

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nov. 12, 2009

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Recommendations for Improving Southern California's Marine Protected Areas Move Forward

Four marine protected area proposals will be forwarded to the California Fish and Game Commission

Sacramento – The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) has unanimously (5-0) adopted a preferred marine protected area (MPA) proposal for the south coast study region. The proposal, along with three MPA proposals developed by a regional stakeholder group, comes after extensive science evaluation and stakeholder input over the last 18 months.

“The task force’s recommendations for the south coast represent significant advancements in ocean protection and create an endowment that will strengthen California’s coastal economy long into the future,” said Secretary for Natural Resources Mike Chrisman.

The recommendations will now be presented to the California Fish and Game Commission on Dec. 9 in Los Angeles. The commission’s regulatory process to adopt south coast MPAs takes about one year and includes numerous opportunities for public input.

The MLPA South Coast Study Region includes state waters from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the California border with Mexico, including offshore islands. The MLPA strengthens the long-term protection of California’s coastal resources by improving the design and management of the state’s system of MPAs.

“Our recommendation was reached through extensive cross-interest dialogue by a diverse group of stakeholders and numerous opportunities for public input,” said Cathy Reheis-Boyd, chair of the MLPA BRTF. “The preferred alternative balances the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act, science guidelines, socioeconomic considerations and diverse views in the south coast. This plan represents something we can live with today and sustain for the long term.”

The BRTF proposal does not restrict public access or recreational enjoyment, such as boating, swimming, diving or kayaking. The plan allows existing commercial and recreational fishing to continue in the majority of the region, including at Rocky Point along the Palos Verdes Peninsula, while strengthening ecosystem protection at a number of key geographies such as Point Dume in Malibu and the Laguna Beach coastline. Maps and descriptions of the specific MPAs included in the BRTF proposal will be posted to the MLPA website by Nov. 19; a general description is available on the video archive of the meeting.

The adopted proposal is based on the efforts of the 64-member south coast regional stakeholder group (SCRSG), representing a broad range of interest and in-depth knowledge about local resources. The SCRSG was tasked with evaluating existing MPAs and developing alternative MPA proposals along the Southern California coast. The stakeholder group included, among others, representatives of recreational angling, diving, commercial fishing, ports and harbors, conservation, business and government agencies with MPA-related responsibilities.

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After more than one year of formal meetings, numerous informal meetings, and input and review from a science advisory team, DFG, and California State Parks, the stakeholder group developed and forwarded to the task force three MPA proposals for the south coast, identified as proposals 1, 2 and 3. Proposal 0, the existing MPAs in Southern California, was also used as a baseline. The California Fish and Game Commission and DFG will automatically compare Proposal 0 as the “no project” alternative during the state regulatory process.

“I am extremely proud of the work the stakeholders and science team delivered to the task force in developing these proposals,” said MLPA Initiative Executive Director Ken Wiseman. “As the commission begins its deliberations on the MPAs along the south coast, I hope they consider the invaluable amount of time and local knowledge that went into these recommendations. As an example, with the help of the stakeholders the task force was able to develop a design for the San Diego region that has even less potential economic impact than any of the three proposals developed by the SCRSG.”

California has three types of MPAs that are utilized in the proposals – marine conservation areas, marine parks and marine reserves – as part of an ecosystem-based approach to protecting valuable marine life and critical habitats. Allowed activities vary greatly among the three types of MPAs, ranging from limiting certain types of commercial and recreational activities to establishing no-take zones. Public access is allowed in all three.

The MLPA South Coast Study Region encompasses approximately 2,354 square miles of state waters adjacent to five coastal counties: Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego.

Led by Chair Reheis-Boyd, the five-member MLPA BRTF is comprised of public leaders with experience in addressing complex public policy issues and a diversity of professional experience. Member of the BRTF were appointed by the Secretary for Natural Resources to oversee the south coast study region planning process.

The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force members are:

- William W. Anderson, president of Westrec Marina Management, Inc.
- Meg Caldwell, director and senior lecturer on Law, Stanford Law School's Environment and Natural Resources Law & Policy Program
- Dr. Jane Pisano, president and director of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
- Catherine Reheis-Boyd, chief operating officer and chief of staff for the Western States Petroleum Association
- Gregory F. Schem, president and chief executive officer of Harbor Real Estate Group

In 1999 the state enacted the MLPA, which directs the state to reexamine and redesign California's system of marine protected areas with the goal of increasing its coherence and effectiveness at protecting the state's marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage, as well as to improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems.

Making recommendations for MPAs along the south coast, utilizing the best readily-available science and the advice of stakeholders, is one of a number of steps being taken in California to implement the MLPA, which is part of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Ocean Action Plan. To achieve this, the California Natural Resources Agency and DFG partnered with the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation to establish the MLPA Initiative, a public-private partnership designed to help the state implement the MLPA, guided by the advice of scientists, resource managers, experts, stakeholders and members of the public.

For more information about the MLPA Initiative, please visit <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa>.