

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
North Central Coast Regional Goals and Objectives
Adopted by the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force on February 14, 2008

Introduction

The members of the North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCCRSG) agree that regional goals, objectives, and design and implementation considerations are all very important in the development of an effective system of marine protected areas (MPAs) that have stakeholder support. Regional goals are statements of what the regional MPAs are ultimately trying to achieve (Pomeroy et al. 2004)¹. The regional goals are largely taken directly from the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) itself. Regional objectives are more specific measurable statements of what MPAs may accomplish to attain a related goal (Pomeroy et al. 2004). The NCCRSG recognizes that MPAs are one among a suite of tools to manage marine resources.

Design considerations are additional factors that may help fulfill provisions of the MLPA related to facilitating enforcement, encouraging public involvement, and incorporating socio-economic considerations, while meeting the act's goals and guidelines. Design considerations will be applied as the location, category (reserve, park or conservation area), size and other characteristics of potential MPAs are being developed. Design considerations are cross-cutting (they apply to all MPAs) and are not necessarily measurable. MPA alternatives developed by the NCCRSG should include analysis of how the proposal addresses both regional goals and objectives and design guidelines.²

¹ Pomeroy R.S., J.E. Parks, and L.M. Watson. 2004. How is your MPA doing? A Guidebook of Natural and Social Indicators for Evaluating Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. xvi + 216 p. (Accessed 17 January 2004).
<http://effectivempa.noaa.gov/guidebook/guidebook.html>.

² John Kirilin Memo, August 22, 2005.

Regional Objectives

Goal 1. To protect the natural diversity and abundance³ of marine life, and the structure, function, and integrity of marine ecosystems.

1. Protect species diversity and abundance consistent with natural fluctuations by including and maintaining areas of high native species diversity and representative habitats.
2. Include areas with diverse habitat types in close proximity to each other.
3. Protect natural size and age structure and genetic diversity of populations in representative habitats.
4. Protect natural trophic structure and food webs in representative habitats.
5. Protect ecosystem structure, function, integrity and ecological processes to facilitate recovery of natural communities from disturbances both natural and human induced.

Goal 2. To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted.

1. Help protect or rebuild populations of rare, threatened, endangered, depressed, depleted, or overfished species, where identified, and the habitats and ecosystem functions upon which they rely.⁴
2. Sustain or increase reproduction by species most likely to benefit from MPAs through retention of large, mature individuals⁵.
3. Sustain or increase reproduction by species most likely to benefit from MPAs through protection of breeding, foraging, rearing or nursery areas.
4. Protect selected species and the habitats on which they depend while allowing the commercial and/or recreational harvest of migratory, highly mobile, or other species

³ *Natural diversity* is the species richness of a community or area when protected from, or not subjected to, human-induced change (drawn from Allaby 1998 and Kelleher 1992). *Natural abundance* is the total number of individuals in a population protected from, or not subjected to, human-induced change (adapted from Department 2004 and Kelleher 1992).

⁴ The terms “rare,” “threatened,” “endangered,” “depressed,” “depleted,” and “overfished” referenced here are designations in state and federal legislation, regulations, and fishery management plans (FMPs)—e.g., California Fish and Game Code, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), California Nearshore FMP, Federal Groundfish FMP). Rare, *endangered*, and *threatened* are designations under the California Endangered Species Act. *Depleted* is a designation under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act. *Depressed* means the condition of a marine fishery that exhibits declining fish population abundance levels below those consistent with maximum sustainable yield (California Fish and Game Code, Section 90.7). *Overfished* means a population that does not produce maximum sustainable yield on a continuing basis (MSA) and in the California Nearshore FMP and federal Groundfish FMP also means a population that falls below the threshold of 30% or 25%, successively, of the estimated unfished biomass

⁵ An increase in lifetime egg production will be an important quantitative measure of an improvement of reproduction.

where appropriate through the use of state marine conservation areas and state marine parks.

Goal 3. 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.

1. Ensure some MPAs are close to population centers, coastal access points, and/or research and education institutions and include areas of educational, recreational, and cultural use.
2. Sustain or enhance cultural, recreational, and educational experiences by improving catch rates, high scenic value, lower congestion, or increased size or abundance of species.
3. To enhance the likelihood of scientifically valid studies, replicate appropriate MPA designations, habitats or control areas (including areas open to fishing) to the extent possible.
4. Develop collaborative scientific monitoring and research projects evaluating MPAs that link with fisheries management information needs, classroom science curricula, volunteer dive programs, and fishermen, and identify participants.

Goal 4. To protect marine natural heritage, including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats in north central California waters, for their intrinsic value.

1. Include within MPAs the following habitat types: estuaries, the intertidal zone at the Farallon Islands, and subtidal waters (including the water column and benthic habitats) around the Farallon Islands
2. Include and replicate to the extent possible [practicable], representatives of all marine habitats identified in the MLPA or the *California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas* across a range of depths.

Goal 5. To ensure that north central California's MPAs have clearly defined objectives, effective management measures, and adequate enforcement, and are based on sound scientific guidelines.

