

State of California
Department of Fish and Game

M e m o r a n d u m

Date: January 24, 2011

To: Jon Fischer
Acting Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: John McCamman
Director
Department of Fish and Game

Subject: Submission of Department of Fish and Game Feasibility Evaluation of North Coast MPA Proposals Submitted by the Blue Ribbon Task Force to the Fish and Game Commission

The Department of Fish and Game (Department) recognizes that the extensive Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) public process that recently concluded in the North Coast Study Region for the development of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has been a very inclusive and collaborative process. That process and the decisions by the Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) resulted in two proposals being forwarded by the BRTF to the Fish and Game Commission (Commission).

The Department has a specific role in the MLPA implementation process of evaluating the proposals forwarded to the Commission relative to the ability of the proposals to meet feasibility guidelines. The Department's review of these proposals has focused on feasibility aspects of individual MPAs, their identified goals and objectives, and on the prospects of the individual areas to help achieve the goals of the MLPA. The Department will not be developing any additional MPA network proposals nor recommending any specific proposal in the Commission venue.

If you have additional questions regarding the Department's input, please contact Ms. Marija Vojkovich, Regional Manager in the Department's Marine Region, at (805) 568-1246.

Attachment(s)

**California Department of Fish and Game Feasibility Evaluation
of the Final Blue Ribbon Task Force Marine Protected Area Proposals
for the North Coast Study Region**

January 24, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation includes a feasibility review of both of the marine protected area (MPA) proposals forwarded by the Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) to the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) for consideration for the North Coast Study Region (NCSR). The North Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCRSG) produced a single proposal for MPAs to forward to the BRTF. The BRTF used the NCRSG proposal, which is referred to as the Revised NCRSG MPA Proposal (RNCP), as the foundation to create a BRTF-modified version of the proposal, which they named the Enhanced Compliance Alternative (ECA) Proposal. In creating the ECA, the BRTF used the RNCP as the base and made select modifications to certain MPAs. This evaluation provides a review of both the RNCP and of the ECA.

The enclosed recommendations reflect the Department's assessment of the BRTF proposals relative to the pre-established guidelines for evaluation based on direction in the Draft Master Plan as adopted by the Commission and specified by the BRTF.

Evaluation Process

Department of Fish and Game (Department) evaluation utilized the feasibility criteria document provided in the NCSR process. These criteria are consistent with Department criteria used in previous study regions to guide stakeholders, and were used to evaluate all draft MPA proposals. The Commission has used this evaluation to make technical changes to MPA proposals.

Feasibility evaluation of final north coast MPA proposals

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that follow the Department's feasibility guidelines will help ensure that MPAs are enforceable and easy for the public to understand. Throughout the planning process in the north coast study region (NCSR), the Department provided input to the North Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCRSG) and Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) regarding feasibility aspects for siting MPA proposals. The input was based on feasibility criteria outlined in a document provided to the NCRSG and BRTF dated March 23, 2010¹. These criteria are consistent with Department criteria used in previous study regions to guide stakeholders, and were used to evaluate all draft MPA proposals². These evaluations were provided to stakeholders to offer examples of feasibility issues the Department would comment on, and to guide stakeholders in crafting MPA designs that are most likely to be effective and meet the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). Department staff provided guidance and feedback to stakeholders and NCRSG workgroups during their work sessions, by email, and by phone. As in previous study regions, the feasibility criteria has been used by the Department to develop recommendations for the Commission regarding north coast MPA proposals advanced by the BRTF. The Commission has used these recommendations to make technical adjustments to the proposals to enhance compliance with the act.

This section reviews feasibility concerns identified in individual proposed MPAs, Marine Managed Areas (MMAs), and Special Closures included in the Revised NCRSG MPA Proposal (RNCP) and the North Coast Enhanced Compliance Alternative (ECA). MPA and MMA classifications referred to include: State Marine Reserve (SMR), State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA), State Marine Park (SMP), and State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA). Table 1 provides an overview of the feasibility evaluation for the MPA proposals. Table 2 reviews feasibility concerns for each proposed MPA, and Table 3 provides feasibility concerns for each proposed Special Closure. Following the tables is a detailed review of categories of feasibility concern, which includes an overview of the feasibility issue, geographies where the feasibility issue is found, and Department recommendations to address the feasibility concern.

