California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

Brief Description of Marine Protected Areas in the North Coast Enhanced Compliance Alternative MPA Proposal

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This appendix provides a discussion of each marine protected area (MPA) and state marine recreational management area (SMRMA) identified in the North Coast Enhanced Compliance Alternative MPA Proposal (ECA). The ECA was developed by the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force and is one of two MPA proposals being forwarded to the California Fish and Game Commission for consideration. This document highlights the source of each design, the purpose, any modifications to the NCRSG design (boundaries and proposed allowed uses) and key considerations. For a complete description of ecological, socioeconomic, cultural and other considerations for each proposed MPA and SMRMA, please see the description of MPAs for the ECA and other supporting documents on the MLPA website at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/mpaproposals_nc.asp.

There are six additional acronyms used throughout this document: Level of protection (LOP), meter (m), MLPA North Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCRSG), state marine conservation area (SMCA), state marine park (SMP), and state marine reserve (SMR).

Pyramid Point Offshore SMCA and Nearshore SMCA (Pyramid Point cluster)

Source: Revised Round 3 NCRSG MPA Proposal (RNCP)

Key Purpose: This northern-most cluster captures offshore rocks that support a variety of breeding birds. It does not contribute to the backbone because it lacks any habitat replicates at or above moderate-high LOP.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were taken from the Pyramid Point SMCA in the NCRSG MPA Proposal; however, the ECA modified the single SMCA to create a cluster with a nearshore ribbon SMCA of approximately 1000 feet (proposed allowed uses modified to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing) and an offshore SMCA (proposed allowed uses modified to retain only species/gear types with at least moderate-high LOP and to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing).

Key Considerations: There was general support for placing an MPA in this geography. Every MPA proposal in the north coast planning process proposed an MPA or cluster here; however, the boundary designs varied. This MPA was part of a negotiation; the NCRSG decided not to place an MPA near Wilson Rock, just north of the Klamath River, in exchange for an MPA at Pyramid Point. There are three habitat replicates available within this cluster (beaches, rocky shores and soft 0-30m proxy) but all are found in the nearshore SMCA, which is below the science guidelines required moderate-high LOP. Some design considerations on cluster placement included Pelican State Park, which is located in the northern portion of the cluster and Smith River Rancheria, which is located just south of the cluster's southern boundary. The NCRSG decided to avoid the Smith River Rancheria as it did not reduce habitat potential, but did not accommodate the state park by moving the northern boundary south because it would result in losing the rocky shores habitat replicate and would not meet Department of Fish and Game Feasibility

Guidelines. In addition, this MPA was recommended for co-management with the Tolowa Tribe.

Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This moderate-high protection, offshore MPA is important for meeting habitat replication guidelines for the northern bioregion, particularly for deeper habitats. Habitat replicates include hard 30-100m, soft 30-100m and soft 100-3000m. It is also the only offshore bank north of Point Reyes.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal. The proposed allowed uses were modified to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing.

Key Considerations: An MPA was placed in this geography by the NCRSG to capture the deep soft habitat; it is the only place where a replicate is available in the northern bioregion, north of Cape Mendocino. It is designed to overlap with the Rockfish Conservation Area to minimize socioeconomic impacts. The eastern boundary is designed to be in line with navigational buoy.

Reading Rock SMR and Reading Rock SMCA (Reading Rock cluster)

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This backbone MPA cluster is the ECA's only one to meet preferred-size guidelines. It is also the northern-most cluster to replicate any nearshore habitats at moderate-high or above LOP. In total, five of the nine open coast habitats are replicated in this cluster, including: beaches, rocky shores, hard 30-100m, soft 0-30m proxy, and soft 30-100m.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal. The proposed allowed uses in the Reading Rock SMCA were modified to retain only species/gear types with at least moderate-high LOP and to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing.

Key Considerations: Unlike other clusters in the northern bioregion, Reading Rock cluster offers habitat protection in the nearshore area. Siting MPAs in this geography was part of a stakeholder compromise that agreed to place an MPA or cluster at Reading Rock to avoid closures at Trinidad Head and Patrick's Point. The Redwood National and State Park has land adjacent to this cluster. In addition, this area is also considered to be Yurok territory and as such, the cluster was recommended for co-management with the Yurok Tribe.

Samoa Offshore SMCA and Samoa Nearshore SMCA (Samoa cluster)

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: The offshore SMCA provides one habitat replicate of soft 30-100m.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were taken from the Samoa SMCA in the NCRSG MPA Proposal; however, the ECA modified the single SMCA to create a cluster with a nearshore ribbon SMCA of approximately 1000 feet (proposed allowed uses modified to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing) and an offshore SMCA (proposed allowed uses modified to retain only species/gear types with at least moderate-high LOP and to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing).

Key Considerations: There are two additional habitat replicates available within this cluster (beaches and soft 0-30m proxy) but they are found in the nearshore SMCA, which does not meet science guidelines. The beach replicate would help reduce the 126-mile spacing gap between the Reading Rock cluster and Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR. The northern and southern boundaries are designed on whole minutes because obvious landmarks were not available; they were chosen based the California Department of Fish and Game input to help minimize confusion for both beach-based users and offshore users. This cluster was recommended for co-management with the Wiyot Tribe.

