be whales that he was hearing. He got in touch with whale biologists Katy and Roger Payne and played the recordings for them. They went out, found some whales, put microphones in the water, and confirmed that the sounds were coming from humpback whales. They were so amazed that these whales were singing all the time, they were inspired to produce a record called, "The Song of the Humpback Whale." The record sold 125,000 copies and went on to spark the Save The Whale movement, which resulted in the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The MMPA was enacted in 1972 to protect marine mammals from human activities that could lead to their extinction or depletion, according to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 followed, prohibiting the killing, hunting or harassing of marine mammals and protecting endangered species like whales, many of whom were at the brink of extinction. These acts offered incredible protection for marine mammals and stopped the United States whaling industry, which was already in decline.

Suddenly everyone was paying attention to whales; scientists, biologists, environmentalists and people all over the world became interested in these majestic creatures. Whale watching trips enabled people to see whales up close, divers could hear them in the water, research vessels went out with hydrophones to capture their sounds. Over time, there was more interest in trying to figure out what the sounds were all about. Now with AI, several groups are starting to break down and study individual whale sounds.

A potential problem with this is, how do we know that whales want us to understand what they're communicating? We certainly don't like it if someone eavesdrops on our conversations or phone calls and worse if we don't know they're doing it. If we do finally understand what we hear, suppose the whales are saying "go away, you've hurt us enough;" how would we react to that?

The Ethics of Listening to Whales - continued

New York University's More Than Human Life (MOTH) Program, working with CETI (Cetacean Translation Initiative) is very concerned about the lack of shared ethical and legal standards on Nonhuman Animal Communication Technologies (NACTs). "So our work with Project CETI and our own work at MOTH is trying to look at both the opportunities and the risks for the protection of whales and cetaceans and other animals stemming from the emerging scientific findings on the complexity, and potentially the content, of cetacean communication," says MOTH Collective founder César Rodríguez-Garavito.

Presently there are no laws or principles governing the use of NACT's, so in November 2024, MOTH and Project CETI held a workshop at the NYU School of Law that resulted in a plan of action which will ultimately result in the publication of a proposed set of Legal & Ethical Principles for the Responsible Development of NACTs.

The principles are built on certain core values that emphasize the need to prevent the use of technologies as tools of dominion over nature; but to facilitate a sense of kinship with the more-than-human world.

These draft principles are based on five pillars:

- **procedural responsibilities** to be honored throughout the life cycle of NACTs;
- **interests of the animal**, or the robust incorporation and prioritization of nonhuman animal interests in decision-making regarding NACTs;
- **prevention** of the risks and harms associated with the use of NACTs;
- **implementation** of these principles in NACT processes; and
- **remediation** of harms.

Within these five pillars, there are 18 principles, four of which are:

- **the precautionary** principle which calls for the anticipation and mitigation of direct and indirect harms arising from the use of NACTs, stressing prevention over after-the-fact remediation;
- **best interests of the animal** principle provides that the wellbeing of nonhuman animals should be a foremost priority throughout the lifecycle of any NACT;
- **autonomy** principle emphasizes that NACTs must not restrict nonhuman animals' ability to direct their own lives, free from undue human interference, manipulation, or control;
- **data governance principles** should balance the benefits of transparent and open data with risks of further exploitation, ensuring that data use prioritizes the security, dignity and wellbeing of nonhuman animals.

These principles are specifically applicable to those scientists, practitioners, engineers, designers, funders, and other participants involved in the design, construction, and deployment of NACTs.

The positive potential of NACTs is enormous. NACTs could support legal battles for animal rights, challenge anthropocentric views, promote empathy, and advance our understanding of the diverse ways in which different species experience the world. But NACTs also pose serious threats to the well-being of nonhumans. Past technologies offer cautionary tales. While cameras, drones, microphones, and hydrophones have been used to identify, understand, and protect nonhuman animals, they have also been used to track, exploit, harm, and experiment with them. An ethical framework to prioritize the well-being of all species is essential.

Resources:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/emergence-magazine-podcast/id1368790239?i=1000710092632>
<https://emergencemagazine.org/conversation/ethics-of-listening-to-whales/>
<https://2024annualreport.projectceti.org/>
<https://www.openglobalrights.org>



Dobie's Last Article: Urchin Removal at Caspar Cove

Jim Rolfe

As Dobie Dolphin lay in a bed with I.V. tubes connecting her to treatment intended to extend her life, her thoughts were focused on her next PP article. This reveals the heart and soul of a woman who gave so much of her life to protecting the 'Ocean' in general, and in particular, her chosen homes on the Jalisco and Mendocino Coasts. In one of her final emails to the PP staff, she wrote that she was working on an article about the urchin removal project at Caspar Cove; but as we know, she was never able to send anything. This inspired me to step in and write an article, as best I can, that she was working on.

In less than a decade, the kelp forest along the Mendocino and Sonoma coasts declined by over 96%, which left a wake of devastation for the local communities dependent on a healthy coastal ecosystem. Efforts to restore and protect bull kelp populations in the aftermath of this event, are crucial for the recovery of the Caspar Cove marine environment, which remains a primary destination for divers because of easy access to a large sandy beach that stretches between Doyle and Caspar Creeks.

