

Marine Life Management Act Master Plan for Fisheries Amendment Process Frequently Asked Questions

Updated March 2017

1. What is the Marine Life Management Act Master Plan for Fisheries?

The Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) Master Plan for Fisheries (Master Plan) is a planning document that describes how California fisheries are managed. It prioritizes fisheries according to the need for comprehensive management through fishery management plans. The Master Plan is intended to help focus management effort on the highest priority species and to describe the specific tools and approaches to be applied in achieving the goals of the MLMA. The current Master Plan was developed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) with input from stakeholders and adopted by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) in 2001.

2. **(Updated)* Why is the MLMA Master Plan undergoing an amendment?

The current Master Plan has not been updated in over 15 years. CDFW is in the process of amending the MLMA Master Plan to better achieve the mandates of the MLMA, the State's primary fisheries management law. An amended Master Plan is expected to provide enhanced transparency and consistency in the state's approach to fishery management. It will also enable the state to apply scientific advances in fisheries management, be more responsive to potential impacts due to changing climate and oceanic conditions, and increase our understanding of socio-economic drivers and human dimensions to better support healthy marine ecosystems and sustainable fisheries.

3. **(New)* What is driving the amendment process?

The draft "[Amended Framework for MLMA-based Management](#)" is designed to achieve the specific objectives listed in the MLMA. These objectives are advanced by addressing three basic needs: I) a process for prioritizing future management actions both among and within fisheries; II) a process for scaling those management actions to reflect the needs, risks, and value of each fishery together with the Department's capacity; and III) a means of conveying up-to-date fisheries information in a way that's easy for stakeholders, researchers, and the public to navigate and understand.

4. Who is leading the effort to amend the Master Plan?

The Department's Marine Region is directing the effort. The Department is overseeing contractors assigned to specific tasks such as project coordination, outreach, meeting facilitation, editing, conducting analyses, etc.

5. What are the goals of amending the Master Plan?

The goals of the Master Plan amendment are to:

- Enhance the sustainability of the state's ocean fisheries;
- Help promote more efficient, effective, and streamlined fisheries management;
- Establish a clear pathway detailing the management approach for each fishery; and

- Foster transparency and flexibility in fisheries management with stakeholders and interested members of the public.

6. What are the benefits of amending the Master Plan?

Amending the Master Plan will help the Department and stakeholders develop shared expectations of what successful fisheries management and implementation of the MLMA looks like. It will reflect updated fisheries priorities and new management tools and approaches that can help fisheries achieve or maintain sustainability. For example, it may incorporate tools and approaches that have been developed over the last decade to better assess the status of stocks and ensure management measures are better tuned to the needs of fish populations and the fishing communities that depend on them. Successful implementation of these tools through an amended Master Plan can reduce risk and potentially result in greater fishing opportunity, improved access to the growing number of sustainability conscious markets, increased revenue, and greater adaptability to changing climate and oceanic conditions.

7. *(New) What are the anticipated outcomes of the amendment process?

The Master Plan amendment is intended to improve California’s fisheries management framework by helping the state identify and prioritize fisheries that are in need of improvements.

The amendment will not directly change fishing regulations; rather, it will establish priorities, policies, and approaches that will guide management of each state-managed fishery in the future. This effort is expected to make management more efficient and consistent. Future management changes across all state fisheries will be guided by the amended Master Plan, once it has been adopted by the Commission.

Successful implementation of an amended Master Plan is expected to lead to:

- Fishing opportunity that better aligns with resource productivity;
- Increased commercial revenue and sport opportunity over the long-term;
- Healthier marine ecosystems;
- Improved marketability for state fishery products; and
- Fisheries that are more adaptable to changing climate and oceanic conditions.

8. Are there opportunities for stakeholder input to update the Master Plan for Fisheries?

Yes. The MLMA places significant emphasis on the role stakeholders and outside experts should play in the development of the Master Plan. There will be multiple opportunities and platforms for stakeholders to provide feedback and guidance on key components of the amended Master Plan, including, but not limited to, community workshops, small group discussions, and meetings of the Fish and Game Commission and its Marine Resources Committee. Tribal engagement is an important component of the amendment process and was formally initiated by letters sent to California tribes in June 2016. A framework and subsequent draft of the Master Plan amendment will be available for public review and comment. Please see the timeline referenced in question 8 for further details.