1. Minimize negative socio-economic impacts and optimize positive socio-economic impacts for all users, to the extent possible, and if consistent with the Marine Life Protection Act and its goals and guidelines.
2. For all MPAs in the region involve interested parties to help; develop objectives, a long-term monitoring plan that includes standardized biological and socioeconomic monitoring protocols, and a strategy for MPA evaluation, and ensure that each MPA objective is linked to one or more regional objectives.

3. To the extent possible, effectively use scientific guidelines in the *California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas*.

Goal 6. To ensure that the north central coast's MPAs are designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a component of a statewide network.

1. Develop a process to inform adaptive management that includes stakeholder involvement for regional review and evaluation of management effectiveness 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.

Regional Design and Implementation Considerations

Design Considerations

The NCCRSG recognizes several issues that should be considered in the design and evaluation of marine protected areas. Like the “Considerations in the Design of MPAs” that appears in the *California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas*, these considerations may apply to all MPAs and MPA proposals regardless of the specific goals and objectives for that MPA. The design considerations below will be incorporated with the goals and objectives and provided to the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team, MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, and California Fish and Game Commission. Design considerations with long-term monitoring components will be used in developing monitoring plans and to inform the adaptive management process.

1. In evaluating the siting of MPAs, considerations shall include the needs and interests of all users.
2. Recognize relevant portions of existing state and federal fishery management areas and regulations, to the extent possible, when designing new MPAs or modifying existing ones.
3. To the extent possible, site MPAs to prevent fishing effort shifts that would result in serial depletion.
4. When crafting MPA proposals, include considerations for design found in the Nearshore Fishery Management Plan⁶ and the draft Abalone Recovery and Management Plan.⁷

⁶Design considerations from Nearshore Fishery Management Plan:

1. Restrict take in any MPA [intended to meet the NFMP goals] so that the directed fishing or significant bycatch of the 19 NFMP species is prohibited.
2. Include some areas that have been productive fishing grounds for the 19 NFMP species in the past but are no longer heavily used by the fishery.
3. Include some areas known to enhance distribution or retain larvae of NFMP species
4. Consist of an area large enough to address biological characteristics such as movement patterns and home range. There is an expectation that some portion of NFMP stocks will spend the majority of their life cycle within the boundaries of the MPA.
5. Consist of areas that replicate various habitat types within each region including areas that exhibit representative productivity.

⁷Design considerations from Abalone Recovery and Management Plan:

Proposed MPA sites should satisfy at least four of the following criteria.

1. Include within MPAs suitable rocky habitat containing abundant kelp and/or foliose algae
2. Insure presence of sufficient populations to facilitate reproduction.
3. Include within MPAs suitable nursery areas, in particular crustose coralline rock habitats in shallow waters that include microhabitats of moveable rock, rock crevices, urchin spine canopy, and kelp holdfasts.
4. Include within MPAs the protected lee of major headlands that may act as collection points for water and larvae.
5. Include MPAs large enough to include large numbers of abalone and for research regarding population dynamics.
6. Include MPAs that are accessible to researchers, enforcement personnel, and others with a legitimate interest in resource protection.

5. In developing MPA proposals, consider how existing state and federal programs address the goals and objectives of the MLPA and the north central coast region as well as how these proposals may coordinate with other programs.
6. To the extent possible, site MPAs adjacent to terrestrial federal, state, county, or city parks, marine laboratories, or other "eyes on the water" to facilitate management, enforcement, and monitoring.
7. To the extent possible, site MPAs to facilitate use of volunteers to assist in monitoring and management.
8. To the extent possible, site MPAs to take advantage of existing long-term monitoring studies.
9. To the extent possible, design MPA boundaries that facilitate ease of public recognition and ease of enforcement.
10. Consider existing public coastal access points when designing MPAs.
11. MPA design should consider the benefits and drawbacks of siting MPAs near to or remote from public access.
12. Consider the potential impacts of climate change, community alteration, and distributional shifts in marine species when designing MPAs.
13. To the extent possible, preserve the diversity of recreational, educational, commercial, and cultural uses.
14. To the extent possible, optimize the design of the MPA network to facilitate monitoring and research that answers resource management questions; an example is including MPAs of different protection levels in similar habitats and depths, adjacent or in otherwise comparable locations, to state marine reserves, to evaluate the effectiveness of different protection levels in meeting regional and statewide goals.

Implementation Considerations

Implementation considerations arise after the design of MPAs as the California Department of Fish and Game and any other responsible agencies implement decisions of the California Fish and Game Commission and, if appropriate, the California Park and Recreation Commission, with funding from the Legislature or other sources.

1. Improve public outreach related to MPAs through the use of docents, improved signage, and production of an educational brochure for north central coast MPAs.
2. When appropriate, phase the implementation of north central coast MPAs to ensure their effective management, monitoring, and enforcement.
3. Ensure adequate funding for monitoring, management, and enforcement is available for implementing new MPAs.

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4. Develop regional management and enforcement measures, including cooperative enforcement agreements, adaptive management, and jurisdictional maps, which can be effectively used, adopted statewide, and periodically reviewed.
5. Incorporate volunteer monitoring and/or cooperative research, where appropriate.