

# California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative Blue Ribbon Task Force

## MEMORANDUM

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**To: MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force**  
**From: John Kirlin, Executive Director**  
**Subject: Adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation recommendations for task force action**  
**Date: August 28, 2006**

### Context

At your May 25, 2006 meeting in Sacramento you accepted a report on adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation that was developed by a consultant in cooperation with stakeholders and staff. Upon accepting the report, you requested that staff develop an "action strategy" that would highlight key recommendations the State of California should consider in developing an adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation program; this memo is in response to that request.

### Background

The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) requires adaptive management to ensure that a system of marine protected areas (MPAs) meets its stated goals [Section 2853 (c) (3)]. The MLPA defines adaptive management as "a management policy that seeks to improve management of biological resources, particularly in areas of scientific uncertainty, by viewing program actions as tools for learning. Actions shall be designed so that, even if they fail, they will provide useful information for future actions, and monitoring and evaluation shall be emphasized so that the interaction of different elements within marine systems may be better understood" (Section 2852 (a)).

Adaptive management requires learning from current experience to improve the process of achieving the goals of the MLPA over time. The law embeds ecosystem-based adaptive management, monitoring, and evaluation into state policies related to managing MPAs. To achieve the purpose of informing adaptive management, the results of monitoring and evaluation must be communicated to decision makers and the public in terms that they can understand and act upon. This approach will require the State of California to develop and implement a

monitoring , evaluation and adaptive management program. Also necessary will be the institutions and processes for adaptive management, which do not yet exist.

Adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation will be implemented at multiple spatial scales, including individual MPAs, MPA network components in coastal regions, an MPA network in each biogeographical region, and statewide when appropriate. The MLPA Master Plan Framework adopted by the Fish and Game Commission embraces the concept of two biogeographical regions within the state's coastal waters, with a boundary at Point Conception. Within each biogeographical region, groups of individual MPAs are being used to design and implement network components on a coastal regional basis in a sequential process.

Though the results from ongoing monitoring and evaluation at these multiple scales should be reviewed periodically, a comprehensive analysis of monitoring results required for adaptive management should be conducted every three to five years. These reviews should be transparent, include peer review, and results should be available to the public. If the results are not consistent with the goals of the MLPA or of objectives of individual MPAs, the review should include recommendations for adjusting the design and/or management of the MPA network or network component.

### **Recommended Action Strategy**

Key actions the State of California should take when developing an adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation program include:

#### ***Develop Institutional Capacity for Adaptive Management and Monitoring***

*Recommendation 1:* Align the two biogeographical regions for MLPA adaptive management with the nearshore Fishery Management Plan regions, with the goal of achieving improved policy results for both programs and more effective use of available resources.

*Recommendation 2:* Create two, new, consolidated committees that combine the adaptive management functions related to the MLPA and those of the nearshore advisory committees, forming a separate management committee for each biogeographical region. Members of the committees would consist of stakeholders and scientists and would be appointed by the Department of Fish and Game director.

*Recommendation 3:* Establish clear processes to develop science questions that can inform adaptive management of networks of MPAs and those which can inform management of individual MPAs.

*Recommendation 4:* Consistent with the long-term funding strategy recommended by the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, acquire the necessary resources for adaptive management and monitoring, but actively seek to develop and effectively manage partnerships with other governments, philanthropic institutions, research organizations, fishermen, and others.

*Recommendation 5:* Consistent with the long-term funding strategy recommended by the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, create a dedicated organization to develop protocols and

collect, maintain, analyze, archive, and communicate monitoring and evaluation data over long periods of time. The work of the organization should be guided by the management committees identified in Recommendation 2, but also be closely linked to the management structures of the Department of Fish and Game which will develop data and analyses to support adaptive management of the state's MPA networks and individual MPAs.

***Design Monitoring to Support Adaptive Management (and Operational Management)***

*Recommendation 6:* Develop monitoring plans that provide a scientific foundation for policy decisions regarding the effectiveness of a set of MPAs in meeting the goals of the MLPA and the objectives of individual MPAs.

*Recommendation 7:* Measure biophysical, socioeconomic, and governance/management indicators in MPA monitoring programs, since these dimensions of implementing improved networks of MPAs are inextricably linked.

*Recommendation 8:* Create monitoring partnerships with other governmental units. Where possible, involve fishers and volunteers in monitoring efforts to increase support for the MLPA, increase credibility of results, and leverage limited public resources.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Authorize the MLPA Initiative executive director to forward the above recommendations to Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman and Director of Fish and Game Ryan Broddrick.