

# California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative Blue Ribbon Task Force

## MEMORANDUM

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**To: Members, MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force**  
**From: John Kirlin, Executive Director**  
**Subject: BRTF Recommendation for Alternative Packages of Proposed MPAs and a Preferred Alternative Package**  
**Date: February 27, 2006**

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### Summary and Recommendations

At your January 31-February 1, 2006 meeting, you directed MLPA Initiative staff to develop a draft proposed package of MPAs that could be recommended to the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Package "S" is responsive to that direction.

With the addition of Package S, the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) will consider six alternative proposed packages of MPAs for the central coast at its March 14-15, 2006 meeting:

- Package 0, the current system of MPAs
- Packages 1, 2 and 3, developed through the Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (CCRSG) process, and all revised since your last meeting
- Package AC, developed outside the CCRSG process, which remains unchanged
- Package S, developed by the MLPA Initiative staff since your last meeting.

**Recommendation 1:** Staff recommend that the BRTF forward packages 1, 2, 3, AC and S to DFG for consideration. The evaluations of the packages provided by the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) and whatever additional evaluations the BRTF chooses to make should also be provided to DFG.

**Recommendation 2:** Staff also recommend that the BRTF recommend Package S to DFG for selection as the preferred alternative it recommends to the California Fish and Game Commission. Package S seeks to meet the goals of the MLPA and the guidelines for design of networks of MPAs incorporated in the adopted MLPA Master Plan Framework, while at the same time considering the input and discussions heard during the CCRSG process and BRTF meetings.

The six goals of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) are not given priority order in the legislation. Taken as a whole, however, the act focuses on ecosystem integrity and protection of habitats. The act requires creating networks of MPAs as the instrument to achieve its goals. Consistent with this emphasis in the MLPA, Package S seeks to achieve a high level of protection of representative habitats and to establish an effective network of marine protected areas; it is also sensitive to potential negative impacts upon some users.

### **Context for development of Package S**

Under the MLPA and the MOU creating the MLPA Initiative, DFG recommends a preferred alternative to the California Fish and Game Commission; the commission has the authority to designate, modify, and delete marine protected areas. The MOU and the charges to the BRTF and CCRSG include developing alternative packages of proposed MPAs. In addition, Activity 4.2 of the MLPA Master Plan Framework, adopted by the commission on August 22, 2005, requires the BRTF to forward a recommended preferred alternative to DFG, as well as initial evaluations of the alternative proposals that are forwarded.

### **Rationale for recommendation of Package S as preferred alternative**

Package S was developed by closely reviewing and integrating elements of the most recently updated MPA packages developed by stakeholders, building upon those important contributions. Package S was developed relatively quickly as a result of the hundreds of hours already devoted to identifying priority locations for increased protection and the integration of interests that occurred during the stakeholder process.

Package S seeks to achieve a high level of protection of representative habitats and to meet the size and spacing guidelines included in the adopted MLPA Master Plan Framework. As reported in the evaluations of proposed packages by the SAT, its evaluations address goals 1, 2, 4 and 6 of the MLPA. Goal 3 addresses recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems subject to minimal disturbance; Package S meets this goal with proposed MPAs accessible to these uses and sufficient MPAs to meet replication requirements for scientific study. Goal 5 speaks to clearly defined objectives and effective management and enforcement; Package S addresses this goal in part by the siting and design of MPAs. Where possible, Package S proposes MPAs adjacent to supportive land-based uses. The shapes and boundaries of MPAs in Package S are intended to be easily understood by the general public and also enforceable by DFG.

Any package of proposed MPAs will have potential negative impacts on some users. It will also have potential positive impacts not only on ecosystems and marine life but also for some human uses, and will provide general benefits to the public. Information on potential negative impacts is limited to the economically most important commercial fisheries within the central coast and to some types of recreational fishing, with spatial data on commercial fishing

available at a higher resolution. In contrast, less information is available on potential positive impacts of increased protection and is not available at a fine-grained spatial scale necessary for evaluation in this project.

Package S achieves a high level of ecosystem protection while generating modest total potential impacts on commercial and recreational fishing. However, the potential impacts on selected users could be substantial. Meeting the goals of the MLPA and satisfying the MLPA Master Plan Framework will lead to potential negative impacts on some users -- and achieve important benefits for others.

### **Conclusion**

Package S strikes a balance in potential impacts, while satisfying the MLPA; implementation of Package S would significantly increase protection of ecosystems, habitats and marine life in the MLPA Central Coast Study Region.