

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force  
**From:** Michael DeLapa, Central Coast Project Manager  
**Subject:** Staff report and recommendations regarding suggested revisions to the Regional Goals, Objectives, and Design and Implementation Considerations for the Central Coast  
**Date:** November 21, 2005

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### Summary and Recommendations

At its September meeting, the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) approved a set of regional goals, objectives, and design and implementation considerations developed by the Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (CCRSG).

Consistent with the process established upon adoption of the regional goals and objectives package for the central coast, several revisions have been suggested by CCRSG members Jesús Ruiz and Tom Hafer.

Staff has analyzed these suggestions, as described below, and makes the following recommendations:

1. Alter the language of *Goal 2, Objective 2* as follows: "Protect larval sources and enhance restore reproductive capacity of species most likely to benefit from MPAs through retention of large, mature individuals."
2. Alter the language of *Goal 3, Objective 3* as follows: "Develop collaborative scientific monitoring and research projects evaluating MPAs that may link with fisheries management information needs, classroom science curricula, volunteer dive programs, and fishermen of all ages, and identify participants."
3. Do not add an objective on networks and design guidelines to *Goal 6*.
4. Retain the existing language of *Implementation Consideration 2*: "When appropriate, phase the implementation of central coast MPAs to ensure their effective management, monitoring, and enforcement."

### Discussion and Analysis

Four revisions have been suggested, each of which is described below. Staff has also provided an analysis and recommendation, together with a rationale.

#### **Goal 2, Objective 2**

The first suggestion concerns revising text for Goal 2, Objective 2. Goal 2 reads as follows:

"To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted."

The suggested revision would substitute “restore” for “enhance” in objective 2 so that the objective would read:

“Protect larval sources and ~~enhance~~ restore reproductive capacity of species most likely to benefit from MPAs through retention of large, mature individuals.”

The rationale presented is that the word “enhance” suggests increasing reproductive capacity above natural levels, while the word “restore” suggests returning that capacity to some earlier level. This latter objective is more realistic.

*Analysis and Recommendation:* The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines the word “enhance” as “to raise to a higher degree; intensify; magnify.” A primary definition of “restore” is “to bring back to a former, original, or normal condition...to a state of health, soundness, or vigor.” In the context of fisheries management, both words often are used in describing artificial efforts to increase fish populations, as through hatcheries. In the context the MLPA, the word “restore” more closely tracks with the wording of Goal 2, particularly the use of the word “rebuild,” which suggests returning a population to a former level.

Staff recommends revising the language of Goal 2, Objective 2 as suggested.

### **Goal 3, Objective 3**

The second suggestion concerns Goal 3, Objective 3. Goal 3 reads as follows:

“To improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbances, and to manage these uses in a manner consistent with protecting biodiversity.”

The suggested revision would insert text regarding fisheries research in objective 3 as follows:

“Develop collaborative scientific monitoring and research projects evaluating MPAs that link with improving stock assessments, classroom science curricula, volunteer dive programs, and fishermen of all ages, and identify participants.”

The rationale presented is that current fishery stock assessments suffer from data gaps, and are statewide and therefore of limited use for regional fisheries management. Linking collaborative research in MPAs could improve these assessments. Finally, the goals and objectives do not currently mention the use of MPAs specifically for enhancing stock assessments.

*Analysis and Recommendation:* While stock assessments for some species are improving along the coast of California, many others are not. For some species, such as rockfish and other nearshore finfish, studies within MPAs could improve available data. Such studies might make it possible to manage such fisheries as the nearshore finfish fishery on a regional basis, as intended by the Nearshore Fishery Management Plan. Useful research in MPAs is not limited to stock assessments. As required by the Marine Life Management Act, state fishery management plans must identify and prioritize essential fishery information and present a strategy for obtaining that information. As an example, the Nearshore Fishery Management Plan outlines a wide range of research topics that could be explored through research in MPAs.

