

Staff Summary for April 16-17, 2025

27. Commission Policy on Naming Installations**Today's Item****Information** ☐**Action** ☒

Discussion and possible approval of amendments to naming installations policy, including renaming policy title to *Naming Protected Areas*.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Discussed proposed revisions to *Naming Installations Policy*, directed staff to conduct more tribal outreach April 17-18, 2024 and June 19-20, 2025
- Tribal Committee (TC) discussed proposed changes to *Naming Installations Policy* August 13, 2024; TC
- Discussed proposed changes to the *Naming Installations Policy* October 9-10, 2024
- TC discussed proposed changes to the *Naming Installations Policy* December 10, 2024; TC
- Discussed proposed changes to the *Naming Installations Policy* and directed staff to refine language. December 11-12, 2024
- **Today, discuss revised draft amended policy April 16-17, 2025**

Background

Since June 2023, staff has been advancing a plan to review and present potential updates to Commission policies, focusing on justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and tribal perspectives. Due to significant capacity issues earlier in 2024, progress was limited to a small number of policies. However, staff remains committed to advancing this project in small, consistent stages.

Potential updates to the *Naming Installations Policy*, with a proposed renaming to *Naming Protected Areas Policy*, were initially presented at the Commission's February 2024 meeting and subsequently at Commission and committee meetings throughout 2024. Following discussion at its December 2024 meeting, the Commission directed staff to revise the draft proposed language. The goal of the revision was to refine content associated with honoring traditional tribal names and language for protected areas naming for further discussion at a future meeting.

As directed, Commission staff prepared revised proposed language that seeks to reflect the Commission's intent. Staff anticipated presenting the options for Commission consideration at this meeting. However, based on the need for additional review by the Department, and input from the Commission president and vice president as requested in December, staff recommends referring the revised proposed language to TC for additional tribal review, and considering potential action at the June 2025 Commission meeting. The TC meeting, originally scheduled for April 15, 2025, is proposed to be rescheduled to May 7, 2025.

Significant Public Comments

A commenter writes to oppose the draft policy amendment language as presented in February 2024, which considers traditional tribal placenames when naming or renaming protected areas, including marine protected areas. The commenter notes the limitations of the draft amended

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policy, such as removing the ability to honor individuals who have made contributions to California's natural environment [allowed in the current policy].

Recommendation

Commission staff: Refer the revised proposed language *Naming Installations Policy* (with proposed renaming as *Naming Protected Areas Policy*) to TC for review, and continue this item to the June 11-12, 2025 meeting.

Exhibits

1. [Letter from Keith Rootsaert, Giant Kelp Restoration, received April 3, 2025](#)

Motion (N/A)

From: Keith Rootsart <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 03:34 PM

To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Cc: Ashcraft, Susan@FGC <[REDACTED]>

Subject: FGC Meeting Written Comments

WARNING: This message is from an external source. Verify the sender and exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments.

Dear FGC staff,

Attached are our written comments for the April 17, 2025 meeting Agenda item 27. These comments are hereby submitted prior to the written comment deadline of April 3 at 5:00 PM.

Thank you,

Keith Rootsart

Giant Giant Kelp Restoration

[REDACTED]



Giant Giant Kelp
Restoration Project

Regarding Agenda Item 27 – Commission Policy on Naming Installations.

This agenda item considers changes to a 13 year old policy (Figure 1) to remove the names of historic people from three MPAs. There are three MPAs named after individuals: Lovers Point-Julia Platt State Marine Reserve, Edward F. Ricketts State Marine Conservation Area, and Robert W. Crown State Marine Conservation Area in Central California.

There was a petition ([2022-06](#)) to rename Casino Point State Marine Conservation Area to Dr. Bill Bushing SMCA at Casino Point after Dr. Bill's death December 21, 2021 but this widely supported petition was denied (Figure 2) by the Commission because Dr. Bill had only recently passed and the policy is that he had to have [passed for 5 years](#). In discussing the petition, Commissioners [considered](#) revisiting the many FGC policies and referred this to FGC staff. There was no mention of not allowing naming MPAs after individuals only that we should consider naming sites after indigenous people's historical names of places.

In Steven L. Yaffee's book Beyond Polarization, Susan Ashcraft, then working for the Department, stated that "DFG did not like the use of historic Native American names for MPAs because they differed from geographic labels used by the public" (p324). Nevertheless, two MPAs were labeled with their tribal names in the southern region in 2012 (p346).

In December 2025 divers could petition to name Casino Point after Dr. Bill under current policy, but this new language would preclude that possibility. This is just one of many examples of the anti-diver sentiment aimed at us as we promote diver stewardship of the ocean. Divers are considered by the Department as a "Vigilante Horde" and "Ecoterrorists." Again, the wishes of the diving community are unexpectedly and deliberately opposed. This change in policy ignores public sentiment and creates a policy that nobody has spoken about or advocated for in public and which CDFW advocated against.

To further punish divers, this policy seeks to remove the names of our local heroes. Removing an individual's name from a place is usually done because it was later revealed that the person is not worthy of the honor, like tearing down a statue of Saddam Hussein or Robert E. Lee. People genuinely dislike changing names capriciously to blow with the political winds of the day such as The Gulf of Mexico being renamed as The Gulf of America or renaming the renamed Denali back to Mt. McKinley.

These three MPAs were established and named in 2007 by a gathered constituency during the MLPA Central Coast deliberations. These individuals made an extraordinary, unique, and long-lasting contribution to the conservation, use, and/or enjoyment of California's

living marine resources. Their efforts have a direct connection with the place and their contribution stood the test of time.

