



March 2011

Executive Director's Message

Whether we actually live on the north coast or elsewhere, the recent challenges presented by the tsunami weigh heavily in the hearts and prayers of all involved in this process. I am certain the same spirit of cooperation and determination in our process that produced just one set of geographical boundaries, will also bring the resources for a speedy recovery to those north coast communities affected by this event.

This final issue of North Coast News marks the completion of the marine protected area planning process for the Marine Life Protection Act's open coast study regions. This tremendous accomplishment would not have been possible without the dedication of each of you – the stakeholders and members of the public who persevered through the trials and tribulations to arrive at this moment of reflection and accomplishment.

As I reflect back on last month's joint California Fish and Game Commission and MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force meeting, the collective tone of respect and recognition of the unique characteristics of the north coast illustrates the incredible progress we all made together. This journey has led people of various backgrounds and experiences to unite and establish new relationships, paving the way toward building a better understanding of the social fabric that makes California the special place it is. I am extremely honored to have been part of the MLPA Initiative and to have worked closely with all of you to make our stakeholder-based approach a powerful model for other national and worldwide environmental decision-making processes.

I look forward to our paths crossing throughout 2011 and beyond.

~Ken Wiseman, Executive Director

Meeting Highlights

California Fish and Game Commission Special Meeting with the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force

The California Fish and Game Commission held a special meeting with the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) on February 2, 2011 in Sacramento. Recently appointed Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird opened the joint meeting by commending the north coast community and the BRTF for their hard work and the regional stakeholders at their success in arriving at a single, unified MPA proposal. Secretary Laird shared that he had requested his staff work with MLPA Initiative staff and others to identify an administrative process that honors and accommodates traditional tribal gathering while reflecting the stakeholders' intent in the unified proposal.

Throughout the day, commissioners received information from the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team, California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), California State Parks, MLPA Initiative staff, BRTF members, MLPA North Coast Regional Stakeholder Group members and members of the public. At the end of the meeting, the commission unanimously supported the guidance provided by Secretary Laird to his staff and directed that a revised MPA proposal be developed that could accommodate traditional, non-commercial tribal gathering. Additionally, staff was requested to address in this MPA proposal, to the extent possible, the shortcomings identified in the DFG feasibility analysis. Progress on these efforts will be reported to the commission at its April meeting, at which time it may choose to identify a "proposed project" to initiate the regulatory and environmental review processes.

Next Steps

What's next for the north coast study region?

Since the joint meeting, Secretary Laird's staff has been working with staff and attorneys from DFG, California State Parks, the California Attorney General's office, the MLPA Initiative and a number of the north coast tribes to identify a potential administrative solution to allowing traditional tribal gathering within marine protected areas. Those discussions are ongoing and an update is expected at the commission's April meeting.

Sometime in the coming months, the commission is expected to select a "proposed project" from one of the MPA proposals under consideration. This will allow staff to initiate the regulatory process under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and the environmental review process under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

As required by the APA, the commission will hold at least two hearings to receive public comment on the proposed MPA regulations in the north coast to help inform a final decision; these hearings are anticipated to take place in 2011. Members of the public are also invited to provide general comments via the following:

Email: fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Fax: (916) 653-5040

Mail: California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

There will also be an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the draft environmental impact report developed under CEQA that is expected to be released for public review in 2011. For more information about participating in the rulemaking process, please visit www.fgc.ca.gov/public/information/participate.aspx. Information about the commission meeting schedule, draft agendas and proposed regulations can be found on the commission website at www.fgc.ca.gov.

What's next for the MLPA Initiative?

The north coast study region marks the completion of the MPA planning processes for the MLPA's open coast study regions. Members of the I-Team have repeatedly commented on the strong sense of community they experienced in the north coast study region and how much they will miss working with everyone; sincere thanks to the regional stakeholders and members of the public who actively contributed to the MPA planning process. The San Francisco Bay Study Region (waters within San Francisco Bay, from the Golden Gate Bridge northeast to the Carquinez Bridge) is the fifth and final study region for

consideration under MLPA. Currently, an options report is being developed that will consider the study region setting for a potential MPA planning process, including the socioeconomic and jurisdictional settings, existing planning and restoration efforts, overlap with current projects, informational needs of the community and anticipated resources needed for implementing a planning process. The options report will be submitted to the secretary for natural resources and the director of DFG in spring 2011. The report will also be shared with other policy makers, members of the public and potential funders who may have an interest in implementing the MLPA in the San Francisco Bay Study Region.

In the coming months, the MLPA website and list server will continue to provide the public with information about MLPA activities, including commission announcements of dates or documents for the north coast regulatory and environmental review processes.

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