

Marine Life Protection Act Initiative



A Decision Context – MPA Proposals for the North Central Coast Study Region

Presentation to the
California Fish and Game Commission and the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force

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MLPA Initiative

- To assist the State of California in implementing the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA)
- MLPA requires “re-examine and redesign” California’s system of marine protected areas
- Secretary Chrisman’s charter for the Blue Ribbon Task Force:

To guide the development of alternative MPA proposals and to recommend a preferred alternative to the California Fish and Game Commission

Overview of Roles

1. **Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF):** Oversees MLPA Initiative process and makes recommendations to the California Fish and Game Commission
2. **Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT):** Provides scientific guidance and evaluations, using “best readily available science”
3. **Stakeholders and interested public:** Provide practical information on marine environment, ecological values, fishing and socioeconomics; regional stakeholder group develops proposed alternatives
4. **California Department of Fish and Game (DFG):** Provides feasibility guidance and input throughout process
5. **California Fish and Game Commission:** Oversees regulatory process and adopts regulations to redesign marine protected areas in study region

Steps to BRTF Recommendation

- MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCCRSR) appointed, including representatives of other state and federal agencies
- To date, eleven days of formal meetings for NCCRSR and two days of work sessions
- Science advisory team appointed; north central coast science sub-team and work groups
- To date, seven days of formal meetings for SAT and over a dozen work group conference calls
- Extensive staff support including regional profile, data layers, mapping tools, GIS analysis, facilitation



Steps to BRTF Recommendation

- MLPA Statewide Interests Group appointed; public involvement and process advice
- Fourteen public workshops, including five for data gathering, numerous small groups, and reviewing draft MPA proposals
- Evaluations and analyses conducted by SAT, MLPA Initiative staff, DFG staff and contractors
- Strong commitment from group members, public
- Lots of hours



Public Involvement and Knowledge

- Public workshops to share and gather information
- Statewide and regional representation on NCCRSR and Statewide Interests Group
- Stakeholder panels at meetings
- Public comments at meetings
- Written public comments on posted documents
- Individual conversations
- Simultaneous webcasting of task force and science team meetings, with video/audio records of meetings on the website
- List servers / print mailing list, including other government agencies
- Website: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa/>



Avoiding Information Overload

- Context, general draft proposal, and SAT evaluation methods information in binder
- Maps showing areas of overlap among draft proposals
- SAT evaluation methods – SAT member available to answer questions
- Socio-economic evaluation methods – DFG staff on hand to answer questions
- Staff evaluation methods – staff on hand to answer questions
- DFG feasibility analysis criteria and methods – DFG staff on hand to answer questions
- Various details available as requested



Addressing Concerns

- Timing: MLPA passed in 1999, MLPA Initiative second phase started January 2007, NCCRSR started May 2007, task force decision almost one year later in April 2008, and then California Fish and Game Commission public process
- Readily available information shared equally
- SAT and staff evaluations are consistent with MLPA and master plan for marine protected areas
- Have attempted to apply MLPA, master plan and staff guidance consistently
- Some errors have been made and are corrected as quickly as possible
- Lessons learned in real time



Task Force Decisions

- Provide direction on policy issues where uncertainty exists
- Statements on strengths and weaknesses of process and concepts being discussed
- Recommendations for changing any or all draft proposals
- Recommendation(s) to commission regarding preferred alternative



Six Goals of MLPA

1. **To protect the natural diversity and abundance of marine life**, and the structure, function and integrity of marine ecosystems
2. **To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations**, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted
3. **To improve recreational, educational and study opportunities** provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbance, and to manage these uses in a manner consistent with protecting biodiversity
4. **To protect marine natural heritage**, including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats in California waters for their intrinsic value
5. **To ensure that California's MPAs have clearly defined objectives**, effective management measures, and adequate enforcement, and are based on sound scientific guidelines
6. To ensure that the state's MPAs are **designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a network**