

# **California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative**

## **Strategy for Stakeholder and Interested Public Participation**

*Revised March 30, 2007*

The success of the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative depends to a significant degree on meaningful public and stakeholder input into the work of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force and Master Plan Science Advisory Team to help the State of California implement the Marine Life Protection Act

This strategy represents the suggestions of staff, task force members and stakeholders on ways to ensure quality public and stakeholder participation in developing the recommendations the task force delivers to the California Fish and Game Commission.

Strategies described in this document and recommended to be utilized by the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force through the MLPA Initiative are:

- Interested Public
  - Open meetings
  - Public comment at each meeting
  - Written public comment on draft documents
  - Responsive decision-making
  - Effective web technologies
  
- Stakeholders
  - Stakeholder panel presentations at task force meetings
  - Statewide interests group
  - North central coast stakeholder group
  - Roundtable discussions
  - Study tours and field trips
  - Stakeholder-hosted meetings
  - Joint fact finding
  - Local community profiles
  - Educational and hands-on workshops
  - Plan for stakeholder involvement published on MLPA website

### **Background**

Creating a collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship with stakeholders is essential to the success of any project, including the MLPA Initiative. Collaborative relationships with stakeholders can increase stability in a complex environment and expand capacity rather than diminish it under changing circumstances. Collaboration with stakeholders allows us the opportunity to deepen mutual understanding about the issues at hand, explore and integrate ideas together, generate new options and solutions that may not have been considered individually, identify and resolve areas of conflict, and ensure the long-term availability of resources to achieve mutual goals.

In recognition of these benefits, the focus of this strategy is on building a robust network of positive, mutually reinforcing stakeholder relationships and interested public involvement. This network of relationships will help ensure the success of the MLPA Initiative, and also creates an evolving structure within which the long-term goal of creating a more cohesive system of MPAs along the California coast can be achieved. This strategy also builds upon the lessons learned through the first phase of the MLPA Initiative in 2004-2006 and recommendations made during public workshops in March 2007.

A network of relationships is supported by the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), which emphasizes involving affected parties, including commercial fishing interests, recreational users, conservationists, scientists and others, in developing and evaluating management proposals for marine resources. As intended by this legislation, the structure of the MLPA Initiative provides for local communities and stakeholders to share relevant knowledge, information and suggestions on statewide and regional proposals, including firsthand observations, socioeconomic information, and suggestions for monitoring, evaluation and stewardship of marine protected areas. The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF), appointed by the secretary for resources, is fulfilling this legislative intent through a variety of strategies designed to provide opportunities for the interested public and stakeholders to positively contribute to the proposals developed under the guidance of the BRTF.

There are two general categories of strategies described in this document which differentiate between “the interested public” and “stakeholders.”

- The interested public strategies are those that any person, on their own initiative, can avail themselves of, to follow and provide input into the work of different groups and individuals (i.e., BRTF, Master Plan Science Advisory Team).
- Stakeholder strategies are those that will solicit the views of and involve those with a direct interest in the marine environment.

### **Stakeholders Defined**

Stakeholders can be defined as “individuals or organizations who stand to gain or lose from the success or failure of a system” (Nuseibeh and Easterbrook, 2000). For a system of MPAs, this can include designers of the system, resource managers, coastal tourism businesses, and users of marine resources, such as fishers, divers, kayakers, researchers, underwater photographers, and boaters.

Since stakeholders are those who are impacted by or have an impact on a system of MPAs, their perspectives need to be taken into account in order for the system to ultimately be successful. Stakeholders can have positive or negative views regarding a given product or action, and often don’t agree with one another, sometimes making it a challenge to reconcile their varied viewpoints. The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force has been appointed in the second

phase of the MLPA Initiative to address this possibility by providing policy guidance and direction to the regional stakeholder group.

