

Marine Protected Area Decadal Management Review

Community Meetings: Key Themes Summary

Overview

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) hosted a series of four public Community Meetings on October 18, October 19, November 3, and November 4, 2021, to inform the ocean community about the upcoming 2022 Marine Protected Area Decadal Management Review (Review) of California's Network of marine protected areas (MPAs), and to collect public perspectives on the MPA Network and Management Program. Each Community Meeting was targeted towards one of the following ocean community perspectives: recreational anglers, commercial fishermen, non-consumptive users*, and ocean governing agency members. All meetings were open to the public and followed the same agenda and discussion topics. To promote inclusivity among the diverse ocean-related interests, participants were invited to select the audience they identified with most and could attend all four meetings.

The Community Meetings had nearly 400 participants and showcased a diverse array of perspectives and feedback for CDFW to consider in the Review. While some of the feedback was specific to unique perspectives, there was a great deal of alignment in the themes of the feedback across all meetings.

About this Document

This document provides an overview of the virtual Community Meetings hosted by CDFW, in partnership with the Ocean Protection Council (OPC), in fall 2021, and a summary of the key themes that emerged from participant input during those meetings. The information presented in this summary will inform the 2022 MPA Decadal Management Review report which is expected to be released in early 2023. Questions, concerns, and comments about this document should be directed to MPAManagementReview@wildlife.ca.gov.

Meeting Summary Themes

- Community members expressed an interest in engaging with the science of MPAs/MPA management, and the monitoring process.
- Community members shared a desire for increased collaboration and participation across agencies, organizations, and community groups in the management of MPAs.
- Community members requested increased and diversified communications and outreach from state agencies and partner organizations.

*Note: non-consumptive users include divers, photographers, researchers, environmental groups, non-governmental organizations, etc.

