

Executive Summary

This document is a draft environmental impact report (EIR) analyzing the potential environmental effects of the Central Coast Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Project (Proposed Project) as proposed by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission). It was prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code Section 2100 et seq.), which requires state and local agencies to consider and disclose the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on those projects. Consistent with CEQA requirements, the purpose of this document is to:

- identify potential direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project;
- identify its potential contributions to cumulative regional impacts in the project area;
- evaluate the potential for growth inducement due to the project;
- describe mitigation measures that would avoid any potentially significant project impacts or reduce them to a less-than-significant level; and
- discuss potential project alternatives that would avoid or reduce one or more of the identified significant project impacts.

Project Background and Need

In 1999, the legislature approved and the governor signed the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) (Stats. 1999, Chapter 1015). In general, the 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. The California Department of Fish and Game (Department) must prepare and present to the Commission a master plan that will guide the adoption and implementation of a Marine Life Protection Program (Program) by 2011.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the California Resources Agency, Department, and the Resource Legacy Fund Foundation, the MLPA Initiative was formed to implement the MLPA. The MLPA Initiative has divided the master plan into two principal parts:

- (1) a section providing guidance in the application of the MLPA to the development of a statewide MPA network (the master plan framework); and
- (2) a section describing the preferred alternatives for MPA proposals in various regions of the state.

The master plan framework was completed and adopted by the Commission in August of 2005. The framework envisions a sequential focus on portions of the state in a series of regional processes, beginning with the central coast (defined as the region from Pigeon Point, San Mateo County to Point Conception, Santa Barbara County). The Commission has identified a preferred alternative (the Proposed Project) and two other alternatives for MPA proposals for the central coast region. If adopted, this first region will fulfill the preliminary step necessary to convert the master plan framework into a master plan for the entire state. The requirement for a full master plan and implementing regulations will be met when the Commission adopts the final portion of the plan and all regions of the coast, including the San Francisco Bay estuarine complex, have been completed.

The MLPA recognizes that a combination of state marine reserves (SMRs), state marine conservation areas (SMCAs) and state marine parks (SMPs) can help protect habitat and ecosystems, conserve biological diversity, enhance recreational and educational opportunities, and provide scientific reference points to assist resource management decisions. Consequently, development of a statewide MPA network through a series of regional processes requires analysis of alternative groupings of proposed MPAs within each region. According to the MLPA, the Commission preferred alternative must include recommended no-take areas (SMRs) that encompass representative habitat types and communities across a range of depths and conditions and avoid activities that upset the natural ecological functions within such reserves. Collectively the regional alternatives must include replicates of similar types of habitats in each broader biogeographical region, to the extent possible.

CEQA Compliance Process

This Draft EIR is a project EIR. The project EIR analyzes the effects of activities specifically related to the Proposed Project, including all phases of the project such as management, enforcement, and monitoring.

Consistent with CEQA requirements, this Draft EIR evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed project in relation to the following:

- aesthetics,
- agriculture,
- air quality,
- consumptive uses,
- cultural resources,
- ecosystems and habitats,

- geology and soils,
- hazards and hazardous materials,
- land use,
- mineral resources,
- noise,
- oceanography,
- population and housing,
- public services and utilities,
- recreation and research,
- species of interest,
- vessel traffic, and
- water quality.

Project Goals

The goals of the Proposed Project are as follows:

- **Goal 1:** To protect the natural diversity and abundance of marine life, and the structure, function, and integrity of marine ecosystems.
- **Goal 2:** To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted.
- **Goal 3:** To improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbances, and to manage these uses in a manner consistent with protecting biodiversity.
- **Goal 4:** To protect marine natural heritage, including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats in central California waters, for their intrinsic value.

- **Goal 5:** To ensure that central California's MPAs have clearly defined objectives, effective management measures, and adequate enforcement, and are based on sound scientific guidelines.
- **Goal 6:** To ensure that the central coast's MPAs are designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a component of a statewide network.

Overview of Proposed Project and Alternatives

In addition to the Proposed Project, this Draft EIR analyzes the potential impacts of three alternatives:

- Alternative 1 (previously Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group [CCRSG] Package 1);
- Alternative 2 (previously CCRSG Package 2R); and
- The No-Project Alternative (existing MPAs and special closure).

Like the Proposed Project, Alternatives 1 and 2 would designate a number of MPAs within the central coast study region; the principal differences between the Proposed Project and these two project alternatives relate to the total area and percent of the study region that would be designated as MPAs, the locations of the proposed MPAs, their boundary design, and their regulations for allowed and prohibited take. Under the No-Project Alternative, existing regulation of uses and protection of habitats would continue within existing MPAs and one special closure.

Proposed Project

Under the Proposed Project, MPAs would be designated as shown in Table ES-1. The Proposed Project would prohibit take within 15 State Marine Reserves (Año Nuevo, Natural Bridges, Elkhorn Slough, Moro Cojo, Lovers Point, Asilomar, Carmel Pinnacles, Point Lobos, Point Sur, Big Creek, Piedras Blancas, Cambria, Morro Bay East, Point Buchon, and Vandenberg) and the southern portion of one State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA) in Morro Bay, in which waterfowl hunting would be permitted. Take of recreational finfish by hook-and-line and clams in the Elkhorn Slough State Marine Park would be allowed. Recreational fishing would be allowed in the Cambria State Marine Park. Allowed take within 11 State Marine Conservation Areas are shown in Table ES-2. Further details on the size, along-shore span, depth range, and habitats of these areas are described in Chapter 2, "Project Description."

Table ES-1. Overall Summary of Proposed Project and Alternatives

Type of MPA	Number Proposed				Area (Square Miles)				Percent of Study Region			
	Prop. Proj.	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	No-Proj. Alt.	Prop. Proj.	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	No-Proj. Alt.	Prop. Proj.	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	No-Proj. Alt.
State Marine Reserve	15	15	21	5	96.61	59.56	147.68	7.45	8.40	5.18	12.84	0.65
State Marine Park	2	1	1	0	6.35	4.41	9.84	0.00	0.55	0.38	0.86	0.00
State Marine Conservation Area	12	13	8	7	100.91	107.37	63.93	33.50	8.77	9.34	5.56	33.50
Special Closure	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	2.20	–	–	–	0.19
All MPAs Combined	29	29	30	13	203.87	171.33	221.45	43.15	17.73	14.90	19.26	3.75

Notes:

These are proposed MPA designations, not levels of protection assigned by the SAT. The southern portion of the proposed Morro Bay SMRMA was included with the SMRs for the analysis. The remainder of the proposed Morro Bay SMRMA was included with the SMCAs for the analysis and count of proposed MPAs.

Prop. Proj. = Proposed Project.

Alt. 1 = Alternative 1

Alt. 2 = Alternative 2.

No-Proj. Alt. = No-Project Alternative.

Table ES-2. Allowed Take for Individual MPAs in Proposed Project

MPA Name	Proposed Take Allowed
Año Nuevo SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Greyhound Rock SMCA	Recreational finfish by hook and line from shore only and recreational and commercial giant kelp (<i>Macrocystis pyrifera</i>) by hand, salmon, and squid.
Natural Bridges SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Elkhorn Slough SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Elkhorn Slough SMCA (SMP) ¹	Recreational finfish by hook and line and clams in area adjacent to DFG wildlife area in west.
Moro Cojo Slough SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Soquel Canyon SMCA	Pelagic finfish ²
Portuguese Ledge SMCA	Pelagic finfish ²
Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	Recreational finfish by hook and line, and commercial take of kelp by hand north of 36° 38.83' North Latitude. NOTE: Sub-Options are provide for the time of day and location where recreational fishing is allowed in this MPA.
Lovers Point SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	Recreational finfish and commercial kelp by hand.
Asilomar SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Carmel Pinnacles SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Carmel Bay SMCA	Recreational finfish and commercial kelp by hand.
Point Lobos SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Lobos SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon, albacore, and spot prawn.
Point Sur SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Sur SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon and albacore.
Big Creek SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon, albacore, and spot prawn west of line approximating 25 fathoms.
Big Creek SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Piedras Blancas SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Piedras Blancas SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon and albacore.
Cambria SMCA (SMP) ¹	All recreational take. NOTE: Sub-Options are provided for the southern and northern boundaries of this MPA.
Cambria SMR	No commercial or sport take. NOTE: Sub-Options are provided for the northern boundary of this MPA.

