

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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Chair Shallenberger Statement on the Death of Peter Douglas

(San Francisco) – California Coastal Commission Chairwoman Mary Shallenberger has issued the following statement on the passing of former Coastal Commission Executive Director Peter M. Douglas, who died Sunday, April 1, 2012 after a long battle with cancer:

Californians mourn the passage of Peter Douglas, who served as the Executive Director of the Coastal Commission for 26 years. Peter's leadership in coastal protection began with the birth of the Coastal Initiative (Proposition 20) in 1972. The passage of Prop 20 signaled Californian voters' resounding declaration that the coast was a public resource, deserving of heightened protection. Under Peter's leadership, miles of beaches have been opened to the public, wetlands and wildlife habitat have been saved, scenic vistas protected, and coastal farms and ranches have remained intact.

Peter spent decades protecting California's rich and vibrant coastal resources in spite of political controversy, legal challenges, and demonization by those who wanted to profit from their destruction. He said often that successful coastal management is measured not what we see, but what we don't see—wetlands not filled, beach access not blocked, coastal bluffs and ridges and terraces not marred by inappropriate development.

Peter's legacy goes beyond preserving California's signature geography for future generations. As with that of other environmental heroes such as John Muir, and Rachel Carson, Peter has changed the way we think about the environment and our relationship to it. This is reflected in the public opinion polls that consistently show that people from all over California, from the inner cities to the rural central valley, people of all incomes and ethnic backgrounds, love their coast, value their coastal access, and enjoy coastal recreation. They support habitat and wildlife. Peter's life-long vision for California's coast has shaped our own. For that we all owe him thanks.

I will miss him as a friend and mentor. I am also confident that he has left us with the determination to protect our coast for future generations. We owe him, the coast and ourselves, nothing less.