Key Themes Summary

Background Information, MPA Network

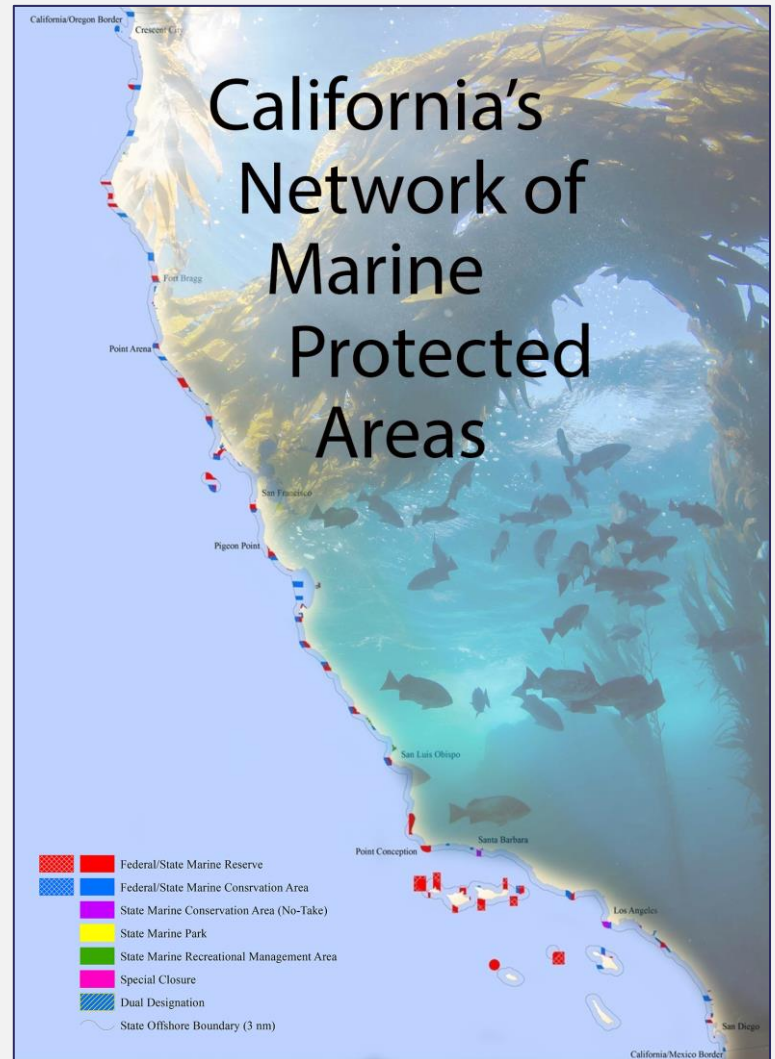
California's MPA Network

California's innovative science-guided and stakeholder-driven [MPA Network](#) was implemented as directed by the 1999 [Marine Life Protection Act](#) (MLPA). The broad objectives of the MLPA are to protect the integrity of marine ecosystems by safeguarding the diversity and abundance of marine organisms and their habitats in areas subject to minimal human disturbance. From 2004 to 2012, the state designated and implemented 124 MPAs and 14 special closures that comprise key and diverse habitats along California's coast. California has the largest MPA Network in North America and one of the largest ecologically connected networks in the world, encompassing approximately 842 square miles ([16% of state waters](#)).

The [2016 Master Plan for MPAs](#) established a timeline for CDFW to conduct a comprehensive review of the MPA Network and Management Program every ten years, starting from the year the Network was completed in 2012, to inform the adaptive management process at the core of the MLPA. The Review will be the first decadal evaluation of the progress of California's MPA Network towards meeting the goals of the MLPA. The Review will consider all available sources of information about the MPA Network, including assessments of ecological and socioeconomic [monitoring results](#), input from Tribal representatives and members, MPA enforcement data, and input from members of the broader ocean users community that will help inform future management efforts.

The Review report will be publicly released in January 2023 and presented to the Fish and Game Commission in February 2023. In April 2023, the Fish and Game Commission may consider directing next steps for CDFW to address any potential adaptive management actions in the four pillars of the MPA Management Program*. Additional information about the MPA Network, MPA Management Program, and Review can be found at the [MPA Decadal Management Review webpage](#).

**Note: this timeline reflects the most recent information available following the Fish and Game Commission meeting on December 16, 2021 and has been updated since being presented at the Community Meetings.*



Key Themes Summary

Background Information, Community Meetings

Fall 2021 Community Meetings

Participation

Recreational Fishing Community

October 18, 2021

97 participants

Commercial Fishing Community

October 19, 2021

79 participants

Non-consumptive Community

November 3, 2021

133 participants

Government Agencies

November 4, 2021

78 participants

The Community Meetings hosted by CDFW in October and November 2021 occurred via online video conferencing software (Zoom) and were recorded to improve transparency and accessibility. Third-party, neutral facilitation of the meetings was provided by Strategic Earth Consulting and funded by OPC. Each meeting followed the same agenda, but discussions were focused on specific perspectives across California's ocean community to ensure conversations were focused and relevant to the interests of participants. The content and discussion topics presented by CDFW and the facilitation team were the same across all meetings, with minor updates in later meetings based on community feedback. As of December 2021, meeting [recordings](#)* are available upon request, with plans to post them to CDFW's website once closed caption text has been verified.

After a brief presentation from CDFW about the MPA Management Program and the Review development process, participants moved into breakout rooms based on the coastal region they most identified with (i.e., North, Central, or South Coast).

Breakout Rooms: Q & A

After a brief presentation from CDFW about the MPA Management Program and the Review development process, participants moved into breakout rooms based on the coastal region they most identified with (i.e., North, Central, or South Coast).

CDFW staff then solicited feedback by asking the following questions:

1. *What are your highest priority topics/issues and sources of information that should be considered in the Decadal Management Review?*
2. *How would you define, measure, and/or assess progress toward Marine Life Protection Act goals?*
3. *What role would you like your community to play in the MPA Management Program moving forward?*
4. *Any other reflections/recommendations regarding MPA management and the role of the ocean community in the broader MPA program?*

All community member responses to these questions were recorded in real-time by members of the facilitation team for CDFW to consider as they develop the Review report. The high-level or key themes that arose during those discussions are summarized on the following pages.