Here are the three individuals:

Julia Barlow Platt, born September 14, 1857 was a Harvard educated embryologist, politician and mayor of Pacific Grove. In Dr. Steve Palumbi's book *the Death and Life of Monterey Bay: A story of Revival*, Platt is credited with tearing down a fence to give the public access to the beach at Lovers Cove. Her prescient pioneering set up a marine protected area that was crucial to the recovery of the sea otter.

Edward F. Ricketts, born May 14, 1897, was a marine biologist and strong influencer of John Steinbeck as they journeyed together on the *Western Flyer* to the Sea of Cortez. Ricketts wrote *Between Pacific Tides* (1939) a pioneering study of intertidal ecology. Over 16 species of marine animals are named after Ricketts. His old wooden laboratory with wells for collecting tidepool animals still remains next to the Monterey Bay Aquarium on the shore of the MPA named after him.

Six-time elected State Assemblyman Robert W. Crown, born January 23 1922, campaigned to preserve Alameda Beach (1880) as public parkland. The SMCA that bears his name is very small, only 132 acres along 2.5 miles of shoreline at the former Alameda Naval Air Station, an island now developed for civilian use. It is the only MPA on the island of 75,353 residents. Crown Memorial State Beach, adjacent to the Robert W. Crown State Marine Conservation Area was also named after him in recognition of his work to preserve the area.

This new policy seeks to remove the names of historic and directly connected individuals to follow the political need of including indigenous people in the naming process who were largely excluded from the MLPA initiative. Renaming these places capriciously is lame. Places where the Commissioners reside like San Diego, Santa Cruz, and St. Helena are all named after people. Napa and Arcata are named after indigenous places. Why can't both naming conventions be allowed?

G2KR is proposing a new State Marine Reserve adjacent to the Edward F. Ricketts State Marine Conservation Area and near Lovers Point-Julia Platt State Marine Reserve, that we tentatively call Tanker's Reef State Marine Reserve as a working title. In early Monterey history this was the sandy bottomed location where oil tankers would anchor before onboarding crude oil from Coalinga at the Standard Oil platform, now Wharf #2. But there is an earlier history of Tanker's Reef that we could honor. Establishing this new protected area in Monterey would be a great opportunity for the Ohlone Coastanoan Esselen Nation to name and commemorate the new MPA for recommendation to FGC.

In conclusion, renaming these three MPAs is just a bad idea and will thereby cast aspersions on these three amazing individuals. We should keep the policy and allow the diving community to commemorate Dr. Bill's, or other future environmental heroes', significant contributions to the marine ecology of California.

Keith Rootsart
Giant Giant Kelp Restoration

Figure 1.

Naming Installations Policy with Draft Potential Revisions

Naming Protected Areas Installations Policy

It is the policy of the Fish and Game Commission that:

- I. ~~No fish hatchery, game refuge, wildlife area, ecological reserve, or marine protected area (MPA) or any installation, other than Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), shall be named for any person, living or dead. Installations Protected areas shall be named in a manner which will indicate their geographical location, avoiding as far as possible the names of local political units. Vessels shall be named for fish.~~
- II. Traditional tribal placenames for a geographic location shall be considered in collaboration and collaboration with local tribes when naming or renaming any protected area, including MPAs.
- I. ~~The Commission may commemorate an individual by including that individual's name after the geographic name of an MPA if all of the following criteria are met:~~
 1. ~~The individual has been deceased for a minimum of 5 years;~~
 2. ~~It has been determined the individual has made an extraordinary, unique, and long-lasting contribution to the conservation, use, and/or enjoyment of California's living marine resources;~~
 3. ~~It has been determined with reasonable care and consideration that the individual's merit and/or contribution can stand the test of time;~~
 4. ~~The individual and/or their efforts have a direct connection with the geographic location of the MPA or immediate vicinity.~~
- III. The Commission shall be represented at and may participate in all ceremonies dedicating the launching or inauguration of any wildlife area, ecological reserve, or MPA ~~or any installation of the facilities mentioned above.~~ The Department and the Commission staff shall coordinate their work and efforts in ~~setting up or arranging such dedication ceremonies programs.~~

(Amended 4/7/1994, and 5/23/2012, 2/xx/2024)

Figure 2.

Tracking No.	Date Received	Name of Petitioner	Subject of Request	Short Description	FGC Receipt Scheduled	FGC Action Scheduled
2022-06	3/4/2022	Ken Kurtis	Marine Protected Areas: Casino Point SMCA	Rename Casino Point SMCA to "Dr. Bill Bushing SMCA at Casino Point" to provide permanent recognition of the 55 year legacy of resident marine biologist Dr. Bill, who had a direct connection to the area now named Casino Point SMCA; Dr. Bill passed away in December 2021; June 2022 would mark his 75th birthday.	4/20-21/2022	6/15-16/2022

REFER to FGC staff for review and recommendation.	6/15-16/2022	FGC Staff	DENY due to inconsistency with FGC Naming Installations Policy (https://fgc.ca.gov/About/Policies/Miscellaneous#Installations). The policy dictates, with one exception, that installations shall not be named for any person, living or dead, and shall be named in a manner that will indicate their geographical location, avoiding the names of political units. The exception is marine protected areas (MPAs), where FGC may commemorate an individual by including that individual's name after the geographic name of an MPA if four criteria are met. The petition does not meet the first criteria which requires the individual be deceased for a minimum of five years. Since the first criteria has not been met, staff has not dedicated the time and outreach necessary to assess the additional three criteria.
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