South Humboldt Bay SMRMA

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This SMRMA is part of the backbone and protects estuarine habitat, especially sensitive eelgrass habitat. It captures the only estuarine habitat replicates in the northern bioregion.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal. The proposed allowed uses were modified to retain only species/gear types that have at least moderate-high LOP for those uses intended to accommodate tribes and tribal communities.

Key Considerations: It provides protection for critical eelgrass habitat. In addition, there are a variety of user groups and activities in Humboldt Bay, including restoration projects, aquaculture sites and long-term monitoring. The Wiyot Tribe owns land adjacent to the estuary and stakeholders worked with the tribe to minimize impacts; co-management with the Wiyot Tribe is recommended.

South Cape Mendocino SMR

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This backbone reserve replicates several habitats, including: rocky shores, hard 30-100m and soft 0-30m proxy. It protects also seabird and marine mammal colonies.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal and there were no modifications to the proposed allowed uses.

Key Considerations: Every draft proposal submitted by the NCRSG included a state marine reserve at this site. This is part of a compromise with Eureka fishermen to keep

open the area north of this MPA. South Cape Mendocino SMR is part of group of three reserves in the area, which includes Mattole Canyon SMR and Sea Lion Gulch SMR. They were designed as linked geographies and based on negotiations between stakeholders and local communities, particularly Petrolia and Shelter Cove. These MPAs overlap with essential fish habitat (EFH) conservation areas in an effort to minimize impacts on fishing. In addition to the habitat replicates mentioned above, this MPA comes close to meeting the replication guidelines for beach habitat; this point also relates to spacing guidelines as there is currently a large, 126-mile gap that this MPA comes close to addressing. Regarding proposed uses, this is one of the only MPAs in the ECA that does not accommodate tribal uses in the nearshore area.

Mattole Canyon SMR

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: A backbone reserve designed to meet replication guidelines for rare deep habitats while minimizing socioeconomic impacts to the local community. In addition, the MPA is located in an upwelling zone.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal and there were no modifications to the proposed allowed uses.

Key Considerations: Mattole Canyon SMR crosses the bioregion boundary. It provides four habitat replicates (hard 30-100m hard 100-3000m, soft 30-100m and soft 100-3000m) and it contains the only deep hard replicate in the ECA. This MPA is part of a group of three reserves in the area, which includes South Cape Mendocino SMR and Sea Lion Gulch SMR. They were designed as linked geographies and based on negotiations between stakeholders and local communities, particularly Petrolia and Shelter Cove. The design received extensive input from the Petrolia community and leaves the nearshore area open to provide the only nearby shore access. It also overlaps with an EFH conservation area in an effort to minimize impacts on fishing.

Sea Lion Gulch SMR

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This northern-most reserve in the southern bioregion has three habitat replicates: rocky shores, hard 30-100m and soft 0-30m. It also offers protection to seabird colonies.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal and there were no modifications to the proposed allowed uses.

Key Considerations: The reserve is close to meeting the guidelines for deep hard habitat, but it is difficult to get in this geography because most of the habitat lies outside the study region boundary. This MPA is part of group of three reserves in the area, which includes South Cape Mendocino SMR and Mattole Canyon SMR. They were designed as

linked geographies and based on negotiations between stakeholders and local communities, particularly Petrolia and Shelter Cove. These MPAs overlap with EFH conservation areas in an effort to minimize impacts on fishing. The southern boundary was specifically located north of Roger's Break, which is an important fishing area to Shelter Cove. In addition, it is an area of special biological significance (ASBS). It is one of the few MPAs in the ECA that does not accommodate tribal uses in the nearshore area.

Big Flat Offshore SMCA and Big Flat Nearshore SMCA (Big Flat cluster)

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: The offshore MPA provides two habitat replicates: soft 30-100m and soft 100-3000m. It protects rockfish habitat, including a Rockfish Conservation Area, and also contains part of Spanish Canyon.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were taken from the Big Flat SMCA in the NCRSG MPA Proposal; however, the ECA modified the single SMCA to create a cluster with a nearshore ribbon SMCA of approximately 1000 feet (proposed allowed uses modified to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing) and an offshore SMCA (proposed allowed uses modified to retain only species/gear types with at least moderate-high LOP and to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing).

Key Considerations: There are three additional habitat replicates available within this cluster (beaches, rocky shores and soft 0-30m proxy) but they are found in the nearshore SMCA, which does not meet science guidelines. The beach replicate would help reduce the 126-mile spacing gap between the Reading Rock cluster and Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR. Big Flat is part of a compromise that agreed to keep Roger's Break open to fishing. The boundaries were placed so that the northern boundary is at the mouth of Big Creek and the southern is approximately ten miles from Shelter Cove.

