

California Fish and Game Commission Regional MPA Petition Meetings: Goals, Expectations and Format

Overview

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) is holding three regional meetings (April 21, May 5-6, and May 19) to consider recently evaluated marine protected area (MPA) petitions. We expect to hear comments from people with varied perspectives and deeply held values about California's ocean and coastal places. In these meetings, the Commission is committed to supporting an environment where everyone can safely participate, while also protecting free speech. Meeting goals, expectations, and format information have been created to support a respectful, constructive environment where all voices are heard; we share them here to enhance transparency for regional meeting participants.

Regional Meeting Goals

- Provide a safe and inclusive environment for sharing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.
- Uphold the Commission's [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(JEDI\) Policy](#) and goals, including centering principles of environmental justice and access for underserved communities; recognizing and honoring the perspectives and traditional knowledge and practices of California tribes and tribal communities; and working from a shared understanding of key JEDI-related [definitions and terms](#).
- Ensure all commissioners can hear and participate in petition dialogue in real time.
- Receive overview of petitions, ask questions, and discuss petitions and evaluations.
- Daylight areas of agreement or disagreement, as well as potential modifications and compromises.
- Gather input to inform Commission recommendations or make requests for additional information for future consideration.
- Deliberate on petition content without making final decisions, which will occur at later publicly noticed Commission meetings; real-time negotiation or resolution may not be possible within the meeting time.

Regional Meeting Expectations: Commitment to a Respectful Environment and Free Speech

We acknowledge that regional meeting participants care deeply about California's marine and coastal places and public trust resources. These meetings are intended to provide space to openly and respectfully share relevant information and perspectives on MPA petitions. The following content is intended to set expectations and tone for these meetings.

The Commission is committed to creating and maintaining an environment where all participants feel safe, respected, and able to contribute meaningfully. It therefore strongly discourages personal attacks, intimidation, harassment, hateful expressions (including racial or

other identity-based comments), or other conduct that targets individuals rather than issues. These comments can diminish the quality of public dialogue, discourage community participation, and potentially reduce the likelihood that commissioners will give weight to comments delivered in this manner.

The Commission upholds the right to free speech. All individuals possess this right and are entitled to use their full speaking time to express their views, including critiques, alternative perspectives, and disagreement. However, disruptions to the meeting will not be tolerated. Profanity, obscenity, personal threats or attacks on members, staff or other commenters, references to protected characteristics, offensive speech, yelling, interruptions, audible and disruptive reactions, or disputing another speaker during their speaking time may constitute a disruption to the meeting, depending on the circumstances.

The Commission may restrict an individual's right to speak when necessary to avoid disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting. In these cases, the presiding commissioner may gavel or mute a speaker's microphone. If the disruptive behavior continues, after a call for decorum and a warning, the person or people disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting may be removed from the meeting, the meeting may be suspended, and the room may be cleared.

Regional Meeting Participation Logistics: Day of Engagement and Written Comments

Participating in Person, on Zoom, or by Phone

All meetings are subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act and open to the public. Participation and comment are available in person, via Zoom webinar, or by phone; meetings are also live streamed for listening or viewing only. The presiding commissioner will explain how to indicate your interest in speaking and time limits. Staff are available to answer logistical questions. Audio and video archives are posted to the Commission website after each meeting.

To speak on an agenda item in-person, please complete a "speaker card" and provide it to the designated staff member before the agenda item is announced. Please complete one speaker card per agenda item. Cards will be available near the entrance of the meeting room. In-person speakers will be identified in groups; please line up when your name is called.

To speak on an agenda item via Zoom or phone, please "raise" your hand either through the Zoom function or by pressing *9 once on your phone when prompted at the beginning of the agenda item. Speakers on Zoom or phone will be identified by your display name or the last three digits of your phone number; listen closely for when your name or number is called.

Visual Presentations: Slides, Videos, and Graphics

All electronic presentations must be submitted by the Supplemental Comment Deadline and approved by the Commission executive director before the meeting.

- Electronic presentations must be provided by email to fgc@fgc.ca.gov. If the file is too large to send via email, contact staff to identify an alternative method for submitting the file.
- Specify to which meeting date and petition/geography it pertains to.
- All electronic formats must be Windows PC compatible.

- If presenting at the in-person meeting location, it is recommended that you bring a print copy of your presentation in case of technical difficulties.
- Approval is at the discretion of the presiding commissioner and is not guaranteed.

Persons with Disabilities or Accommodation Needs

Individuals with disabilities and/or needing reasonable accommodation to participate in Commission meetings may contact the Civil Rights Office (CRO) of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at civilrights@wildlife.ca.gov. Requests for facility or meeting accessibility and requests for American Sign Language interpreters should be submitted at least 72 hours before the meeting to help ensure that the requested accommodation can be met. If an accommodation is no longer needed, please notify CRO immediately.

Individuals relying on an interpreter are entitled to at least twice the allotted speaking time pursuant to Government Code Section 11125.7(c), and are asked to provide at least 72 hours' notice. Additional time for other accommodation needs may be granted at the presiding commissioner's discretion to ensure equal opportunity to address the Commission.

Written Public Comments and Submission Deadlines

The public is encouraged to submit written comments on any agenda item. Written comments can be more detailed than what you may have the opportunity to share with commissioners in verbal comments made during the meeting. If written comments are received before the deadline, they will be shared with Commissioners before the meeting; you may wish to refer to your full written comments during your verbal testimony during the meeting.

Submit written comments by one of three methods:

- E-mail to fgc@fgc.ca.gov
- Mail to California Fish and Game Commission, P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
- Deliver to California Fish and Game Commission, 715 P Street, 16th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 (call at least one business day in advance to arrange delivery).