9. What is the timeframe for updating the Master Plan?

The Master Plan amendment process is a phased approach. An anticipated timeline is available that outlines each phase, available here. In brief:

- Information Gathering Phase, 2015- 2016
 - Information gathering projects underway to develop work products and tools to be assessed by CDFW, with input from stakeholders, and potentially integrated into a draft amended Master Plan framework to inform the Amendment Phase.
 - Resources, including, but not limited to, existing [Fisheries Management Plans \(FMPs\)](#) and the [MLMA Lessons Learned](#), are reviewed to help inform priorities, products, and tools for potential integration into the amended Master Plan;
 - Tribal consultation begins.
- Amendment Phase, 2016 –2017
 - Tribes and stakeholder will be invited to review options developed in the Information Gathering phase and provide feedback and guidance on key components of the amendment;
 - Public workshops and other community outreach opportunities will take place during this phase.
 - The draft amendment will be prepared, available for stakeholder comments, and undergo a scientific peer review process;
 - The draft amendment will be presented to the Fish and Game Commission.
- Implementation, 2018
 - The draft amendment will be considered and potentially adopted by the Fish and Game Commission.

10. How will stakeholders be affected by the Master Plan amendment?

The Master Plan amendment will not change fishing regulations directly. Rather, it will establish priorities, policies, and approaches that will guide management in the future, making management more consistent and predictable. These policies are anticipated to include identifying fisheries that will most benefit from fishery management plans, identifying tools for assessing fish stocks and managing harvest, understanding when and how to consider socioeconomic impacts, how to integrate the marine protected area (MPA) network into fisheries management, and how best to engage stakeholders and build partnerships with fisheries managers.

11. How are outside groups and funding involved in amending the Master Plan?

Partnerships are an important means of leveraging outside resources to expand the Department's capacity and improve management outcomes. Partners for this process include tribes and outside groups such as fishing associations and environmental groups to build knowledge and help develop priorities, products, and tools for potential integration into the amended Master Plan. In addition, funds from the Ocean Protection Council and the philanthropic community are helping to pay for facilitation and supporting analyses. The Department and the Commission are committed to maintaining the integrity and transparency of the process and all partnerships will be structured to achieve that goal.

12. Does the Master Plan amendment process have any relationship to the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative?

No. This is a separate effort under a different law. The [Marine Life Protection Act](#) (MLPA) Initiative was focused on redesigning California's system of marine protected areas (MPAs) to function as a network. The effort prohibited or restricted fishing in some areas with the goal of improving ecosystem function. By contrast, the MLMA and its implementation plan, the Master Plan for Fisheries, are focused on the compatible goals of improving fisheries management and on how to achieve sustainable and economically viable fisheries in California. Nevertheless, the MLMA Master Plan amendment process is an opportunity to help identify how the new MPA network should be considered when managing fisheries.

13. How does the Master Plan amendment affect other Department priorities?

Several major strategic initiatives are moving forward at the same time as the Master Plan amendment process. These include: the development of fisheries management plans for the recreational red abalone and commercial herring fisheries; the transition to electronic reporting; addressing whale entanglements; and ongoing management of state and federally managed fisheries, among others. The Master Plan amendment is a major undertaking that will shape how the Department manages state fisheries over the next five to ten years. As a result, some other activities will likely be deferred until it is completed. An amended Master Plan will make state management of fisheries more efficient, transparent, and consistent. The goal is for an amended Master Plan to be adopted that reflects goals of the amendment process (see FAQ #4) and the interests and priorities of stakeholders invested in a sustainable future for California's fisheries.

14. How can I stay informed about the Master Plan for Fisheries amendment?

For more information about the MLMA Master Plan Amendment process, visit <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MLMA> or email MLMA@wildlife.ca.gov.