

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (2009-2010) Operating Procedures
Revised November 18, 2009

For any collaborative process to move forward smoothly, it is helpful for those involved to agree at the onset on the purpose for the process and on the procedures by which the group will govern its discussions, deliberations, and decision-making.

I. Charter of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (2009-2010)

The Secretary for Natural Resources determined it beneficial to convene a task force to make public policy recommendations and to enhance the state's ability to carry out its mandate under the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). The charge to the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) is to meet the objectives of the MLPA Initiative (third phase, north coast study region, 2009-2010), including: to oversee a regional project to develop alternative marine protected area proposals in an area along the north coast to present to the California Fish and Game Commission by December 2010, to prepare information and recommendations for coordinating management of MPAs with federal agencies involved in marine protected areas, and to provide direction for expenditure of initiative funds.

II. Role of the Blue Ribbon Task Force

The BRTF will achieve three objectives (see charge of the BRTF) and will work to resolve policy disputes and provide direction in the face of uncertainty, while meeting the goals and objectives of the MLPA. The BRTF process will be directly supported by initiative staff and contractors, California Department of Fish and Game staff, and California Department of Parks and Recreation staff. Additional support will be provided by independent contractors, as needed and requested. Members of the BRTF will serve as liaisons to the MLPA North Coast Project.

Committees of the BRTF may be formed to conduct work outside the regular meetings. The BRTF will designate committee members as needed for the anticipated tasks and outcomes. At the direction of the BRTF, committee members may develop draft products and make recommendations to the BRTF. Committees will not make decisions on behalf of the BRTF.

The California Department of Fish and Game is the lead agency under the MLPA and will provide advice and recommendations to the BRTF, MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team, and regional stakeholder group. This advice is intended to help develop feasible alternative proposals for marine protected areas in an area along the north coast. Eventually the BRTF will submit its advice to the California Fish and Game Commission, the decision-making body under the MLPA.

III. Participation

Interests represented. BRTF members do not represent specific parties, organizations, agencies or others that have an interest, role, responsibility and/or would be substantially affected by developing and implementing the MLPA Initiative.

Attendance at meetings. Each BRTF member is expected to attend each full meeting. It is the responsibility of the member to stay fully briefed on all BRTF meeting discussions and deliberations. Identified BRTF members will also attend meetings of the MLPA North Coast Regional Stakeholder Group.

IV. Meetings

Open meetings. BRTF meetings will be open to the public. Members of the public will be given opportunities at identified times at each meeting to make comments, raise questions or submit materials, as time permits and the BRTF directs.

Video or audio recordings. Audio or video recordings of each regular meeting of the BRTF, SAT and regional stakeholder group will be made available to the public. Every effort will be made to also offer live webcasting of regular BRTF, SAT and regional stakeholder group meetings.

Agendas. Proposed meeting agendas will be drafted by the executive director and other staff in consultation with the BRTF chair and under the advice of BRTF members. Proposed agendas will be circulated in advance of meetings and approved or revised at the beginning of each meeting.

Meeting summaries. Meeting summaries and action item lists will be prepared by the executive director or his/her designee in consultation with the BRTF chair to assist the BRTF in documenting its progress and activities. Meeting summaries will be made available to the public via the MLPA Initiative website.

V. Decision-Making and Commitments

Decision making. Decisions will be made by a quorum of the BRTF at regular meetings. If consensus is not achieved, the BRTF will make decisions by majority vote. Regular meetings may be conducted in person or by conference call. Those BRTF members absent from any meeting will be asked to provide written comments within one week of a decision, and if they do not, their agreement will be assumed.

Quorum. If less than a majority of the BRTF members are present, decision-making will be postponed until a quorum is reached.

Consensus. When concurrence among members is possible, the BRTF will strive to make decisions by consensus. Consensus is defined as all BRTF members can agree to the recommendation or decision.

VI. Safeguards

Good faith. All BRTF members agree to act in good faith in all aspects of this collaborative effort. Members are encouraged to offer a free and open exchange of ideas, views and

information prior to making recommendations or reaching consensus. Personal attacks are not acceptable.

Information. BRTF members agree to share all relevant information to the maximum extent possible. Members will provide information as much as possible in advance of the meeting at which such information is used. BRTF staff will make a good faith effort to distribute documents to BRTF members and the public at least five days in advance of requested action.

VII. Process Reminders

- Seek to learn and understand each other's and the public's perspective
- Encourage respectful, candid and constructive discussions
- Provide balance of speaking time
- If you disagree, offer an alternative solution
- Seek to resolve differences and reach consensus
- Discuss topics together rather than in isolation
- Make every effort to avoid surprises
- No sidebar conversations
- Cell phones and PDAs shall be turned off or in the silent mode during formal meeting sessions