MPA Name	Proposed Take Allowed
Morro Bay SMRMA	No commercial or sport take in South. Recreational finfish and commercial bait fish receiving, and commercial aquaculture by permit in north. Waterfowl hunting under DFG regulations in entire area.
Morro Bay SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Buchon SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Buchon SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon and albacore.
Vandenberg SMR	No commercial or sport take.

¹ These areas will initially be designated as state marine conservation areas, though their regulations allow later change to state marine parks by the State Park and Recreation Commission.

² Pelagic Finfish are defined as: northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*), barracudas (*Sphyræna spp.*), billfishes* (family Istiophoridae), dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*), Pacific herring (*Clupea pallasii*), jack mackerel (*Trachurus symmetricus*), Pacific mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*), salmon (*Oncorhynchus spp.*), Pacific sardine (*Sardinops sagax*), blue shark (*Prionace glauca*), salmon shark (*Lamna ditropis*), shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), thresher sharks (*Alopias spp.*), swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), tunas (family Scombridae), and yellowtail (*Seriola lalandi*). *Marlin is not allowed for commercial take.

Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, MPAs would be designated as shown in Table ES-1. Of the various alternatives, Alternative 1 would designate the smallest number and area of MPAs. Alternative 1 would prohibit take within 14 State Marine Reserves and one SMRMA in Morro Bay, in which waterfowl hunting would be permitted. Within the Cambria State Marine Park, no commercial fishing would be allowed, but recreational fishing would be allowed. Commercial shore-launched craft would be allowed to transit the area. Allowed take within 13 State Marine Conservation Areas are shown in Table ES-3. Further details on the size, along-shore span, depth range, and habitats of these areas are described in Chapter 2, "Project Description."

Table ES-3. Allowed Take for Individual MPAs in Alternative 1

MPA Name	Proposed Take Allowed
Año Nuevo SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Greyhound Rock SMCA	Recreational and commercial take of pelagic finfish ¹ , squid, Dungeness crab, and salmon. Salmon may not be taken shallower than 25 fathoms.
Greyhound Rock SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Elkhorn Slough SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Moro Cojo Estuary SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Monterey Submarine Canyon No Bottom Contact SMCA	Pelagic finfish ¹ and squid.
Ed Ricketts SMCA	Recreational finfish by hook and line, and commercial take of kelp by hand north of 36° 38.83' North Latitude.
Hopkins SMR	No commercial or sport take.

MPA Name	Proposed Take Allowed
Pacific Grove-Monterey SMCA	Recreational finfish, Dungeness crab, and squid. Commercial Dungeness crab, pelagic finfish ¹ , squid, and kelp.
Carmel Pinnacles SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Carmel Bay SMCA	Recreational finfish and commercial kelp and squid
Point Lobos SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Lobos SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon and commercial spot prawns.
Point Sur Deep Reef SMCA	Pelagic Finfish ¹
Julia Pfeiffer Burns Offshore SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Julia Pfeiffer Burns SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Julia Pfeiffer Burns Offshore SMCA	Salmon and spot prawn.
Big Creek SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Alder Creek SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Alder Creek SMCA	Pelagic Finfish ¹
Point Piedras Blancas SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Cambria SMCA (SMP) ²	All recreational take.
Morro Bay Harbor SMCA	Recreational take, commercial bait fish receiving, and commercial aquaculture by permit.
Morro Bay South SMRMA	No commercial or sport take except recreational hunting of waterfowl unless otherwise prohibited.
Point Buchon SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Buchon SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon.
Diablo Canyon Security Zone SMCA	No commercial or sport take.
Vandenberg SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Vandenberg Danger Zone 4 SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon and crabs.

¹ Pelagic Finfish are defined as: northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*), barracudas (*Sphyraena spp.*), billfishes* (family Istiophoridae), dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*), Pacific herring (*Clupea pallasii*), jack mackerel (*Trachurus symmetricus*), Pacific mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*), salmon (*Oncorhynchus spp.*), Pacific sardine (*Sardinops sagax*), blue shark (*Prionace glauca*), salmon shark (*Lamna ditropis*), shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), thresher sharks (*Alopias spp.*), swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), tunas (family Scombridae), and yellowtail (*Seriola lalandi*). *Marlin is not allowed for commercial take.

² These areas will initially be designated as state marine conservation areas, though their regulations allow later change to state marine parks by the State Park and Recreation Commission.

Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, MPAs would be designated as shown in Table ES-1. Of the various alternatives, Alternative 2 would designate the largest number and area of MPAs. Alternative 2 would prohibit take within 20 State Marine Reserves and the southern portion of one SMRMA in Morro Bay, in which waterfowl hunting would be permitted. Within the Cambria State Marine Park, no commercial fishing would be allowed. Allowed take within State Marine Conservation Areas are shown in Table ES-4. Further details on the size, along-shore span, depth range, and habitats of these areas are described in Chapter 2, "Project Description."

Table ES-4. Allowed Take for Individual MPAs in Alternative 2

MPA Name	Proposed Take Allowed
Año Nuevo SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Baldwin to Natural Bridges SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Elkhorn Slough SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Moro Cojo Estuary SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Soquel Canyon SMCA	Salmon and albacore.
Portuguese Ledge SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Edward C. Cooper SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Ed Ricketts SMCA	November 1 through the end of February, the commercial take of kelp north of 36° 36.83' N. lat. by hand only. Not more than 15 tons of kelp may be harvested from the portion of Administrative Kelp Bed 220 within the Ed Ricketts State Marine Conservation Area in the open time period.
Hopkins SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Pacific Grove SMCA	Finfish may be taken recreationally in the area between the seaward extension of Esplanade Street and boundary of the Hopkins State Marine Reserve by hook and line or spear. Take is prohibited by use of poke-pole gear. Take is prohibited for any competition involving two or more persons in which persons are ranked, or winners are determined, based on size, weight, number of species, type of species, or number of fish taken by means of spearfishing. Commercial take prohibited except kelp harvesting allowed by hand harvest with restrictions to limit take approximately to existing levels.
Asilomar SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Carmel Pinnacles SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Carmel Bay SMCA	Recreational finfish by hook and line or spear except poke-pole gear is prohibited. Take is prohibited for any competition involving two or more persons in which persons are ranked, or winners are determined, based on size, weight, number of species, type of species, or number of fish taken by means of spearfishing. Commercial take of kelp by hand.

MPA Name	Proposed Take Allowed
Point Lobos SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Lobos SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon, albacore, and spot prawn.
Point Sur SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Julia Pfeiffer Burns SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Big Creek SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon, albacore, and spot prawn deeper than 50 fathoms.
Big Creek SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Piedras Blancas SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Cambria SMCA (SMP) ¹	All recreational take.
Ken Norris SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Estero Bluff SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Morro Bay SMCA	Recreational take and commercial receiving of finfish for bait and permitted aquaculture of oysters.
Morro Bay SMRMA	No commercial or sport take. Waterfowl hunting under DFG regulations is allowed.
Morro Bay East SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Buchon SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Buchon SMCA	Recreational and commercial salmon and albacore.
Purisima Point SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Point Arguello SMR	No commercial or sport take.

¹ These areas will initially be designated as state marine conservation areas, though their regulations allow later change to state marine parks by the State Park and Recreation Commission.

No-Project Alternative

The No-Project Alternative includes existing MPAs in the central coast study region; a total of 13 existing MPAs, including one special closure, as shown in Table ES-1. No take is allowed within existing State Marine Reserves. Within the Special Closure, Año Nuevo Invertebrate Area, no take of invertebrates is allowed between November 30 and April 30. Allowed take within existing State Marine Conservation Areas are shown in Table ES-5. Further details on the size, along-shore span, depth range, and habitats of these areas are described in Chapter 2, "Project Description."

Table ES-5. Allowed Take for Individual MPAs and Special Closures in No-Project Alternative