¹ "Feasibility Criteria and Evaluation Components for Marine Protected Area Proposals" (CDFG, March 23, 2010).

² "California Department of Fish and Game Feasibility Evaluation of Round 1 Arrays in the MLPA North Coast Study Region" (March 23, 2010); and "California Department of Fish and Game Feasibility Evaluation of Round 2 Draft MPA Proposals in the MLPA North Coast Study Region" (July 15, 2010).

Table 1. Summary of the feasibility evaluation findings for the North Coast Study Region proposals forwarded to the Commission by the Marine Life Protection Act Blue Ribbon Task Force.

Proposal Name	Total # of MPAs ¹	Total # of Special Closures	# of MPAs without Any Feasibility Concerns (percent)	MPAs with Feasibility Concerns		
				# of MPAs with Boundary or Design Concerns (percent)	# of MPAs with Complex ² Regulations (percent)	# of MPAs with Permissive ³ Regulations (Below Moderate-High LOP) (percent)
Revised NCRSG MPA Proposal (RNCP)	17	7	5 (29% ⁴)	7 (41%)	7 (41%)	9 (53%)
North Coast Enhanced Compliance Alternative (ECA)	21	7	6 (29%)	14 (67%)	9 (43%)	7 (33%)

¹ The difference in the number of MPAs between proposals is due to the addition of ribbons within four proposed MPAs in the ECA; new geographies were not added. The numbers in this column were used for calculating percentages.

² Complex regulations are categorized as those that allow a long list of excepted species and/or gear types to the general regulation.

³ Permissive regulations are categorized as take allowances that provide for little ecological protection (biological) and are below a moderate-high level of protection (LOP).

⁴ This percentage has changed since the Department's evaluation of the NCRSG Round 3 North Coast Proposal (NCP), due to the addition of a person's name to MPAs in the Ten Mile area in the RNCP, which does not meet Department feasibility guidelines.

Department feasibility concerns found in both the RNCP and ECA:

- Regulations and boundaries with limited enforceability;
- Goals and objectives that are incompatible with design of MPAs;
- MPAs that do not meet science guidelines.

Summary of Department Recommendations for the RNCP and ECA proposal:

- ✓ *Modify MPAs to increase enforceability and public understanding by simplifying take regulations and placing boundaries at easily recognizable landmarks where appropriate.*
- ✓ *Remove or modify incompatible goals and objectives to ensure realistic expectations.*
- ✓ *Modifying proposals to increase adherence to science guidelines provided in the Master Plan.*

DETAILED REVIEW OF MPAs BY PROPOSAL AND FEASIBILITY CATEGORY

A review of the feasibility issues identified in the MPA proposals are summarized by category and issue type. Individual MPAs and recommendations for each MPA are included for the RNCP in Table 2, and for the ECA in Table 3. Note that comments regarding MPAs in the RNCP also apply to the ECA for MPAs that are identical in both proposals, which includes the following: Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA, Reading Rock SMR, South Cape Mendocino SMR, Mattole Canyon SMR, Sea Lion Gulch SMR, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA, and Point Cabrillo SMR.

A. RNCP review (also applies to all MPAs that are identical in the ECA)

Category: MPAs with No Feasibility Issues (5 MPAs)

The following proposed MPAs do not have any feasibility concerns identified by the Department: Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA, Reading Rock SMR, South Cape Mendocino SMR, Mattole Canyon SMR, and Point Cabrillo SMR.

Category: Complex Take Allowances (7 MPAs)

Issue: Many of the proposed MPAs include highly complex take regulations. Take allowances that include a long list of allowed species and gear types in the general regulation reduce public understanding and enforceability of the regulation.

Recommendation: Reduce the list of allowed species, and/or combine into categories and take regulations should be streamlined to reduce complexity and increase public understanding.

