

Introduction to Regional Bin 2 Marine Protected Area Petitions and Evaluations

Today's Item

Information ☒

Action ☐

This regional meeting focuses on marine protected area (MPA) petitions with proposed actions across Los Angeles County through San Diego County, including Santa Catalina Island. For each petition, the Commission will receive presentations from MPA petitioner(s), ask clarifying questions, receive community input, and discuss petitioned actions and recommendations. The Commission may develop recommendations for consideration at a future meeting. No formal action will be taken today.

This staff summary provides an overview and background relevant to the four petitions and regional actions listed under Agenda Items 2–5.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

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| • Received 20 MPA petitions | December 2023 |
| • Referred 20 MPA petitions to Marine Resources Committee (MRC) and Department for review and recommendation | February 2024 |
| • Approved MRC recommendation for sorting MPA petitions and evaluating individual actions within “binned” petitions, and supported scheduling consideration of individual actions as recommendations were ready | August 2024 |
| • MRC received Department recommendations for individual actions proposed in 5 “bin 1” MPA petitions and developed MRC recommendations; recommendations adopted by Commission | November 2024; MRC and December 2024 |
| • Petitioners for the 15 “bin 2” petitions afforded an opportunity to amend petitions | December 2024 – March 2025 |
| • MRC received Department proposal for bin 2 petition evaluation framework and developed recommendations for grouping the 15 MPA petitions in bin 2 for future review and discussion | July 16-17, 2025; MRC |
| • Received and approved MRC recommendation for the bin 2 petition evaluation framework, with one modification related to a question about tribal leadership/sponsorship of petitions | August 13-14, 2025 |
| • Tribal Committee (TC) received overview from tribal leads or co-leads of 5 MPA petitions; received Department presentation, and developed TC recommendation | April 14, 2026; TC |

Staff Overview for May 19, 2026

MPA Agenda Items

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- Approved TC recommendation for Department to evaluate 5 *revised* tribally led or co-led petitions *as proposed on April 14*; received Department bin 2 petition evaluations for 10 non-tribally led or co-led petitions April 15-16, 2026
- At San Mateo regional MPA meeting, receive petitioner presentations, ask clarifying questions, receive community input, and discuss region-specific petitioned actions in 6 MPA petitions April 21, 2026
- At Goleta regional MPA meeting, receive petitioner presentations, ask clarifying questions, receive community input, and discuss region-specific petitioned actions in 15 MPA petitions (7 petitions on May 5; 8 petitions on May 6) May 5–6, 2026
- **At San Clemente regional MPA meeting, receive petitioner presentations, ask clarifying questions, receive community input, and discuss region-specific petitioned actions in 4 MPA petitions** May 19, 2026

Background

In early 2023, the state completed the first 10-year review of the statewide MPA network and management program. The “decadal management review” (known as the DMR) generated significant public interest in contributing to adaptive management of the network, including through public proposals to modify existing MPAs or management approaches. In response, the Commission agreed to accept public proposals using its existing process for public petitions for regulation change. The Commission set a submission deadline for late November 2023 for receipt at the December 2023 Commission meeting.

In November 2023, the Commission received 20 petitions proposing modifications to MPAs or new MPAs. By late 2024, the Commission acted on five of the petitions—categorized as “bin 1” for near-term evaluation—leaving 15 “bin 2” petitions for additional evaluation under a [bin 2 evaluation framework](#) approved by the Commission.

Petition Amendments (Formal and Informal)

Bin 2 petitioners were provided an opportunity until March 2025 to submit formal amendments to their original petitions, to be integrated into evaluations to be conducted by the Department. Since the March 2025 amendment deadline, several petitioners have identified additional requested changes for the Commission’s awareness, noting these revisions respond to community concerns or, in one case, input from the U.S. Department of Defense.

For tribally led or co-led petitions, the Commission provided additional time for the Department to consult with tribes and for California tribes to formally join petitions as co-sponsors. The Commission also requested that tribally led or co-led petitions be discussed at the April 14,

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2026 Tribal Committee (TC) meeting and potentially provide a recommendation to the Commission.

For non-tribally led petitions, the Commission supported the Department's and staff's request to not incorporate additional, informal, post-deadline amendments into the evaluation process. Instead, petitioners were asked to describe any proposed changes not reflected in their original or amended petitions during regional MPA petition meetings, scheduled for after Department evaluations were released.

Department Evaluations

On March 20, 2026, the Department released its evaluations and recommendations for 10 of the 15 petitions — those not led or co-led by tribes or tribal communities. The Department's evaluations were informed in part by Commission staff's work on two evaluation questions. The materials released included a Department transmittal memo (Exhibit 1), a petition evaluation companion document (Exhibit 2) with supplemental information and additional context across the petition evaluations, and petition-specific analyses (see exhibits for staff summaries 3A – 3F). The documents generated substantial public interest, with approximately 20 substantive comment letters received in advance of the Commission's April 15-16, 2026 meeting.

At the Commission's April 2026 meeting, the Department presented a summary of its evaluations and recommendations (see Exhibit 3 for presentation slides) for all proposed actions associated with the 10 non-tribal petitions; this provided the Commission an opportunity to hear a consolidated overview, ask clarifying questions, and receive additional public input. There is a [Zoom recording of the Department presentation and public/Commission discussion](#).

Evaluations for the five tribally led or co-led petitions are currently in development. Consistent with the Commission's request, the Department attended the April 14, 2026 TC meeting to hear presentations from tribal leads and co-leads and to seek guidance before completing its evaluations. The tribal leads and co-leads of the five petitions shared their goals, updates, clarifications, and any desired revisions to the original petitions. Participants and TC discussed proceeding with evaluating the five tribally led/co-led bin 2 petitions as described at the meeting. During the April 15-16, 2026 Commission meeting, the Commission adopted the TC recommendation to formally accept clarifications and revisions to three of the tribally-led or co-led petitions, and requested the Department proceed with evaluating the petitions with revisions incorporated.

Input from California Ocean Protection Council (OPC)

In addition to the Department's evaluations, the executive director of the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC), on behalf of OPC Chair and Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot, submitted a letter to the Commission (Exhibit 4) providing input on proposals to adaptively manage California's MPA network, with the stated intent to complement the Department's evaluations. The letter highlights OPC's unique policy role in California's MPA

network, supporting adaptive management, using MPAs to protect full ecosystems, prioritizing tribal stewardship, and supporting thriving fishing communities and climate-resilient fisheries. In the near future, OPC plans to provide specific input on the petitions using a policy lens that can complement the Department's assessment completed using questions and criteria established by the Commission. OPC now anticipates transmitting its input for the June 2026 Commission meeting.

Regional Meetings

The Department's evaluation and recommendation presentation, TC discussion and input on tribally led and co-led petitions, and public input on both has helped lay the foundation for robust public dialogue at the regional scale in three regionally-located public meetings.

The Commission is commencing this regional meeting as one of three — April 21, May 5–6, and May 19 — to hear from petitioners and the public on bin 2 MPA petitions, including both the Department-evaluated petitions and the tribally led or co-led petitions still under review. The meetings are designed to provide petitioners an opportunity to present their petitions, describe any proposed changes since the March 2025 amendment deadline, and engage in dialogue with the Commission alongside robust public participation.

Additional information about the petitions and regional meetings is available on the Commission's website, including:

- the [MPA petitions process webpage](#) outlining the public process for reviewing 2023 MPA petitions and providing key resource links;
- the [MPA petitions index](#), with access to each 2023 MPA petition and compiled public comments received since December 2023;
- [regional MPA meeting agendas and materials](#); and
- [regional meeting goals and participation guidelines](#).

For petition-specific information, public comments, and Department evaluations, see individual exhibits listed at the bottom of each MPA agenda item staff summary for today's meeting.

Exhibits

1. [Department memo transmitting evaluations for non-tribally led or co-led MPA petitions](#), received March 20, 2026
2. [Department "2023 Decadal Management Review Marine Protected Area Petition Evaluation Companion Document"](#) for completed MPA petition evaluations, dated March 20, 2026
3. [Department presentation from Agenda Item 2, Commission April 15-16, 2026 meeting](#) (*for background purposes only*)

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4. [Letter from Jenn Eckerle, Executive Director, California Ocean Protection Council, and Deputy Secretary for Oceans, California Natural Resources Agency](#), received March 20, 2026

Motion (N/A)