

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311 • Sacramento, CA 95814 • (916) 654-1885

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Media Contacts: Chamois Andersen (MLPA Initiative) 307.742.2331 or 307.460.0771
Steve Martarano (CDFG) 916.322.8639

Public Workshops Scheduled for Draft North Central Coast Marine Protected Area Proposals

SACRAMENTO -The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative has scheduled a series of three public workshops beginning February 4 in Petaluma. The workshops will focus on draft marine protected area (MPA) proposals for the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region, which covers state waters from Alder Creek near Point Arena in Mendocino County to Pigeon Point in San Mateo County.

Members of the regional stakeholder group that helped develop the draft proposals and MLPA staff will be on hand to answer the public's questions and provide a dialogue for how these ideas, and ultimately a network of marine protected areas, will help meet the goal of improved marine life, habitats and ecosystem health.

"Our goal is for each region's marine protected areas to link together in a statewide network, and the five draft stakeholder proposals all consider the conservation of diverse marine life and their habitats to help achieve that goal," said Ken Wiseman, executive director of the Initiative. "The public's continued participation in helping to refine these ideas is vital to a successful outcome," he added.

The public workshops are scheduled for:

- Monday, February 4, 2008: 6 p.m. - 9 p.m., Sheraton Sonoma County, 745 Baywood Drive, Petaluma
- Tuesday, February 5, 2008: 6 p.m. - 9 p.m., Gualala Art Center, 46501 Gualala Road, Gualala
- Wednesday, February 6, 2008: 6 p.m. - 9 p.m., Best Western Lighthouse Hotel, 105 Rockaway Beach Avenue, Pacifica

A copy of the agenda for all three workshops is available on the MLPA website at www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa/workshops_020408.asp.

At the workshops the public will receive information about the five draft MPA proposals currently under consideration and the various evaluations and analyses of the proposals that have been conducted by the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team, California Department of Fish and Game, and MLPA staff. The workshop will also include a summary of the MLPA North Central Coast Project, next steps in the development of the MPA proposals, and other opportunities for public input.

The process to develop a recommendation for north central coast MPAs, under the guidelines of a master plan for MPAs, involves the identification of marine species that may benefit from

MPAs, consideration of existing marine protected areas, and inclusion of a variety of habitats and water depths, among other things.

A blue ribbon task force is overseeing the process and will make a final recommendation regarding MPA proposals for the north central coast to the California Fish and Game Commission in April of this year.

For additional information on the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative, log on to www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa/.

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