MPA or Special Closure Name	Allowed Take
Año Nuevo Special Closure	All except invertebrates between November 30 and April 30.
Elkhorn Slough SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Hopkins SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Pacific Grove SMCA	Recreational finfish, and invertebrates other than mollusks or crustaceans. Commercial sardines, mackerel, anchovies, squid, and herring by ring net, lampara net, or bait net.
Carmel Bay SMCA	Recreational finfish by hook-and-line or spear and commercial kelp under specific conditions.
Point Lobos SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Julia Pfeiffer Burns SMCA	Recreational finfish, chiones, clams, cockles, rock scallops, native oysters, crabs, lobsters, ghost shrimp, sea urchins, mussels and marine worms (except no worms may be taken in any mussel bed unless taken incidentally to the take of mussels). Commercial finfish, crabs, ghost shrimp, jackknife clams, sea urchins, squid, kelp and worms (except no worms may be taken in any mussel bed, nor may any person pick up, remove, detach from the substrata any other organisms, or break up, move or destroy any rocks or other substrata or surfaces to which organisms are attached).
Big Creek SMR	No commercial or sport take.
Atascadero Beach SMCA	All except clams.
Morro Beach SMCA	All except clams and commercial take of giant kelp and bull kelp.
Pismo SMCA	All finfish and the commercial take of algae other than giant and bull kelp.
Pismo-Oceano Beach SMCA	All except clams and commercial take of giant kelp and bull kelp.
Vandenberg SMR	No commercial or sport take.

Comparison of Proposed Project and Alternatives

The Proposed Project and Alternatives, excluding the No-Project Alternative, would increase conservation benefits and create improved ecological MPA network components relative to existing MPAs. With respect to the amount of area receiving any level of protection, Alternative 2 would provide the most protection while Alternative 1 would provide the least protection. The Proposed Project would fall in between the two alternatives in terms of amount of area protected. The Proposed Project, however, provides for the most consistent and enforceable regulations and simple and enforceable boundary descriptions. It is the only alternative that could realistically be implemented with regulations that could be enforced and prosecuted with a higher likelihood of success. The No-Project Alternative currently provides the least protection compared to the Proposed Project and Alternatives 1 and 2.

The MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) for the central coast study region evaluated the Proposed Project and Alternatives 1 and 2 in terms of the extent to which each meets the SAT guidelines and project goals. The SAT team has concluded that the Proposed Project and Alternatives 1 and 2 would increase conservation benefits and create better ecological MPA network components relative to existing MPAs. The packages differ substantially in the amount of area protected and level of protection in each of the 10 habitat types that were evaluated. The 10 habitat types that were evaluated included deep rock, shallow rock, deep sand, shallow sand, deep canyon, shallow canyon, estuary, kelp, rocky intertidal, and sandy beach. The SAT made the following conclusions:

Proposed Project

- Provides moderate- to high-level protection for at least 20% of eight habitats.
- Provides high-level protection for at least 20% of six habitats: deep rock, estuary, intertidal, kelp, sandy beach, shallow rock.
- SMRs protect less than 1% of available deep rock habitat, and 8% or less of available shallow sand, shallow canyon, deep canyon, and deep sand habitat.

Alternative 1

- Provides moderate- to high-level protection for at least 20% of five habitats.
- Provides high-level protection for at least 20% of four habitats: rocky intertidal, estuaries, deep canyon, and deep sand.
- Provides high-level protection for at least 30% of only one habitat: estuaries.
- SMRs include less than 1% of available deep rock habitat and less than 5% of available deep sand, shallow sand, deep canyon, and shallow canyon habitats.

Alternative 2

- Provides moderate- to high-level protection for at least 20% of eight habitats.
- Provides high-level protection for at least 20% of six habitats: rocky intertidal, estuaries, deep rock, shallow rock, kelp, and sandy beach.
- Provides high-level protection for close to 30% (or more) of four habitats: shallow rock, rocky intertidal, estuaries, and kelp.
- Provides high-level protection to less than 5% of available shallow canyon habitat.

Areas of Known Controversy / Issues

Based on input during the public scoping period, several issue areas of public concern have been identified regarding the Proposed Project. Some of the issues raised might be considered controversial. The issues of apparent greatest concern raised in comment to date are highlighted below.

- Displacement effects on fisheries outside proposed MPAs;
- Loss of commercial and recreational fishing opportunities;
- Socioeconomic effects on fishing industries, seafood business economy and communities;
- Representation of non-consumptive use interests;
- Adequacy of enforcement resources and funding;
- Adequacy of biological baseline data;
- Ability of MPAs to build or maintain fish stocks;
- Need for quantitative classification guidelines and species benefit assessment;
- Phasing of MPA network components;
- Effects on ports, marina, and harbors; and
- Vessel safety.

