

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
Summary of MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force Guidance to the
North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group
February 14, 2008 BRTF meeting
Prepared February 20, 2008

At its February 14 meeting, the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) provided the following guidance to the MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCCRSR) and the MLPA Initiative team of staff and contractors (I-Team) as they work to complete the MLPA Initiative process for the North Central Coast Study Region.

1. NCCRSR members should place great weight on the results of the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) evaluations of marine protected area (MPA) proposals.
2. In preparing the final round of proposals, NCCRSR members should place strong emphasis on MPAs that meet the SAT guidelines for "preferred" size and spacing. Proposals should include MPAs with "very high" or "high" levels of protection. The BRTF considers marine reserves to be the "backbone" of any proposed network. The BRTF recognizes that proposals may include MPAs with "moderate-high" levels of protection. The BRTF will seriously consider such proposals and will use all SAT-evaluated levels of protection when considering MPA alternative proposals and their socio-economic consequences, as outlined above.
3. The BRTF deliberated on the levels of protection assigned by the SAT to MPAs that allow salmon trolling. Specifically, the BRTF agreed that MPAs that allow salmon trolling at depths less than 50 meters should be characterized as providing a "moderate-high" level of protection for the North Central Coast.

In reaching its decision, the BRTF noted that in the SAT evaluation for the MLPA Central Coast Study Region, MPAs allowing salmon trolling in less than 50 meters water depth were assigned a "moderate" level of protection. The BRTF also recognized that for the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region, the SAT had reached a split vote on the issue of salmon trolling at depths less than 50 meters, and that the SAT acknowledged that resolving this issue would likely require policy direction from the BRTF.

4. The BRTF stressed that cross-interest support for the final MPA proposals is very important and will be given great weight.
5. The BRTF asked that in March the NCCRSR forward no more than three alternative MPA proposals, where there are currently five draft MPA proposals. BRTF members applauded the cross-interest work in developing the draft MPA proposals and asked that the NCCRSR continue to strive for convergence.
6. The BRTF asked that RSG members give strong consideration to the Department of Fish and Game Feasibility guidelines. In the final MPA proposals, the NCCRSR should provide specific rationale for any deviations from the recommendations in the feasibility analysis conducted by the California Department of Fish and Game.

7. The BRTF considered the merits of including recommendations for special closures, for marine bird and marine mammal protection, in the final MPA proposals. The BRTF reaffirmed that the main focus of the NCCRSG in developing final proposals should be on MPAs rather than special closures, as the primary charge of this group is to develop alternative MPA proposals for the north central coast. The BRTF also recognized that in some instances special closures may offer geographically-specific protection from threats such as disturbance that are not necessarily addressed by MPAs.
 - a. The NCCRSG may elect to include recommendations for special closures in their final proposals so long as this does not detract from completing the primary task of developing alternative MPA proposals.
 - b. Special closures should be used sparingly and selectively.
 - c. Refinement of special closures options may require an additional meeting of the NCCRSG Special Closures Work Group.