

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
A Conceptual Overview
Revised May 2005

California's extraordinary marine biological diversity is a vital asset to the state and nation. The productivity, wildness and beauty of our coasts and oceans are central to California's identity, heritage, and economy. At the same time, however, the impacts from coastal development, water pollution, certain modern fishing practices, and other human activities are altering and degrading our coastal and marine environment.

In the late 1990s, the California Legislature responded to declines in the state's marine environment with legislation intended to reduce these threats and protect our ocean. Among others, the 1999 Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) aims to protect California's marine natural heritage through the establishment of a network of marine protected areas, to be designed, created, and managed according to sound science in order to protect the diversity and abundance of marine life and the integrity of marine ecosystems. The MLPA recognizes that a combination of marine reserves, marine conservation areas and marine parks can help protect habitat and ecosystems, conserve biological diversity, provide a sanctuary for marine life, enhance recreational and educational opportunities, and provide scientific reference points to assist resource management decisions.

To date, the Marine Life Protection Act has not been implemented as quickly as intended. A realistic approach focuses on strategically prioritizing those program components that can be effectively implemented now, and completing the remaining components in later phases. Acknowledging the importance of protecting the state's ocean heritage, California aims to achieve the goals of the MLPA by pursuing the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative, a cooperative effort funded by a public-private partnership, and enhanced by the advice of scientists, resource managers, experts, stakeholders and interested members of the public.

The objectives of the MLPA Initiative are as follows:

- ***Submit the Department of Fish and Game's draft Master Plan Framework to the Fish and Game Commission by May 2005 for proposed adoption by the commission in August 2005.*** As provided in the MLPA, several components of the Master Plan will provide a statewide framework for the design and implementation of marine protected areas. To that end, a Master Plan Framework based on sound science will be prepared to specify programmatic goals and recommendations for the future design, implementation and management of networks of marine protected areas, including necessary monitoring, adaptive management, enforcement, and funding. The Master Plan Framework will build upon work already accomplished by the state under the MLPA, and will include a prioritized timeline and action plan to design and implement marine protected areas in phases by region between the years 2006 and 2011.
- ***Prepare a comprehensive strategy for long-term funding of planning, management and enforcement of marine protected areas by December 2005*** by presenting a package of legislative and other recommendations to the Secretary for Resources to identify new sources of revenue and ensure adequate resources for quality state oversight of the network of marine protected areas.

- **Design and submit the Department of Fish and Game's alternative proposals for marine protected areas in an area along the central coast to the Fish and Game Commission by March 2006 for proposed adoption by the commission by November 2006.** The Central Coast Project will produce a suite of alternatives for an area along the central coast according to the Master Plan Framework, in a regional project that incorporates sound science, stakeholder input and general public participation. The alternative adopted by the Fish and Game Commission will be implemented by the Department of Fish and Game.
- **Develop recommendations for coordinating the management of marine protected areas with the federal government by November 2006.** The recommendations will draw from the recent reports of the United States Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission.
- **Secure agreement and commitment among state agencies with marine protected area responsibilities by November 2006 to complete statewide implementation of the Master Plan by 2011.** By November 2006, the Resources Agency will negotiate a commitment among key public agencies and other interested parties to ensure that marine protected areas are designed and proposed for adoption by the commission and implemented by the Department of Fish and Game in the remaining regions between 2006 and 2011 in accordance with the Master Plan Framework, and to dedicate funding for the ongoing management of the marine protected areas.

This initiative will require:

- **Leadership** - The Resources Agency and the Department of Fish and Game will provide direction and leadership for this initiative, and will be responsible for presenting proposals and recommendations to the Fish and Game Commission that are based on sound public policy and science.
- **Policy Advisors** - The Secretary for Resources will appoint a California MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, with members known for their intellect, integrity, experience in public policy and concern for the common good, to propose policies for marine protected area design and implementation; to oversee the preparation of the draft Master Plan Framework; to advise on the initial marine protected area project within the Central Coast; to provide recommendations for long-term funding of marine protected areas; and to provide recommendations for coordinating management of marine protected areas with federal agencies.
- **Stakeholder Input** – As part of the overall scientific research strategy for both the development of the draft Master Plan Framework and alternative proposals for marine protected areas in an area along the central coast, data and other information will be actively solicited from resource users and other stakeholders who possess first-hand knowledge about marine resources and socioeconomic factors.

- **General Public Participation** – Participation from the general public will be solicited through periodic statewide and regional meetings and workshops, review and comment on key concepts, and other opportunities for timely and meaningful participation, in addition to hearings before the Fish and Game Commission.
- **Science** – The best readily available biological and socioeconomic science will be used in drafting the Master Plan Framework, and in the design, implementation and adaptive management of the proposed marine protected areas. The director of the Department of Fish and Game, in consultation with the secretary for resources, the president of the Fish and Game Commission, and the chair of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, will appoint a Master Plan Science Advisory Team to provide research strategies and scientific analysis to the task force. The director will also establish an external peer review process to evaluate the scientific basis of the Master Plan Framework and regional proposals for marine protected areas. Scientific data and information will also be solicited from stakeholders, and other researchers and experts.
- **Resource Management and Technical Expertise** – State managers and biologists will work with qualified experts, including federal fisheries managers, university scientists, other researchers, and commercial and recreational fishermen, to collect and provide the best available information and technical knowledge.
- **Interagency Coordination** – To encourage complementary planning and coordinated reviews and decisions, this process will leverage existing interagency coordinating teams such as the State Interagency Coordinating Committee for Marine Managed Areas, and will create new opportunities among relevant state and federal agencies.
- **Public-Private Partnership** – Due to the limited staffing and funding resources of the Resources Agency and Department of Fish and Game, this proposal is dependent upon supplementing public funding with private resources to enhance the state's capacity to accomplish the science, analysis, planning, and coordination necessary to achieve the objectives on time. While private funding will support much of the costs of the initiative, the work will be open and transparent.
- **Phased Design and Implementation** – The task force will select an area along the central coast where it will oversee the development of alternative proposals for marine protected areas. The task force will present the proposals to the Department of Fish and Game, which will independently review and make any amendments or modifications to the draft documents that it determines appropriate. After exercising its independent judgment, the department will submit alternative proposals for marine protected areas to the commission. By focusing first within the central coast, the initiative will enable Department of Fish and Game personnel and the Master Plan Science Advisory Team to focus limited resources more productively. Other regional efforts to develop proposals for marine protected areas that are not funded by this initiative and that proceed ahead of the phased schedule provided by the Master Plan Framework may be presented to the State Interagency Coordinating Committee following the adoption of the Master Plan Framework. However,

due to the need to concentrate available public and private resources and meet the objectives and timeline of the MLPA Initiative, the Department of Fish and Game will not be able to provide technical assistance in developing regional network proposals in advance of the phased timeline recommended by the adopted Master Plan Framework.