*Note: recordings without closed captions are currently available by request only, please contact MPAManagementReview@wildlife.ca.gov for viewing.

Key Themes Summary

Breakout Rooms, Key Themes 1

Community members expressed an interest in engaging with the science of MPAs/MPA management, and the monitoring process.

- Individuals across perspectives of the ocean community sought **clarity on the goals of the MPA Network** and an assessment of progress towards achieving those goals.
 - Participants from the recreational fishing community and ocean governance community expressed their belief that **MPA goals are too broad as currently written**. They are unsure whether the State hopes to achieve a return to pristine conditions, slow the rate of decline, maintain the current ecological conditions, or a “middle ground” approach.
 - Participants from the ocean governance community and non-consumptive community expressed a **desire to see equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts reflected in the goals of MPA Network** (e.g., equity in enforcement, Tribal consultation, engagement of diverse multicultural groups in education and monitoring).
 - Participants from the recreational and commercial fishing communities expressed a desire to understand **how effective MPAs have been in achieving the educational and ecological goals** of the MLPA. A common question was, “Have fish stocks been improved by MPAs?”
 - Participants from the recreational and commercial fishing communities expressed a **desire for MPA goals to be updated to include a return of fishing opportunities**, especially in notable legacy fishing areas.
- Individuals across the range of perspectives within the ocean community shared a **desire for MPA monitoring data to be more accessible** and readily available.
 - Participants from the recreational fishing community expressed an interest in **seeing data visualized in a clear and digestible way** to increase understanding among members of the public across educational backgrounds.
 - Participants from the recreational fishing community suggested that CDFW **share monitoring data earlier (i.e., as soon as it is available) in the decision-making process** to allow for more informed public comment and review opportunities. They also suggested CDFW should consider modifying the Review timeline if the data used to inform the Review are not made available soon.
- Members of the non-consumptive community expressed **interest in an economic assessment of the recreational value of MPAs and healthy coastal ecosystems**.



Key Themes Summary

Breakout Rooms, Key Themes 1 continued

Community members expressed an interest in engaging with the science of MPAs/MPA management, and the monitoring process.

- Individuals across the ocean community expressed an **interest in understanding the science resulting from MPA monitoring projects** and how it is used.
 - Participants from the recreational, commercial, and non-consumptive communities expressed **concern that the 10-year adaptive management cycle was not responsive enough** to address rapid environmental changes.
 - Participants across the ocean community expressed interest in **understanding how the Review relates to the 30x30 initiative** and whether MPA Network expansion is being considered to achieve the goals of 30x30.
 - Participants from the commercial fishing community voiced their **desire to have access to the data and methodologies of MPA monitoring studies** that are used to inform the State's decision-making.
 - Participants from the recreational and commercial fishing communities expressed **concern that fishing effort is concentrated along MPA boundaries** and current research is not sufficiently studying this phenomenon and how it may impact the success of MPAs and their ability to provide "spillover" into areas outside MPAs beyond the immediate MPA borders.
 - Participants across the ocean community voiced a **desire to see climate change considerations integrated into the Review**.

