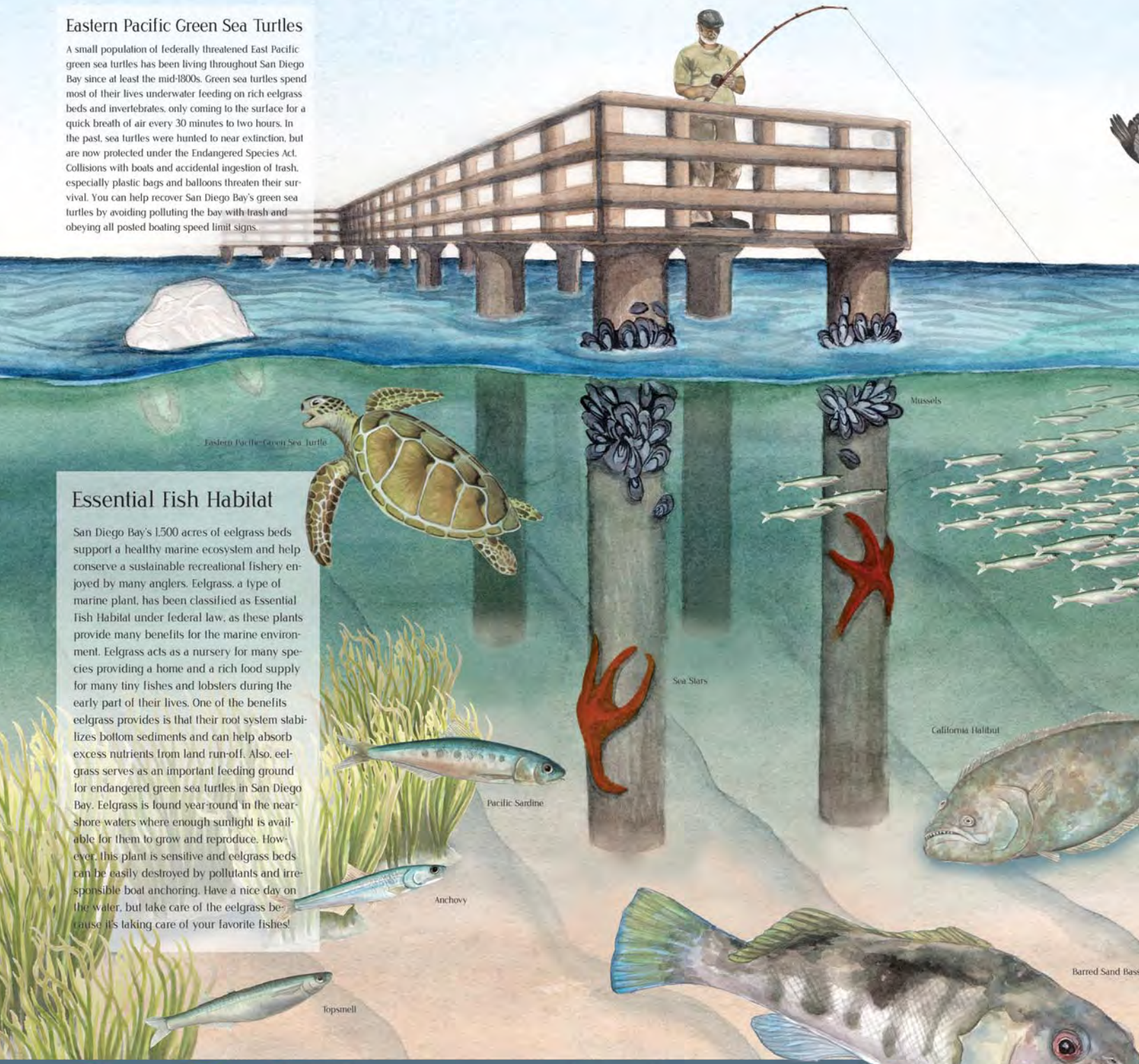
What's In Your Bay?