In a user-centered process, special emphasis is placed on *one* type of stakeholder—the users of the system—arguing that user experience needs to be carefully crafted to satisfy user needs. Understanding user needs and goals is certainly *necessary*, but it will not be *sufficient* for producing a successful design of MPAs. In addition to an understanding of user needs and perspective, designing a system of MPAs needs to incorporate sound science and effective management principles, as well as the needs and desires of the general public.

### **Interested Public Participation**

Throughout the MLPA Initiative, the general public has had, and will continue to have, regular and frequent opportunities to observe and comment on the work of the BRTF, Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT), and regional stakeholder group. As described in the memorandum of understanding among the California Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Game, and Resources Legacy Fund Foundation, the proceedings of the BRTF, SAT and regional stakeholder group will be transparent to the public.

#### ***Open meetings***

All meetings of the BRTF, SAT and regional stakeholder group where a majority of the members is scheduled to attend will be noticed in advance and open to the public; whenever possible, these meetings will also be simultaneously webcast. Meeting agendas and supporting materials will be available in advance for public review, using standard message dissemination techniques such as the Internet, email, list servers, occasional mailings and other methods on special request. Written meeting summaries and video recordings will be available.

#### ***Public comment at meetings***

The agenda of each BRTF meeting will include the opportunity for public comments on actions to be taken by the task force, as well as a general public comment period for any subject related to the MLPA Initiative. The points made will be briefly identified in the written meeting summaries.

#### ***Written public comment***

The public may direct written comments to the BRTF in response to any materials made publicly available supporting the work of the BRTF, especially key documents being considered for adoption by the task force. Written comments received will be made available to the public.

#### ***Web technologies***

The BRTF will enhance the MLPA Initiative website, [www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa), to include functions such as a list server and a simultaneous webcast of meetings. These and other types of functions will be implemented to the extent that the manageability and cost of these technologies is not prohibitive.

***Responsive decision making***

The BRTF and SAT will consider public comments and questions while developing final versions of key documents and will make an effort to articulate the ways in which comments received were reflected in decisions made or the reasons they were not, recognizing that they may not be able to respond specifically to each comment submitted.

**Stakeholder Participation**

The principal focus of improving stakeholder involvement in marine management and conservation draws upon years of planning and meetings with stakeholders. These strategies go beyond the traditional methods of interested public observation and comment to foster direct and useful communication among those with a direct stake in our coastal and marine resources and those helping California implement the MLPA.

***Stakeholder Panels***

At BRTF meetings, panels of approximately four to six stakeholders will be asked to provide their perspectives on a question or issue posed in advance of the meeting. The purpose is to encourage a cross-section of stakeholders to engage in dialogue with one another and with the BRTF and to offer recommendations or other points of consideration on an issue to be discussed by the task force at that meeting. Speakers will be selected based on expertise by the executive director and chair of the BRTF, in consultation with the MLPA Statewide Interests Group (see below).

***Statewide Interests Group***

This group will include representatives of key constituent groups throughout the state, to serve as an additional mechanism for two-way communication between the BRTF and its stakeholders about the approach and activities of the MLPA Initiative and about policy issues of statewide concern. This group will meet via facilitated conference call and will be convened by the chair of the BRTF or the executive director as necessary or desired, but generally about ten days after each BRTF meeting. The group will provide feedback on the previous BRTF meeting, respond to specific questions posed by the chair or executive director, and recommend panel speakers and subject matter for upcoming BRTF meetings.

***North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group***

This group will include approximately 20 individuals from the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region who provide perspectives and skills that will be valuable in developing alternative proposals for marine protected areas in the study region. The director of the Department of Fish and Game and the chair of the BRTF will solicit nominations, and jointly select from the nominees a group whose members are capable of working together to successfully complete the project. The group will meet regularly, most often in person, for approximately one year to develop recommendations for the MLPA North Central Coast Project. The types of representatives selected may include educators, resource managers, extractive users, non-extractive users, scientists, conservation interests, members of the general public and enforcement personnel, among others.

