

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative Charter of the Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group

Official Name: This group officially will be designated as the MLPA Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group to the Blue Ribbon Task Force and the California Department of Fish and Game (hereinafter the CCRSG).

Background: The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) requires that the Department of Fish and Game prepare a master plan and recommend alternative networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) within the state's coastal waters for proposed adoption by the Fish and Game Commission, to improve the protection of the state's marine life, habitat and ecosystems. The MLPA Initiative recognizes that developing a master plan requires considerable work and analysis that is too complex to implement along the entire California coast at once. The Initiative is focusing as a starting point on an area along the central coast where a combination of the efforts of prior working groups, available scientific resources and potential partnerships provide a sound foundation for making progress.

In addition to a requirement for the participation and advice of a science advisory team, the Marine Life Protection Act gives the Department of Fish and Game the ability to engage other experts to contribute to the master plan, including scientists, geographic information system experts, commercial and recreational fishermen, divers, and other individuals knowledgeable about the state's underwater ecosystems, the history of fishing effort or marine protected area management, or other relevant subjects. The department is also required to take into account relevant information from local communities and solicit comments and advice for the master plan from interested parties. The Blue Ribbon Task Force and the Department of Fish and Game have taken these provisions into account in convening a CCRSG to enhance the state's ability to carry out the mandates of the Marine Life Protection Act, and to ensure that regional knowledge and interests are reflected in alternatives for MPAs.

Membership: The CCRSG is composed of key, affected members of the central coast region who are able and willing to provide information that will assist in developing the alternative proposals for marine protected areas along the central coast. The chair of the Blue Ribbon Task Force and the director of the California Department of Fish and Game shall have sole discretion to select members of the group. In selecting members, they may consider professional expertise or experience, diversity of perspectives, geographic location, communication network, capability to work with diverse viewpoints, ability to work collaboratively, and commitment to successfully completing the central coast process by March 2006.

Term: Each member shall serve through March 2006. Each member shall serve at the pleasure of the chair of the Blue Ribbon Task Force and the director of the California Department of Fish and Game.

Charge: In cooperation with a facilitation team, the MLPA central coast project manager, a science advisory team, the Department of Fish and Game, and MLPA Initiative professional staff,¹ the CCRSG will provide advice to assist in the following key tasks:²

- Develop regional goals and objectives consistent with the MLPA;
- Evaluate existing marine protected areas within the central coast study region against those goals and objectives;
- Identify and value alternative proposals for marine protected areas, including MPAs which are new or modified, within the central coast study region;
- The result of the efforts of the CCRSG will be a set of clearly identified alternative proposals for MPAs, each valued regarding how it meets the goals and objectives selected for the central coast study region.

In accomplishing its work the CCRSG members are expected to reach out to constituent groups for involvement in the MLPA Central Coast Project. When needed, the CCRSG will identify potential panel speakers for MLPA Initiative Blue Ribbon Task Force meetings.

The CCRSG will adhere to the ground rules developed by the group and will not decide issues outside the public sessions of the group.

Note that the charge of the CCRSG is not to:

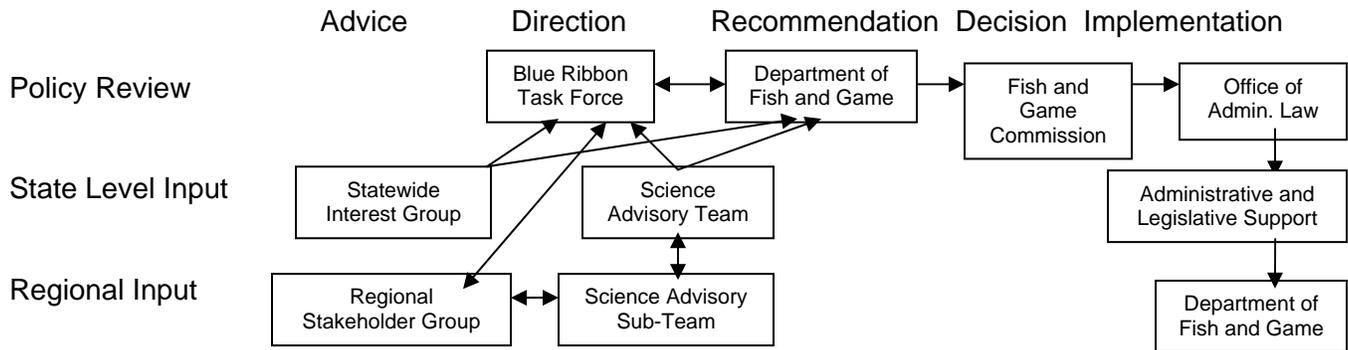
- Debate the virtues of the Marine Life Protection Act or whether MPAs should be established (this is law)
- Debate the validity of MPAs as a fisheries management tool (fisheries management is not the main goal of the MLPA)
- Debate the detailed guidance of the draft Master Plan Framework (it is only guidance)

MLPA Initiative Decision Making Process: The figure on the next page describes the links among the various players in the initiative process.³

¹ The roles and responsibilities of other MLPA groups and organizations is described in the draft Master Plan Framework (pages 14-16).

² The MLPA calls for the development of a master plan by the Department of Fish and Game, and its adoption by the Fish and Game Commission. The MLPA Initiative has divided the master plan into two principal parts: a section providing guidance in the application of the MLPA to the development of a statewide MPA network (the master plan framework), and a section describing the preferred alternatives for MPA proposals. The CCRSG's charge contributes to this latter part.

³ The process for designing alternative MPA proposals is described in greater detail in Section 2 of the draft Master Plan Framework.



Note: input is solicited from the interested public and stakeholders at each step, until adoption of regulations by the Fish and Game Commission.

Meeting Structure and Format: The members of the CCRSG, or their alternates, are expected to attend all regular meetings of the group, which shall generally be scheduled as one- or two-day working meetings every four weeks from June 2005 through January 2006. These meetings will alternate between the Monterey Bay and Morro Bay areas. In the August, September, and October timeframe, the CCRSG meetings will be scheduled as “sub-group” meetings, where northern and southern sub-groups will meet separately for one-day meetings. CCRSG members are invited to participate in both northern and southern sub-group meetings, although it is anticipated that CCRSG members will self-select to attend one or the other.

Information Supporting the Design of MPAs: The MLPA calls for the use of the “best readily available science” in designing and managing MPAs.

Remuneration: Upon request, members of the CCRSG, including alternates, will be reimbursed for actual travel expenditures related to the MLPA Initiative, but not for time.