Meeting Date	Comment Deadline*	Supplemental Comment Deadline**
April 21, 2026	April 13, 8:00 AM	April 17, 12:00 PM
May 5-6, 2026	April 22, 5:00 PM	April 30, 12:00 PM
May 19, 2026	May 6, 5:00 PM	May 14, 12:00 PM

* Written comments received at the Commission office by the **Comment Deadline** will be made available to the Commissioners prior to the meeting, made available to the public, and may be posted online with meeting materials.

** Written comments received at the Commission office by the **Supplemental Comment Deadline** will be made available to Commissioners at the meeting, but not posted online.

After these deadlines, written comments may be delivered in person to the meeting. Please bring twelve (12) copies of written comments and hand them to the designated staff member just prior to speaking.

Regional Meeting Expectations: Agenda and Format

Meeting Agenda

The meeting agenda outlines the planned sequence of items, during which presentations, discussion, and public comment will occur. Each meeting includes a designated public comment period for each agenda item, as well as a “general public comment” agenda item for topics not on the agenda.

Meeting Format

For each regional meeting, the Commission will discuss from four to seven MPA petitions (with eight to fifteen proposed actions). Please refer to these Tables for information on which petitions will be heard at which regional meetings.

In regional meetings, each MPA petition agenda item will follow the same general format:

- Petitioners will present for 10-12 minutes, depending on whether a petition is tribally led or co-led and the number of nested actions within the petition. Presentations will include:
 - Regulatory actions requested
 - Purpose of requested action
 - Updates since petition was submitted in November 2023 or since amended in March 2025
 - A focus on regionally or locally relevant components, especially if petition spans multiple regions
- Commission staff re-cap of evaluation recommendations
- Commissioner questions
- Ceded speaker time
- Public comment and Commission discussion

Regional Meeting Expectations: Guidelines on Speaker Time

Under Commission procedures, the presiding commissioner allocates a maximum speaking time (typically one to three minutes, with exceptions) for each agenda item. For the regional MPA petition meetings, the Commission aims to support a more flexible, conversational dialogue whenever possible, to reflect the spirit of the Marine Resources Committee meetings. The Commission understands that many participants travel long distances or rearrange commitments to attend, whether in person or remotely.

That said, the Commission expects the regional meetings to be well-attended, potentially with large numbers of speakers. The Commission is committed to hearing all scheduled petitions, while also maximizing the amount of information and number of viewpoints shared by attendees.

To balance these goals, the presiding commissioner will seek to ensure discussions are focused, respectful, and efficient, and that as many voices as possible can be heard. In that spirit, the presiding commissioner will specify a target maximum speaking time for those wishing to speak on a petition.

Tools the Presiding Commissioner May Use to Maximize Viewpoints Shared

To help participants prepare for regional meetings, we share here proposed speaker time guidelines, as well as other tools the presiding commissioner may use to manage large numbers of speakers on any given petition. Note that at any time, the presiding commissioner may choose to use these or other tools to focus comments and/or maximize participation. Please keep these guidelines in mind as you prepare your public comments.

- **If there are 25 or fewer speakers:** Speakers may be asked to speak for no more than **two to three minutes** each.
- **If there are more than 25 speakers:** Speakers may be asked to speak for no more than **one minute** each.

If there are large numbers of speakers for any petition: The presiding commissioner may also choose to rely on group sentiment tools to allow participants to indicate their views, when there is not enough time for all individuals to speak. These tools are strategies to broaden participation, not to limit viewpoints.

- **Levels-of-Support Checks:** Quick indicators such as “I like it,” “I can live with it,” or “I cannot support it”
- **Group Sentiment Capture:** Hand-raising or digital reactions when not everyone can speak individually
- **Time Management Adjustments:** Modifying pacing, structure, or feedback tools so all petitions can be addressed during the meeting

Additional Time for Speakers with Ceded Time

A speaker may be approved to speak for up to **three minutes if five or more** participants cede their time to them. This allows a group to designate spokespersons to provide comment on a specified MPA petition agenda item. Participants ceding their time:

- must be present (in person or on Zoom) when the agenda item is called; and
- forego their own opportunity to speak on that agenda item.

If you plan to cede time:

- **In-person:** the five participants ceding their time must complete speaker cards and approach the staff table with the spokesperson before the agenda item begins so staff can confirm the presence of those ceding time.
- **Remote (via Zoom or phone):** participants who wish to cede their time must notify the Commission at fgc@fgc.ca.gov by the Supplemental Comment Deadline and include the name of the individual to whom they are ceding time. All individuals ceding time must also be present on Zoom or phone during the agenda item.

Considerations for Giving Effective Public Comment

- When addressing the Commission, please give your name and the name of any organization you represent.
- Respect the meeting environment, other speakers, staff, and commissioners, as outlined above.

- Treat all participants with courtesy and recognize diverse experiences.
- Listen respectfully; one person speaks at a time.
- Avoid personal accusations, stereotyping, or deliberate misinformation.
- Come prepared and keep comments centered on the topic.
- Focus on clear, concise contributions that support productive dialogue.
- If there are several speakers with the same concerns, you are encouraged to appoint a spokesperson and avoid repetitive comments.
- Treat disagreements as shared problems to solve.
- When offering critique, propose alternative ideas when appropriate.
- To help first-time participants organize comments, it may be helpful to focus on:
 - Do you support or oppose the petition and why?
 - Why is it important to you, your community, or your work?
 - What action(s) would you like the Commission to consider?