



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor
MIKE CHRISMAN, Secretary for Natural Resources

December 23, 2009

Patrick Higgins
Division 5 Commissioner/North Coast Local Interest MPA Workgroup
Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District
P.O. Box 1030
Eureka, California 95502-1030

Dear Commissioner Higgins,

Thank you for your December 18, 2009, letter requesting an extension of the deadline for submitting external marine protected area (MPA) arrays in the north coast through the MLPA Initiative. While I understand your concerns and have thoroughly considered the points you raised regarding the timeline and availability of information, I am confident that given all that is available to you now, the current timeline provides ample opportunity for your group to submit a quality first-round draft array. Therefore, I find that an additional extension of the deadline is unnecessary at this time.

The north coast community has more scientific data readily available at this time than any of the three previous study regions had at this point in the MPA array development process. External array proponents have a great deal of information available for MPA planning, including a draft regional profile, MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team and MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force guidance, and 27 different data layers in MarineMap. One of the data layers contains preliminary substrate data for the entire study region that will be further improved over the next month. This will afford external array proponents the opportunity to use the layer to develop MPA arrays now and then apply the improved data, if they so choose, later to further refine MPA arrays.

I well understand the challenges you face; however, this is only the first of three phases of the science-based process and there are more opportunities over the next year to refine and improve upon these ideas. These first round MPA arrays, and subsequent science evaluations, will be important to inform the north coast regional stakeholder group as it begins its work. There will be continuity between the external MPA array proponents and members of the regional stakeholder group, and as such, external array proponents will have further opportunities to provide input into the next two rounds of the MPA proposal development process.

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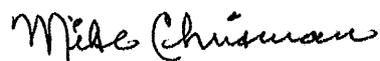
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Having completed three previous study regions, I can tell you that the process in which we are engaged together often creates concerns similar to those you have expressed. In each of the previous study regions, despite these perceived obstacles, stakeholders were able to submit quality proposals. The effort of the Tri-County Work Group to assemble cross-interest support early in the MPA planning process is commendable. Our experience demonstrates that a successful MPA proposal incorporates multiple viewpoints on how best to redesign MPAs in California waters. I am very encouraged by your efforts thus far.

As you know, a six week extension was already provided, based upon conversations with MLPA Initiative Executive Director Ken Wiseman, Assemblymember Wesley Chesbro (D-North Coast) and Senator Patricia Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa), which balanced the needs of north coast stakeholders and the objectives of the memorandum of understanding that guides the MLPA Initiative.

We will have many opportunities moving forward to work together to develop MPAs for the north coast and I encourage you to stay in touch and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,



Mike Chrisman
Secretary for Natural Resources

cc: Assemblymember Wesley Chesbro (D-North Coast)
Senator Patricia Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa)