

Short Casts

By Erik Landesfeind



Anglers aboard the half-day boat *Monte Carlo*, out of 22nd Street Landing in San Pedro, show off the yellowtail they caught while fishing near the Catalina Sea Ranch's mussel farm. This aquaculture enterprise has proven to be a boon to recreational anglers.

Southern California Mussel Ranch has Unexpected Benefits

Catalina Sea Ranch, a pioneering research and business venture, recently established the first offshore aquaculture facility in federal waters. The 100-acre shellfish ranch, which is about six miles offshore from Huntington Beach, is currently growing an initial pilot crop of around 30,000 pounds of mussels that will soon be harvested from dozens of specially designed ropes.

The location was chosen because it's on the periphery of about 26,000 acres (40 square miles) off the San Pedro Shelf which, according to the company's website, is one of the broadest mainland continental shelf segments offshore of California. The ranch was located as close to the edge of the shelf as possible because it was better for minimizing marine crop exposure to inland storm water runoff contaminated with bacteria and other pollutants.

Moreover, the ocean flushing characteristics in offshore waters provide a cleaner environment for preventing diseases that are a prevalent problem with inshore aquaculture. If production on this first ranch goes as planned, the company aims to

expand the ranch to 1,000 acres, which could produce as much as 20 million pounds annually.

Of interest to anglers, the structure associated with the ranch ended up attracting fish as well. The expanse of submerged cables, ropes and mussel created a habitat perfect for baitfish to feed and hide. As a result, yellowtail found this previously empty section of ocean and decided to call it home. Throughout the summer, sportboaters and private boaters alike consistently caught yellowtail while drifting along the length of the mussel ranch. With any luck the yellowtail angling opportunities will expand right along with any future expansion of the ranch.

Recreational Lobster Regulations Change

It's lobster season and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife reminds hoop netters of new regulations that will be in effect for the 2017-2018 season. According to the DFW website, hoop net buoys south of Point Arguello (Santa Barbara County) must now be marked for identification and enforcement purposes. All hoop nets shall be marked with a surface buoy that is legibly marked to identify the operator's GO ID number as stated on the operator's sportfishing license or lobster report card.

Shared hoop nets can be marked with multiple GO ID numbers, or GO ID numbers can be switched out by using any sort of removable tag on or attached to the buoy, so long as the GO ID numbers are all legible. Hoop nets deployed by people on shores or man-