

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

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To: MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group
From: MLPA I-Team
Subject: Science Questions from the MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group to the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team
Date: November 14, 2008

Introduction

Developing alternative marine protected area (MPA) proposals is a complex process requiring considerable social, biological, ecological, economic, biophysical, and other scientific information. Throughout the MLPA South Coast Study Region planning process, the MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (SCRSG) may seek scientific input from the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT). In response to science questions, the SAT may provide feedback in the form of information summaries, data syntheses or analyses, or general SAT guidance.

The overarching flow for addressing science questions is composed of five steps:

1. Science questions developed during SCRSG meetings and work sessions are recorded by the MLPA Initiative team (I-Team).
2. Questions are reviewed initially by the I-Team for relevance to the process. Relevant questions are discussed and prioritized with the SAT co-chairs.
3. Prioritized questions are then presented to the full SAT for discussion. A SAT work group composed of appropriate experts is formed to develop responses or compile requested information.
4. The SAT work group develops a draft response to the question which is presented at the following SAT meeting for discussion and approval.
5. Approved SAT responses are presented to the SCRSG at its next meeting. Responses will typically be provided in the form of a concise memorandum (note: draft work group responses/products may be provided to the SCRSG before full SAT review if the SAT recommends this action).

Developing Science Questions during SCRSG Meetings

Designated I-Team members will track and record science-related questions relevant to the MLPA process from SCRSG deliberations. There are several ways in which questions may be developed to be considered for the SAT.

1. Designated staff will closely track SCRSG discussions. When topics arise that require scientific information, data synthesis, or SAT guidance and are important for the SCRSG in developing alternative MPA proposals, they will be recorded for SAT consideration.

2. During discussions, the SCRSG may specifically request scientific information or scientific guidance on a relevant topic. In some instances, questions from the SCRSG may have both a policy component and a scientific component; staff will work directly with the SCRSG (or subgroup of SCRSG members) to craft the question such that the SAT can address the scientific aspect of the broader question.
3. Questions may be developed by breakout groups of the SCRSG for consideration by the SAT, so that breakout groups may continue work in developing alternative MPA proposals. I-Team members in each of the breakout groups will work with the groups to craft questions for the SAT.
4. At the end of each SCRSG meeting, I-Team staff will review with the full SCRSG, to the extent possible, any questions that were developed for the SAT to consider. Staff will be responsible for conveying requests from the SCRSG and relaying SAT responses back to the SCRSG.

Following SCRSG meetings, the I-Team will review proposed questions for relevance to the process. Discussions within the SCRSG may contain both a policy and scientific component. Staff will identify these two components and will either address policy questions directly or convey the policy components to the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force. The scientific questions will be discussed and prioritized with the SAT co-chairs and then those prioritized for discussion will be considered by the SAT.

Deliberations at SAT Meetings

Relevant SCRSG questions will be presented to the full SAT by members of the I-Team. The SAT may briefly discuss the questions during meetings and identify a work group consisting of knowledgeable SAT members, outside experts and I-Team members who may help provide information to answer the question.

Once a work group develops a draft response to a question, the draft response is discussed at the next SAT meeting. The SAT may approve of the response at that meeting; in some other cases, the SAT may find additional time is needed to address particularly challenging issues.

Reporting SAT Responses at SCRSG Meetings

Responses to SCRSG questions or information summaries will be conveyed to the SCRSG at the next available meeting. Summary documents and/or responses will be presented by SAT members or members of the MLPA I-Team.