Staff recommends changing the suggested wording so that Goal 3, Objective 3 reads as follows:

“Develop collaborative scientific monitoring and research projects evaluating MPAs that may link with fisheries management information needs, classroom science curricula, volunteer dive programs, and fishermen of all ages, and identify participants.

**Goal 6**

The third suggestion would add an objective under Goal 6. Goal 6 currently reads as follows:

“To ensure that the central coast’s MPAs are designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a component of a statewide network.”

The suggested language, which is based upon language considered earlier by the CCRSG, reads as follows:

“To the extent possible, effectively apply scientific guidelines in the MLPA Master Plan Framework, including those related to size and spacing of MPAs, in the overall design of the central coast MPA network component.”

The rationale offered is that Goal 6 does not include a substantive objective aimed at ensuring that the design and management of MPAs in the region reflect the design guidelines developed by the science advisory team and included in the Master Plan Framework. Goal 5 includes an objective calling for use of the design guidelines, but this objective refers only to the design of individual MPAs. The rationale offered further states that including a reference to the guidelines under Goal 6 will recognize the “network” aspect of the design guidelines and will help ensure that MPAs in a region are managed as a network.

*Analysis and Recommendation:* The current version of the provisional goals and objectives includes two objectives under Goal 6 that mention the network aspect of regional MPAs, as follows:

“1. Develop a process for regional review and evaluation of implementation effectiveness that includes stakeholder involvement to determine if regional MPAs are an effective component of a statewide network.

“2. Develop a mechanism to coordinate with future MLPA regional stakeholder groups in other regions to ensure that the statewide MPA network meets the goals of the MLPA.”

Both objectives leave “network” undefined, and as a result, do not accomplish what the recommended revision is seeking. The Marine Life Protection Act does not define network in any meaningful way. The Master Plan Framework contemplates two general types of network: one type linked biologically or oceanographically and the other linked administratively.

“As stated above, the MLPA also requires that MPAs be managed as a network, to the extent possible. This implies a coordinated system of MPAs. MPAs might be linked through biological function as in the case of adult and juvenile movement or larval transport. MPAs managed as a network might also be linked by administrative function. The important aspects of this interpretation are that MPAs are linked by common goals

and a comprehensive management and monitoring plan, and that they protect areas with a wide variety of representative habitat as required by the MLPA. MPAs should be based on the same guiding principles, design criteria, and processes for implementation. In this case, a statewide network could be one that has connections through design, funding, process, and management. At a minimum, the master plan should insure that the statewide network of MPAs reflects a consistent approach to design, funding and management. The desired outcome would include components of both biological connectivity and administrative function to the extent each are practicable and supported by available science.”

The proposed additional objective would effectively adopt the biologically-derived definition of a network as an array of MPAs that reflects the science team’s guidelines. Although the rigor of this definition is softened somewhat by the phrase “to the extent possible,” the proposed objective conflicts with the Master Plan Framework’s broader interpretation. It may also be relevant that under the Master Plan Framework, the design guidelines are not prescriptive. Equally important, however, the Master Plan Framework requires that “any significant deviation from [the guidelines] should be consistent with both regional goals and objectives and the requirements of the MLPA.”

Staff recommends not adopting the suggested objective.

***Implementation Consideration 2***

The final suggestion would alter the language of Implementation Consideration 2 which now reads as follows:

“When appropriate, phase the implementation of central coast MPAs to ensure their effective management, monitoring, and enforcement.”

The new formulation would read as follows:

“Ensure effective management, monitoring, and enforcement of central coast MPAs, using phasing if appropriate.”

The rationale is that the primary purpose is effective management and that phasing is only one of many tools to accomplish that purpose.

*Analysis and Recommendation:* The difference between the two formulations is subtle, if there is a difference at all. Since the suggestion does not clarify the intent of the consideration, and since the CCRSG already has expressed its support for the consideration as currently formulated, staff recommends leaving the language as is.