### ***Periodic Stakeholder Roundtable Discussions***

Once or twice a year, the BRTF will host facilitated discussions with stakeholders. The discussions will be timed to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide meaningful input into key work products or deliverables that are being drafted and considered by the BRTF, SAT, or regional stakeholder group. The objective of the discussions will be to elicit possible solutions to challenges identified.

The four strategies described above involve facilitated discussions of some type. While facilitated meetings will play a prominent role in the MLPA Initiative, there are additional tools that can foster effective stakeholder involvement and integration of useful information, particularly in the MLPA North Central Coast Project.

### ***Study Tours and Field Trips***

In a study tour/field trip, a group of task force members and MLPA stakeholders gather at relevant sites to learn more about issues related to a system of marine protected areas, visit a place where marine protected areas already have been set up, or invite participants from such an area to California. Study tours/field trips are designed to strengthen lines of communication between the task force and its stakeholders and/or to introduce task force members who are in the middle of deciding complex matters to others who have already worked their way through similar questions in a different geographic location. To the extent possible, study tours/field trips will be held in conjunction with BRTF meetings and at additional times when at least two task force members are able to participate.

### ***Stakeholder-Hosted Meetings***

Opportunities will be created for groups of task force and/or science team members to visit with stakeholders in their communities. Through these visits, BRTF and SAT members will have a rich opportunity to learn about the unique needs of the community and how various approaches to designing and managing marine protected areas could best protect both the natural resources and the key social and economic dynamics of the area. Stakeholders are encouraged to forward ideas for constituency-hosted meetings, where BRTF and SAT members will participate to the extent feasible.

### ***Workshops***

Workshops can increase stakeholder capacity to gather information relevant to the BRTF or MLPA North Central Coast Project, on topics such as marine protected area management and stewardship, objectives, enforcement, monitoring and management of fisheries, or the methods and limitations of social science research. Workshops can also be a very effective method for local stakeholders to provide information and suggestions to the BRTF and regional stakeholder group. Workshops will be held periodically as subject matter dictates or the need arises.

### ***Joint Fact-Finding***

Unlike the traditional coastal management process, joint fact-finding begins with collaboratively developing a common set of issues and questions. While the research itself most often is

conducted by experts, defining the research objectives, agreeing on an approach (and on who conducts the research), and analyzing the resulting information can create mutual confidence in the information base for decisions. Joint fact-finding will likely be best applied in the regional project regarding issues such as impacts and benefits of alternative MPA proposals to fisheries.

***Local Community Profiles***

Developing local community profiles in collaboration with members of those communities can help assess and address concerns about the potential impacts of marine protected areas on the local communities. This approach links social scientists and community members, and combines data and other information available from government, business, and civic institutions in the central coast study region, to help ensure a robust discussion and evaluation of potential impacts to local communities of a system of marine protected areas.

***Interviews***

Selective interviews in a stakeholder's community can solicit views of those known to have thoughtful views or knowledge, but are reluctant to share them in a public setting. An interview might concern itself mostly with distilling the views of a constituent or tapping into that person's special knowledge of a fishery, an area, or other important substantive matter. The interview would be conducted by a researcher or other contractor, and the interviews would be synthesized for consideration by the BRTF and SAT.

**Stakeholder Participation Strategy and Flow Chart**

To communicate what opportunities exist for stakeholder and interested public participation, the BRTF will publish this *Strategy for Stakeholder and Interested Public Participation* on the MLPA Initiative website and will circulate it widely to describe the interested public and stakeholder involvement activities. In addition, the BRTF will create a timeline with the major milestones of the MLPA Initiative, showing how and at what points in time these mechanisms for involvement might occur, as well as a flow chart, illustrating the different organizations and individuals involved in the MLPA Initiative and their relationship to one another.

## **Citations**

Nuseibeh, B. and S. Easterbrook. *Requirements Engineering: A Roadmap*. Proceedings of the International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE-2000), 4-11 June 2000, Limerick, Ireland.