Summary of Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table ES-6. Summary of Environmental Impacts under Proposed Project and Alternatives

Environmental Issue Area	Proposed Project	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	No Project
Aesthetics	NI	NI	NI	NI
Agriculture	NI	NI	NI	NI
Air Quality	SU	SU	SU	NI
Biological Resources	LTS to B	LTS to B	LTS to B	SU
Cultural Resources	NI	NI	NI	NI
Geology and Soils	NI	NI	NI	NI
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	NI	NI	NI	NI
Land Use	NI	NI	NI	NI
Mineral Resources	NI	NI	NI	NI
Noise	NI	NI	NI	NI
Oceanography	NI	NI	NI	NI
Population and Housing	LTS	LTS	LTS	NI
Public Services and Utilities	LTS	LTS	LTS	NI
Recreation	LTS	LTS	LTS	NI
Research and Education	NI/B	NI/B	NI/B	NI
Vessel Traffic	LTS	LTS	LTS	NI
Water Quality	LTS	LTS	LTS	NI

Notes: NI = no impact; B = beneficial; LTS = less than significant; SU = Significant Unavoidable

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

The Proposed Project and Alternatives 1 and 2 could result in significant unavoidable air quality impacts. These potential impacts would be caused by possible increased exhaust from fishing vessels traveling longer distances due to displacement of fishing effort by the implementation of new MPAs. Both the North Coast and South Coast Air Basins are not in attainment for ozone and particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or less (PM10). As indicated in Chapter 5, the Proposed Project's operational emissions would be well below the Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District's thresholds of significance and three of the four significance thresholds for the San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD) for criteria pollutants; however, project-related operational emissions would exceed the SLOAPCD significance threshold for

oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) emissions in the Proposed Project and Alternatives 1 and 2. In addition, emissions within both air districts would contribute to cumulative attainment impacts for ozone and PM₁₀ in the North Coast and South Coast Air Basins. These impacts are considered to be of a short-term duration.

Mitigation

Mitigation is not required for less than significant impacts. For identified significant air quality impacts associated from the Proposed Project and Alternatives 1 and 2 there are no mitigation measures that could reasonably be enforced by the Department that would reduce the potential short-term direct and cumulative emissions impacts to less-than-significant. Regulatory compliance authority lies with the California Air Resources Board (ARB). In the long-term, emissions are anticipated to diminish over time due to the current trend of declining fleet numbers, the ARB's ongoing statewide efforts on the regulation of harbor craft diesel engines, and continuing efforts of the Carl Moyer Fund to refurbish or replace aging diesel engines.

Public Involvement

Overview

One of the purposes of CEQA is to establish opportunities for the public to review and comment on projects that may effect the environment. CEQA provides opportunities for public participation through:

- Publication of the Notice of Preparation (NOP);
- Project scoping¹;
- Public review of the Draft EIR; and
- Attendance at public hearings.

To elicit early input on the Proposed Project, the Department held two scoping meetings: one on Thursday, August 10, 2006, in Morro Bay, and one on Friday, August 11, 2006, in Monterey. Technical information about the project has been made available to the general public via written and email notices and publication on the Department's website.

¹ *Scoping* refers to the public outreach process used under CEQA to determine the focus and content of an EIR. It contributes to the selection of a range of project alternatives to be considered, and can also help to establish methods of analysis, identify the environmental effects that will be considered in detail, and develop mitigation measures to avoid or compensate for significant impacts. The scoping process for an EIR is initiated by publication of the NOP required by CEQA, which provides formal notice to the public and to interested agencies and organizations that an EIR is in preparation.

Public Review of Draft EIR and Certification of Final EIR

This Draft EIR is being circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals who may wish to review and comment on it. Its publication marks the beginning of a 45-day public review period. Submittal of written comments via email (Microsoft Word format) would be greatly appreciated. Written comments or questions concerning this Draft EIR should be directed to:

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California Department of Fish and Game
20 Lower Ragsdale Drive, Suite 100
Monterey, CA 93940
Phone: 831/649-2893
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All documents mentioned herein or related to the Proposed Project can be reviewed any Department business day between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. at the Department office identified above, as well as other Department Marine Region offices and various public libraries (call the number above for a full list of locations).

Substantive issues raised in written comments on this Draft EIR will be addressed in the Final EIR. After review of the project and the Final EIR, DFG staff will recommend to the Commission whether to approve or deny the project. The Commission will then review the project, the Final EIR, staff recommendations, and public testimony and decide whether to certify the Final EIR and whether to authorize the project.