MPAs with this Concern: Reading Rock SMCA, Samoa SMCA, Big Flat SMCA, Vizcaino SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA, Big River Estuary SMP, and Navarro River Estuary SMRMA.

Category: Permissive Take Allowances (i.e., take allowances that provide for little ecological protection): (9 MPAs)

Issue: Many MPAs propose extensive take allowances, resulting in a Level of Protection (LOP) below the Department and BRTF standard of moderate-high and above. This permissive take will provide for little ecosystem protection and reduces prospects of contributing to MLPA goals.

Recommendation: Improve the LOP to moderate-high or above.

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point SMCA, Reading Rock SMCA, Samoa SMCA, South Humboldt Bay SMRMA, Big Flat SMCA, Vizcaino SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA, Big River Estuary SMP, and Navarro River Estuary SMRMA.

Category: Boundary Concerns (7 MPAs)

Sub-category: Boundary Concerns in Ocean MPAs (5 MPAs)

Issue: Simple lines of latitude and longitude assist boaters with determining offshore boundaries, while easily recognizable permanent landmarks improve public understanding and enforceability of the boundaries for shore-based users. Trade-offs between these choices are area-specific based on available landmarks and

most common uses.

Recommendation: In general, align boundaries with landmarks where beach-users frequent; use simple coordinates when landmarks are not available or where boat-users are most common.

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point SMCA, Samoa SMCA, Sea Lion Gulch SMR, Vizcaino SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA.

Sub-category: Boundary Concerns in Inland Water MPAs (2 MPAs)

Issue: Boundaries in bays, estuaries and rivers are feasible only if they use easily recognizable permanent landmarks to improve enforceability, and to enhance compliance by users not equipped with GPS. "Floating corners," which are boundary corners not anchored on land, are particularly problematic inside contained bodies of water.

Recommendation: Site boundaries on visible landmarks or between two visible landmarks.

MPAs with this Concern: South Humboldt Bay SMRMA, Big River Estuary SMP

Category: Designation Type (1 MPA)

Issue: The Commission has provided direction to the Department that, when MPAs are desired in rivers and estuaries where waterfowl hunting is allowed to occur pursuant to Fish and Game hunting regulations, the MPA designation should be changed to a State Marine Recreational Managed Area (SMRMA). The SMRMA designation could provide protection equivalent to an MPA designation subtidally but would not conflict with existing hunting regulations.

Recommendation: Receive Commission guidance for designation.

MPAs with this Concern: Big River Estuary SMP

Category: MPAs Named after Individuals (3 MPAs)

Issue: Three MPAs were re-named in both the RNCP and the ECA to include the name of a former NCRSG member in honor of his memory. However, Department feasibility guidelines advise that MPAs be named after adjacent geographic areas that can be recognized by the broader public.

Recommendation: Retain the geographic-based portion of the name and remove the added constituent name.

MPAs with this Concern: Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR and SMCA, and Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA.

B. ECA review (for MPAs that were modified from the RNCP)

Category: Complex Take Allowances (11 MPAs)

Issue: Many of the proposed MPAs include highly complex take regulations. Take allowances that include a long list of allowed species and gear types in the general regulation reduce public understanding and enforceability of the regulation.

Recommendation: Reduce the list of allowed species, and/or combine into categories. The Department advises that if these allowances are maintained in the recommendation that goes to the Commission, that the proposed allowed take for these MPAs at minimum be condensed into streamlined regulations to reduce complexity and increase public

understanding of the regulation.

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point Nearshore SMCA, Reading Rock SMCA, Samoa Nearshore SMCA, Samoa Offshore SMCA, Big Flat Nearshore SMCA, Big Flat Offshore SMCA, Vizcaino Nearshore SMCA, Vizcaino Offshore SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA, Big River Estuary SMP, and Navarro River Estuary SMRMA.