On May 10, 2018, the Calif Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) Commission released an emergency regulation that that increased the daily recreational bag limit for purple sea urchins from 35 individuals to 20 gallons, taken while skin, or SCUBA diving, in state waters off the Mendocino Coast. A year later on February 25, 2019, CDF&W adopted a new regulation increasing the daily recreational bag limit of purple sea urchins from 20 gallons to 40 gallons. Answering this call to a recognized threat, a small group of volunteers, led by Joshua Russo from Watermen's Alliance, staged the inaugural Caspar Cove Project event, which took place in 2020. Guided by a commitment to restoring a balance to this favorite marine ecosystem, they set about removing purple sea urchins by "in-water culling" which became legal through a CDF&W temporary regulation in 2020. Under this regulation, skin and scuba divers were encouraged to smash purple urchin (but not red urchin) in place, which kept their bio-remains in the eco-system by recycling their protein and calcium carbonate.



Caspar Cove



The Waterman's Alliance is a nonprofit group whose mission is to restore balance to marine ecosystems, through leadership, for the public at large, and to participate in experimental urchin suppression efforts. They promote community involvement in the recovery of kelp forests through education, engagement, and volunteer efforts, to enhance biodiversity along California's coastal waters. The Caspar group meets monthly, and has done so since 2020.

Since 2020, the Caspar Cove Project has grown into a local-driven effort that draws participants from throughout California and all walks of life, who all share the common goal of preserving the ocean's equilibrium. Month after month, volunteers return to Caspar Cove to make a difference, and contribute to an ongoing conservation effort. In addition to culling, they participate in kelp surveys with their partners Reef Check and Blue Harmony, to measure recovery rates and effectiveness here, as well as other sites along the California coast.

Resources:

<https://www.casparcoveproject.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/158992911481142/posts/1730901964290221/>
<https://www.reefcheck.org/kelp-forest-program/kelp-restoration/>
<https://www.altaonline.com/dispatches/a63905108/california-kelp-forest-urchin-cull/>

Remembering Dobie Dolphin



Dobie helping with Noyo Center Aquaculture

"I met Dobie about 50 years ago, but had gotten closer to her over the past bunch of years as she lived on the same road as me in Albion. She and I would take walks together. I've been studying Spanish, and we'd get together to talk in Spanish. She was fluent and I was learning but she enjoyed talking in Spanish and helping me. I was one of the people with her in her last days."

Karen Rakowsky



We rise by lifting others.



"Many of us are mourning dearest Dobie's recent passing. She was always working for the, "Good," for our planet with many victories won over her decades of activism. Making things better when the need came before her. She will always be loved and remembered for her endless and dauntless beautiful spirit that rallied many of her friends into action on countless fronts that needed immediate attention with the call, "Si se Puede," "Vamonos."

A memorial is being planned at her home down Mexico way at Tenacatita Beach in February.

Dobie, with tears of sorrow and joy, "We will love you forever."

Gary T. Moraga

Celebrating the Life of Dobie Dolphin

November 14, 1948 - July 2, 2026

Sunday August 23rd
from 2 to 5 pm

Noyo Center Marine Field Station
32430 North Harbor Drive
Fort Bragg, Ca. 95437



Friends and family are invited to join us
as we celebrate Dobie's life and share memories.



Hands Off California's Coast!



ACTION ALERT-- The current public comment deadline is August 22, 2026, for written comments regarding the federal review of the [California Coastal Management Program](#) overseen by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which ties into state oversight on potential offshore development.

To register a public comment regarding the expansion of oil drilling off our coast you can email your comments to NOAA's Office for Coastal Management at czma.california-evaluation@noaa.gov

For Coastal residents in opposition, here is a sample letter, cut and paste parts, or write your own:

Subject: Comments on Performance Evaluation of the California Coastal Management

Dear NOAA Office for Coastal Management,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any expansion of offshore oil drilling leases off the California coast.

I live on the Mendocino coast in (city you live) California. Our community is a coastal town that depends entirely on the health of our ocean. Our local economy relies heavily on commercial and recreational fishing, as well as a thriving ecotourism industry. Visitors come from all over the world to experience our pristine marine environment, including our unique coastal trails, tide pools, and whale watching. (continued next page)

Hands Off - continued

Allowing offshore drilling directly threatens our livelihood in the following ways:

- * Economic Devastation: A single oil spill would ruin our local fisheries and halt coastal tourism, causing severe financial harm to our small businesses and working families.
- * Habitat Destruction: Routine drilling operations pollute local waters and disrupt the delicate marine ecosystems that sustain our fish populations.
- * Visual and Environmental Impact: Industrial energy infrastructure contradicts the natural beauty that drives our ecotourism economy.

For the future of Fort Bragg and the entire California coast, I urge NOAA to prioritize robust coastal protections and reject any new offshore drilling initiatives. The California Coastal Management Program must remain committed to safeguarding coastal economies and marine resources from the risks of fossil fuel extraction.

Thank you for your time and for considering the feedback of our coastal communities.

Sincerely, [Your Name] (address and city you live)



No Kings!

The Pinniped Press team: Dobie Dolphin, Wendi Felson, Linda Francis, Toni Rizzo, Peggy Martin, Jim Rolfe, Donna Worster, Andy Jahn, and Sharen Parker with Trey Petrey. Pinniped Press logo design by Sharon Bowers.

If you have photo or writing skills or have an idea for an article, want to join a great group, or send a letter to the editor, write to Pinniped Press editor, Toni Rizzo at: editor@noyocenter.org