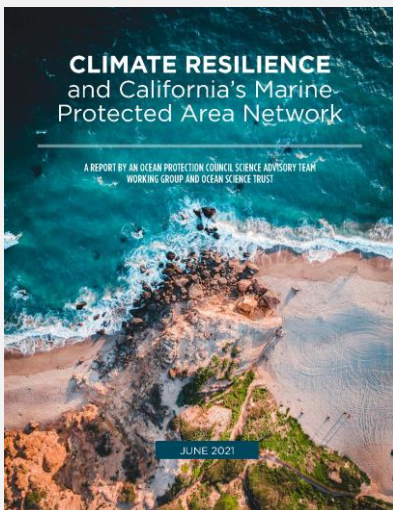


Photo: K. McElgot

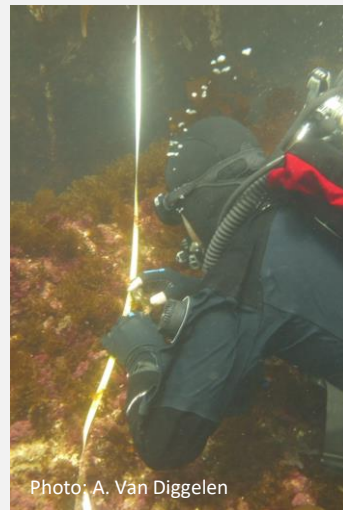
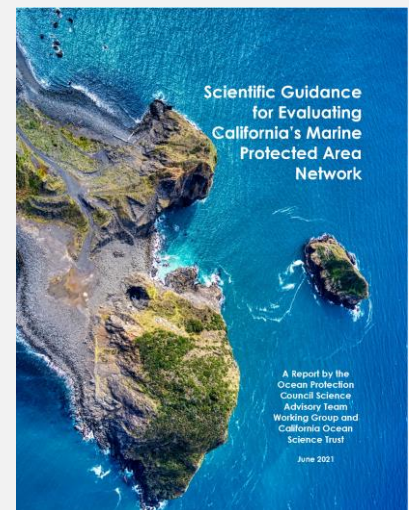


Photo: A. Van Diggelen



Key Themes Summary

Breakout Rooms, Key Themes 2

Community members shared a desire for increased collaboration and participation across agencies, organizations, and community groups in the management of MPAs.

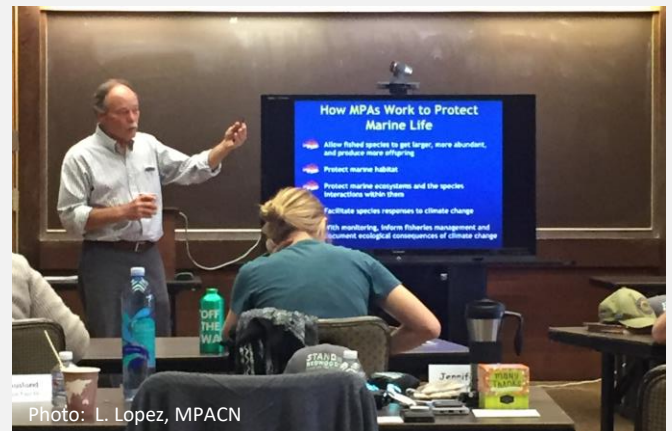
- Members of the commercial fishing, non-consumptive, and ocean governance communities were **interested in ways CDFW can improve enforcement of MPA regulations** and ultimately improve compliance.
 - Participants in the non-consumptive and governance communities expressed a **desire to see enforcement data (number of patrols, agencies involved, citation data)** as well demographic data on citations issued to ensure equitable enforcement across user groups and regions.
 - Participants from the commercial fishing and non-consumptive community throughout California expressed **the concern that current enforcement staffing is not sufficient to achieve adequate compliance with MPA regulations**.
 - Participants from the non-consumptive ocean community shared their belief that **citizen enforcement efforts (i.e., via the CalTIP hotline) can be very effective and should be promoted and encouraged**.
 - Participants from the non-consumptive and governance communities shared **an interest in seeing CDFW collaborating with State Parks, city governments, local law enforcement, and federal agencies to improve enforcement capabilities**.
- Individuals across perspectives in the ocean community shared an **interest in citizen science opportunities** and community participation in MPA management.
 - Participants from the non-consumptive, recreational, and commercial fishing communities voiced a **desire for opportunities to provide citizen science data, including data collected by fishermen**, that the State can incorporate in the Review.
 - Participants from the non-consumptive, recreational, and commercial fishing communities expressed a **desire for the state to allow community members to engage in habitat restoration in MPAs**. Participants mentioned the examples of allowing community urchin culling and kelp culturing to help restore ecological balance.
 - Participants from the governance, non-consumptive, and recreational fishing communities were **in favor of Tribal co-management of MPAs**. The desire for inclusion of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) in MPA management was voiced in several rooms.
 - Participants from the ocean governance community expressed their belief that **scientific collection permits are too expensive and difficult to obtain**. Additionally, they felt the decision-making process to award these permits is not transparent.