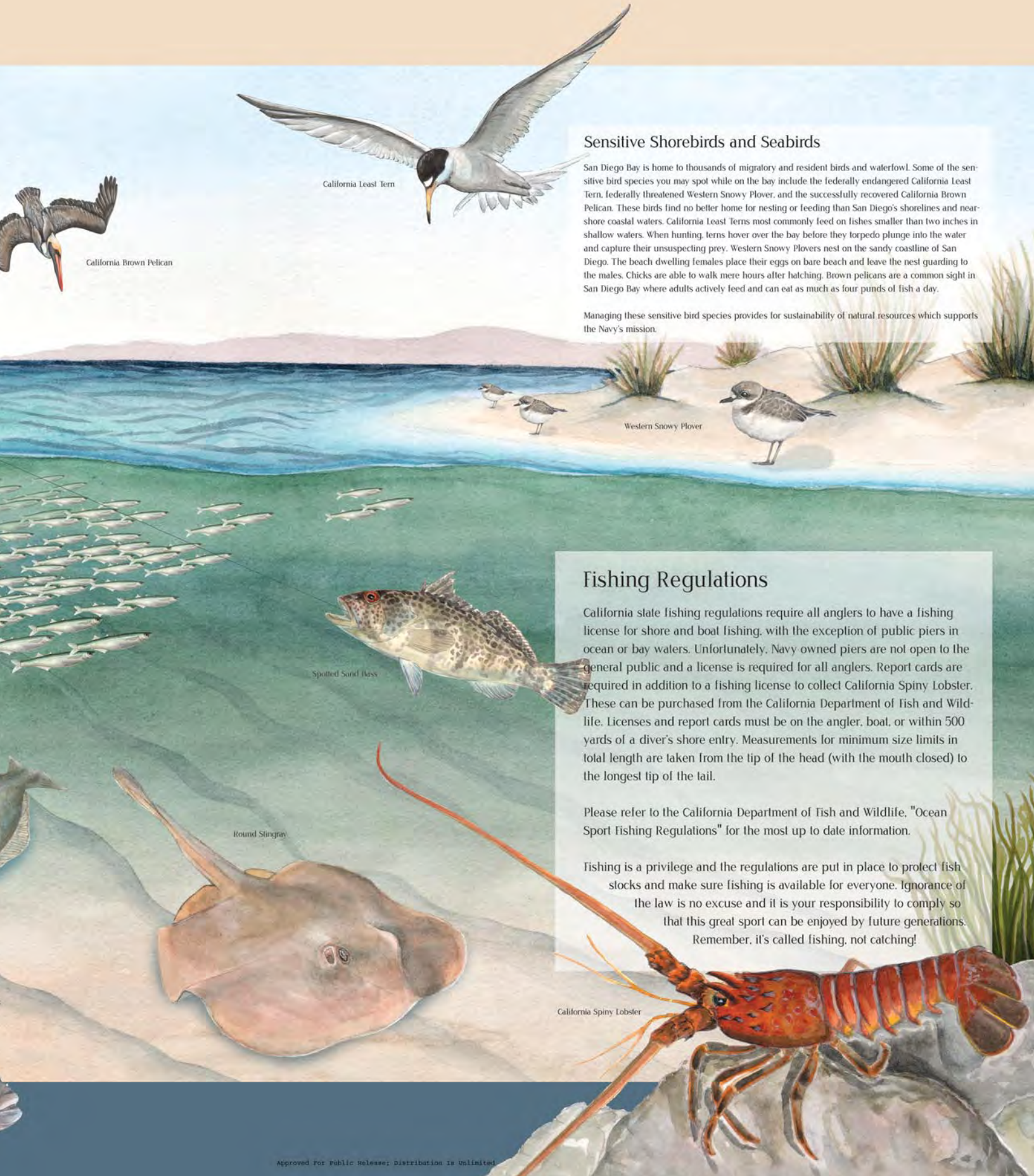
Eastern Pacific Green Sea Turtles

A small population of federally threatened East Pacific green sea turtles has been living throughout San Diego Bay since at least the mid-1800s. Green sea turtles spend most of their lives underwater feeding on rich eelgrass beds and invertebrates, only coming to the surface for a quick breath of air every 30 minutes to two hours. In the past, sea turtles were hunted to near extinction, but are now protected under the Endangered Species Act. Collisions with boats and accidental ingestion of trash, especially plastic bags and balloons threaten their survival. You can help recover San Diego Bay's green sea turtles by avoiding polluting the bay with trash and obeying all posted boating speed limit signs.



Essential Fish Habitat

San Diego Bay's 1,500 acres of eelgrass beds support a healthy marine ecosystem and help conserve a sustainable recreational fishery enjoyed by many anglers. Eelgrass, a type of marine plant, has been classified as Essential Fish Habitat under federal law, as these plants provide many benefits for the marine environment. Eelgrass acts as a nursery for many species providing a home and a rich food supply for many tiny fishes and lobsters during the early part of their lives. One of the benefits eelgrass provides is that their root system stabilizes bottom sediments and can help absorb excess nutrients from land run-off. Also, eelgrass serves as an important feeding ground for endangered green sea turtles in San Diego Bay. Eelgrass is found year-round in the nearshore waters where enough sunlight is available for them to grow and reproduce. However, this plant is sensitive and eelgrass beds can be easily destroyed by pollutants and irresponsible boat anchoring. Have a nice day on the water, but take care of the eelgrass because it's taking care of your favorite fishes!



Sensitive Shorebirds and Seabirds

San Diego Bay is home to thousands of migratory and resident birds and waterfowl. Some of the sensitive bird species you may spot while on the bay include the federally endangered California Least Tern, federally threatened Western Snowy Plover, and the successfully recovered California Brown Pelican. These birds find no better home for nesting or feeding than San Diego's shorelines and near-shore coastal waters. California Least Terns most commonly feed on fishes smaller than two inches in shallow waters. When hunting, terns hover over the bay before they torpedo plunge into the water and capture their unsuspecting prey. Western Snowy Plovers nest on the sandy coastline of San Diego. The beach dwelling females place their eggs on bare beach and leave the nest guarding to the males. Chicks are able to walk mere hours after hatching. Brown pelicans are a common sight in San Diego Bay where adults actively feed and can eat as much as four punds of fish a day.

Managing these sensitive bird species provides for sustainability of natural resources which supports the Navy's mission.

Fishing Regulations

California state fishing regulations require all anglers to have a fishing license for shore and boat fishing, with the exception of public piers in ocean or bay waters. Unfortunately, Navy owned piers are not open to the general public and a license is required for all anglers. Report cards are required in addition to a fishing license to collect California Spiny Lobster. These can be purchased from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Licenses and report cards must be on the angler, boat, or within 500 yards of a diver's shore entry. Measurements for minimum size limits in total length are taken from the tip of the head (with the mouth closed) to the longest tip of the tail.

Please refer to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, "Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations" for the most up to date information.

Fishing is a privilege and the regulations are put in place to protect fish stocks and make sure fishing is available for everyone. Ignorance of the law is no excuse and it is your responsibility to comply so that this great sport can be enjoyed by future generations. Remember, it's called fishing, not catching!

Approved For Public Release; Distribution Is Unlimited