

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

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

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Unanimous Support for Package of Regional Policies to Guide Central Coast Marine Protected Areas

Cambria, CA - The Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (CCRSG), a 32-member panel established to help implement the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), unanimously adopted a package of regional policies to guide development of proposals for marine protected areas (MPAs) in state waters between Point Conception and Pigeon Point. This action capped two months of intensive deliberations about how to satisfy the requirements of the MLPA and address the needs and interests of diverse stakeholders.

"The members of the regional stakeholder group listened to one another and worked thoughtfully and creatively to balance diverse perspectives, including fishing, recreational, environmental, and research interests," stated John Kirlin, executive director of the MLPA Initiative. "While participants clearly differed on their initial preferences, they found ways to integrate their interests in a package that all members could support."

The regional policy package include goals and objectives that focus on protecting the natural diversity and abundance of marine life, rebuilding rare or over-fished species, and improving recreational, educational, and study opportunities. The policies also call for replicating MPAs to ensure scientifically valid studies, carrying out a long term monitoring plan, and creating a process for regional review to determine if MPAs are an effective part of the statewide network. In addition, as part of the same package, coast regional stakeholders also adopted a key set of design and implementation considerations to be used in concert with the objectives to guide the siting and evaluation of MPAs. Regional stakeholders agreed on the need to minimize negative socio-economic impacts; optimize positive socio-economic impacts; improve public outreach; and encourage adequate funding for monitoring, enforcement, and adaptive management, as required by the MLPA.

"The Department of Fish and Game appreciates the dedicated efforts of each member of the regional stakeholder group. The integrated set of goals, objectives, and design and implementation considerations provides a solid foundation for developing proposals for marine protected areas," said John Ugoretz, nearshore ecosystem coordinator for the Department of Fish and Game. "This represents a key milestone in the work of the CCRSG. The culmination of two months of such hard work provides momentum for the upcoming steps of evaluating existing MPAs and developing alternative packages of MPAs to transmit to the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force."

The complete text of the Provisional Regional Goals, Objectives, and Design and Implementation Considerations is available at www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa/documentarchives.asp. Under the guidance of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, the CCRSG is responsible for working with a science team, professional staff and the California Department of Fish and Game to help the state improve the design and management of the central coast portion of a statewide network of MPAs. The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force will review the goals, objectives, and design and implementation

considerations developed by the CCRSG at its next meeting on September 28-29 in San Luis Obispo.

The next MLPA Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group meeting will be held on October 5-6, 2005 in Monterey. Meetings are open to the general public and are videotaped for later viewing on the Internet. Audio and video links for past meetings can be accessed at www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa/meetings.asp. Members of the public are encouraged to participate in the regional meetings as observers; they also will have opportunities to provide comments on evolving marine protected areas proposals and other elements of the process.

Early next year the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force is expected to present to the Department of Fish and Game a recommendation for alternative MPA proposals in the central coast region. In turn, by March 2006 the Department of Fish and Game is expected to present its recommendation of a preferred alternative to the California Fish and Game Commission, the decision-making body. After the central coast, the commission will consider recommendations for alternative network components along the remaining sections of California coast between 2006 and 2011.

About the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

The California Natural Resources Agency and California Department of Fish and Game have partnered with the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation and others in an initiative to achieve the MLPA goals. The advice of scientists, resource managers, experts, stakeholders and members of the public guide this public-private partnership. The 1999 MLPA directed the state to design and manage a network of marine protected areas in order to, among other things, protect marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage, as well as improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems. Marine protected areas include state marine reserves, state marine parks and state marine conservation areas. For more information about the MLPA Initiative, please visit the initiative website at www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa/.

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