Key Themes Summary

Breakout Rooms, Key Themes 3

Community members requested increased and diversified outreach and communications from state agencies and partner organizations.

- Individuals across perspectives shared the opinion that **more outreach and engagement efforts should be conducted** across multiple formats to connect with as many stakeholders as possible to raise awareness of MPAs, provide information on how the public can engage, and keep them informed on the status of decision-making.
 - Participants from the commercial and recreational fishing communities expressed an interest in meeting with scientists via a format that would **allow researchers to share their methodologies and results while allowing opportunities for Q&A** to improve understanding (e.g., 'brown bag' seminars).
 - Individuals across the ocean community would like more **clarity on how they can engage in efforts to support management of the network**, especially monitoring.
 - Participants from the non-consumptive and commercial fishing communities expressed their belief that **CDFW should develop a variety of digital and hard-copy outreach materials to reach the public more broadly**. Suggestions included newsletters, mailers, social media posts, and flyers posted at ports, tourist attractions, town centers, etc.
- Members of the recreational and commercial fishing communities expressed their **perception that communications from CDFW are skewed towards non-consumptive ocean users**.



Key Themes Summary

Looking Ahead

Anticipated Timeline

This timeline reflects the most recent information available following the Fish and Game Commission meeting on December 16, 2021 and has been updated since being presented at the Community Meetings. The anticipated next steps for the development of the Review report and future engagement opportunities are detailed below*.

January 2022

- Long-term monitoring reports which build upon baseline monitoring data will be publicly available.
- CDFW receives information from federal and local partners involved in the MPA Management Program since 2012 to include in the Review report as appendices.

February 2022

- Overview of long-term monitoring reports presented at the Fish and Game Commission meeting.

March 2022

- Present the Review process through Community Meeting with California Tribes and Tribal leaders (date TBD).

- CDFW releases the Review report to the public.

January 2023

- CDFW presents the Review report to the Fish and Game Commission.

February 2023

- The Fish and Game Commission's Marine Resources Committee discusses the Review and any adaptive management recommendations. Public comments are taken to solicit public feedback.
- A public symposium is held in conjunction with the Marine Resources Committee meeting (date TBD). The symposium will feature opportunities to learn more about MPA science and management recommendations, and to display and celebrate the efforts of the many Tribal and community partners in the MPA Management Program.

March 2023

- The Fish and Game Commission's Tribal Committee discusses the Review and adaptive management recommendations and solicits Tribal feedback.
- The Fish and Game Commission considers any recommendations and/or findings, then provides CDFW with direction on next steps.

April 2023

*Note: due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the outline reflected here is approximate and all events and their dates are subject to change. Please check the [MPA Decadal Management Review webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information.

Key Themes Summary

Wrapping Up

Anticipated Timeline, continued

In addition to the details provided on the timeline found on the previous page, throughout 2022 please expect:

- Ongoing Tribal and stakeholder engagement. Additional information sharing efforts such as webinars on long-term monitoring reports and virtual and/or in-person meetings (in compliance with local COVID-19 regulations) will be added and announced via CDFW and OPC's communications channels (i.e., social media, blogs, email listservs) as available.
- CDFW to deliver updates to the Fish and Game Commission and their sub-committees.
- CDFW drafting the Review report.

Additional Information

Additional information on MPA monitoring data, science guidance, and further opportunities for public participation can also be found on the [MPA Decadal Management Review webpage](#). Comments and questions can be submitted anytime to MPAManagementReview@wildlife.ca.gov and a CDFW staff member will respond in a timely manner.

Participant Thank You

Thank you to the 350-plus participants who were able to join one, two, or all the MPA 2022 Decadal Management Review Community Meetings!

It is a priority of CDFW and OPC to integrate the knowledge, expertise, and needs of the stakeholder community into the Decadal Management Review. We deeply appreciate your time, thoughtful input, and energetic engagement!