Category: Nearshore Ribbons as Boundaries (4 MPAs)

Issue: The ECA incorporated narrow nearshore MPAs along the shoreline of larger MPAs, increasing the number of MPAs by four. The use of these nearshore “ribbons” as boundaries creates complex designs that do not meet feasibility guidelines. These types of boundaries are difficult to understand by the public. These MPAs also have complex take allowances with differences in gear type and species allowances among the onshore and offshore components and the surrounding waters. This creates concerns regarding multiple zoning, where three zones have complex regulation differences over a small area, and are difficult to enforce.

Recommendation: (a) Remove the nearshore ribbon and modify the MPAs to go from the mean high tide line out to the state water boundary, in order to enhance enforceability and public understanding; (b) Reduce the complexity of take allowances by reducing the number of gear types and allowed species; (c) If the ribbon is retained, enforcement can be significantly enhanced by simplifying take regulations and restricting activities within the ribbon from shore only.

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point Nearshore SMCA, Samoa Nearshore SMCA, Big Flat Nearshore SMCA, and Vizcaino Nearshore SMCA.

DETAILED REVIEW OF SPECIAL CLOSURES BY FEASIBILITY CATEGORY

Special closures proposed within the RNCP were also included in the ECA without change. Therefore, the following comments apply to both proposals.

Category: Special Closures with Special Access Allowances (7 Special Closures)

Issue: The proposed special closures include a provision to allow access for specific groups. However, under current law, the Department does not believe the Commission has the authority to promulgate regulations that provides access to only specific groups.

Recommendation: Revise the regulation to apply to everyone, or do not adopt a special closure.

Special Closures with this Concern: All proposed special closures include this concern.

Category: Special Closures inconsistent with naming convention (4 Special Closures):

Issue: Proposed special closures with a seasonal component currently include the word “seasonal” in their name. However, a reference to seasonality within the name is not consistent with the naming convention used for special closures (seasonal or year-round) in the rest of the State.

Recommendation: Remove the word “seasonal” from the special closure name to be consistent with other special closures that are seasonal in nature elsewhere in the State. Seasonality would be specified in the regulatory language.

Special Closures with this Concern: False Klamath Rock Seasonal Special Closure, Steamboat Rock Seasonal Special Closure, Rockport Rocks Seasonal Special Closure, and Vizcaino Seasonal Special Closure.

Table 2. Summary of Department feasibility concerns in the **RNCP** for proposed State Marine Reserves (SMR), State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCA), State Marine Parks (SMP), and State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA). MPAs shaded in grey do not have feasibility concerns.

Table 2.

MPA Name	LOP	Size Category	Department Comments
Pyramid Point SMCA	Low	Minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection. Recommend reducing allowed take and increasing level of protection. • <u>Boundaries</u>: Boundary is placed on a half minute of latitude but splits a beach. Recommend using nearby landmarks.
Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA	Moderate High	Minimum	No action recommended
Reading Rock SMCA	Low	Minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Complex take regulations</u>: List of multiple species and gear types results in complex regulations, which are difficult to enforce. Recommend consolidating list of species into groupings (e.g., “take of all finfish, invertebrates, marine plants is allowed” or “recreational take is allowed”). • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection.
Reading Rock SMR	Very High	Minimum	No action recommended
Samoa SMCA	Moderate - Low	Minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Complex take regulations</u>: List of multiple species and gear types results in complex regulations, which are difficult to enforce. Recommend consolidating list of species into groupings (e.g., “take of all finfish, invertebrates, marine plants is allowed” or “recreational take is allowed”). • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection. • <u>Boundaries</u>: Northern and southern boundary is placed on whole minute of latitude but splits a beach. There is no recommendation to modify from simple coordinates, as there does not appear to be easily recognizable permanent landmarks in the area.

Table 2.

