

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

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MLPA Task Force Adopts Master Plan Framework Recommendation to Guide Alternative Proposals for the Creation of Marine Protected Areas Network

Pasadena, CA - The California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Blue Ribbon Task Force has adopted a proposed master plan framework to guide the development of alternative proposals for marine protected areas (MPAs). The recommendation will be forwarded to the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) for review and then to the Fish and Game Commission for its consideration.

Also this week, the task force selected Point Conception to Pigeon Point as the boundaries for the central coast study region, the region in which MPAs will initially be evaluated and considered.

"This decision on the framework is an important one in a long, complicated process, but one that was inclusive of the various perspectives and stakeholders," said Phil Isenberg, chair of the task force. "It is our hope that the recommendation made by the task force will be understood by the Fish and Game Commission as emerging from tremendous public involvement and input," he added.

The task force reached its decision after reviewing recommendations and testimony from the Master Plan Science Advisory Team, a panel of experts on marine resources, as well as stakeholder input and extensive public testimony over the last several months. The task force recommendation is being forwarded to the DFG along with a number of additional suggested modifications. The department will present a draft document to the Fish and Game Commission for its consideration in May.

Executive Director John Kirlin stated, "Adoption of the draft master plan framework is a significant accomplishment, and this document was greatly improved by the stakeholder comments received on several drafts."

The master plan framework is the first step in developing a complete master plan for marine protected areas, as required under the MLPA. The task force will now oversee an effort to develop and present recommendations for MPAs in the central coast study region to the Fish and Game Commission by March 2006.

Developing a proposed draft master plan framework is among four objectives of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force. Other objectives include preparing by December 2005 a comprehensive strategy for long-term funding of MLPA implementation, overseeing the development of a recommendation for MPAs along the central coast and developing by November 2006 recommendations for improved coordination with federal agencies involved in MPA management.

The eight-member task force was formed by Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman to help the state implement the MLPA.

The MLPA requires the DFG to prepare and present to the Fish and Game Commission a master plan that will guide the adoption and implementation of a Marine Life Protection Program within the department. The Fish and Game Commission is then required to adopt a master plan, based on the best readily available science, which includes a statewide network of MPAs. After the central coast, the commission will be presented with recommendations for alternative network components along the remaining sections of California coast between 2006 and 2011.

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