Vizcaino Offshore SMCA and Vizcaino Nearshore SMCA (Vizcaino cluster)

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: The offshore SMCA contributes to habitat replication for soft 30-100m and soft 100-3000m.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were taken from the Vizcaino SMCA in the NCRSG MPA Proposal; however, the ECA modified the single SMCA to create a cluster with a nearshore ribbon SMCA of approximately 1000 feet (proposed allowed uses modified to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing) and an offshore SMCA (proposed allowed uses modified to retain only species/gear types with at least moderate-high LOP and to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing).

Key Considerations: There are five additional habitat replicates available within this cluster (beaches, rocky shores, kelp, hard 0-30m proxy and soft 0-30m proxy) but they

are found in the nearshore SMCA, which does not meet science guidelines. Most notable are the potential kelp and hard 0-30m proxy replicates because the ECA currently has only one replicate of each in the entire study region.

There were some important considerations that factored into the design. The southern boundary was designed to avoid nearshore commercial fishing, sport fishing and urchin harvest south of the MPA. The MPA also accommodates important crab and salmon fishing that is critical to the local communities. It is placed to minimize impacts on public access; it is below Usal Beach and above Rockport Beach. The NCRSG also considered concerns expressed by a bordering private landowner (Soper Company/Wilderness Unlimited) about the southern boundary, but the stakeholders decided the importance to gain the hard 0-30m replicate in the southern portion of the reserve outweighed the impacts to a limited number of users.

Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR and Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA (Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile cluster)

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This southernmost open-coast backbone provides replicates for seven of the nine open coast habitats, including: beaches, rocky shores, kelp, hard 0-30m proxy, hard 30-100m, soft 0-30m proxy and soft 30-100. It is the only MPA in the ECA that addresses replication for kelp and hard 0-30m proxy. In addition, this area protects marine mammal haul outs and marine bird nesting and breeding areas.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal. The proposed allowed uses in the Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA were modified to add recreational take of pelagic finfish by spearfishing, and no modifications were made for Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR.

Key Considerations: This MPA cluster was designed to capture the needed habitat for replication and spacing guidelines, while leaving the beach open for traditional tribal activities. The SMR is located south of public access points and a local fishing area in an effort to minimize impacts on local users. The northern boundary was brought as far south as possible while still capturing the hard 0-30m habitat. This replicate, in particular, is important to the ECA meeting science guidelines. It is also the southernmost backbone MPA in the north coast down to Point Arena to avoid further impacts to that north central coast community.

Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This is the southernmost estuarine backbone in the MPA system; it provides the only estuarine habitat replicates in the southern bioregion.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal and there were no modifications to the proposed allowed uses.

Key Considerations: The site protects critical fish and bird habitat, as well as sensitive eelgrass beds, expands upon existing long-term protection, and serves as an ecological linkage in protection between the near-shore and estuary. The SMRMA designation is based on suspected waterfowl hunting in the estuary; if it is determined that waterfowl hunting does not take place within this site, the designation should be changed to an SMR, as intended by the NCRSG.

Point Cabrillo SMR

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This heritage site was designed to maintain and improve an existing MPA and address Goal 3 educational and study opportunities.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal and there were no modifications to the proposed allowed uses.

Key Considerations: This reserve is below minimum size, but was not intended to meet science guidelines; it is a Goal 3 MPA with good baseline data from long-term monitoring and research efforts. The NCRSG was interested in adaptive management research including study opportunities for urchin and other species.

Big River Estuary SMP

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This estuarine MPA is the only proposed state marine park in the ECA; it provides Goal 3 recreational and educational opportunities.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal. The proposed allowed uses were modified to retain only species/gear types that have at least moderate-high LOP for those uses intended to accommodate tribes and tribal communities. Any proposed allowed uses intended for all recreational or commercial users were retained, including those with moderate, moderate-low or low levels of protection. Big River Estuary SMP includes recreational take of surfperch from shore and this proposed allowed use was retained because it was intended for all recreational users.

Key Considerations: MPA is close to population centers and includes numerous coastal access points, which are important for Goal 3 MPAs. It does not contribute to the backbone due to the moderate LOP assigned for the proposed recreational surfperch fishing from shore. Including surfperch in the proposed allowed uses was important for local support and a key factor in the NCRSG negotiations.

Navarro River Estuary SMRMA

Source: RNCP

Key Purpose: This SMRMA provides Goal 3 recreational opportunities.

Boundary or Proposed Allowed Uses Modifications: Boundaries were directly taken from the NCRSG MPA Proposal. The proposed allowed uses were modified to retain only species/gear types that have at least moderate-high LOP for those uses intended to accommodate tribes and tribal communities. Any proposed allowed uses intended for all recreational or commercial users were retained, including those with moderate, moderate-low or low levels of protection. Navarro River Estuary SMRMA includes recreational take for all users that is below moderate-high LOP.

Key Considerations: The SMRMA designation is based on suspected waterfowl hunting in the estuary; if it is determined that waterfowl hunting does not take place within this site, the designation should be changed to an SMCA, as intended by the NCRSG. It does not contribute to meeting science guidelines due to the level of protection.