MPA Name	LOP	Size Category	Department Comments
South Humboldt Bay SMRMA	Moderate - Low	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection. • <u>Boundaries</u>: As currently designed, this MPA utilizes a box shape with lines of latitude and longitude to delineate boundaries and includes two “floating corners”. Recommend redesigning MPA by siting at a landmark or between two landmarks.
South Cape Mendocino SMR	Very High	Minimum	No action recommended
Mattole Canyon SMR	Very High	Minimum	No action recommended
Sea Lion Gulch SMR	Very High	Below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Boundaries</u>: Boundaries are placed on tenths of a minute of latitude, but area has an abundance of landmarks. Recommend siting at nearby landmarks.
Big Flat SMCA	Low	Minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Complex take regulations</u>: List of multiple species and gear types results in complex regulations, which are difficult to enforce. Recommend consolidating list of species into groupings (e.g., “take of all finfish, invertebrates, marine plants is allowed” or “recreational take is allowed”). • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection.
Vizcaino SMCA	Low	Preferred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Complex take regulations</u>: List of multiple species and gear types results in complex regulations, which are difficult to enforce. Recommend consolidating list of species into groupings (e.g., “take of all finfish, invertebrates, marine plants is allowed” or “recreational take is allowed”). • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection.
Skip Wollenberg/ Ten Mile SMR	Very High	Minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>MPA Name</u>: Per Department feasibility guidelines, MPAs should be named for the geographic location, not after individuals or groups. Recommend applying the geography-based name.

Table 2.

MPA Name	LOP	Size Category	Department Comments
Skip Wollenberg/ Ten Mile Beach SMCA	Low	Below Minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection. • <u>Boundaries</u>: Southern boundary is placed on a half minute of latitude but splits a beach. Recommend using nearby landmarks. • <u>MPA Name</u>: Per Department feasibility guidelines, MPAs should be named for the geographic location, not after individuals or groups. Recommend applying the geography-based name.
Skip Wollenberg/ Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA	Very High	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>MPA Name</u>: Per Department feasibility guidelines, MPAs should be named for the geographic location, not after individuals or groups. Recommend applying the geography-based name.
Point Cabrillo SMR	Very High	Below Minimum	No action recommended
Big River Estuary SMP	Low	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection. • <u>Boundaries</u>: The eastern boundary is not placed at an easily recognizable landmark. Recommend using nearby landmarks. • <u>MPA Type</u>: Waterfowl hunting is legal in this location. Previous Commission direction has been to designate as a SMRMA in order to not be in conflict with hunting regulations. Recommend the Commission determine appropriate designation.
Navarro River Estuary SMRMA	Low	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection.

Table 3. Summary of Department of Fish and Game feasibility concerns regarding the **ECA** for proposed State Marine Reserves (SMR), State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCA), State Marine Parks (SMP), and State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA). Only MPAs that have differences from the RNCP are included. The table provides MPA name, changes in MPA from the RNCP, and Department comments.

Table 3.

MPA Name	Changes From RNCP	Department Comments
Pyramid Point Nearshore/Offshore SMCAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearshore “ribbon” MPA created by dividing geography into two MPAs LOP of Offshore MPA increased by removing all take allowances below moderate-high LOP 	<p>Nearshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Boundary concern</u>: See Pyramid Point SMCA in Table 2. <u>Nearshore Ribbon</u>: Seaward boundary creates a nearshore ribbon. Nearshore ribbons are difficult to enforce. Enforceability can be increased by limiting take to shore-based activities only. Further, ribbon designs within MPA clusters lead to complex designs that reduce public understanding of the regulation. Recommend restricting activities to shore-based only, or removing nearshore ribbon. <u>Complex take regulations</u>: List of multiple species and gear types results in complex regulations, which are difficult to enforce. If retained, recommend consolidating list of species into groupings (e.g., “take of all finfish, invertebrates, marine plants is allowed” or “recreational take is allowed”). <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Activities are allowed that results in little ecological protection within this MPA. Recommend reducing allowed take to provide a higher level of protection. <p>Offshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Boundaries</u>: See Pyramid Point SMCA in Table 2.
Reading Rock SMCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOP increased by removing all take allowances below a Moderate-High LOP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Complex take regulations</u>: List of multiple species and gear types results in complex regulations, which are difficult to enforce. If retained, recommend consolidating list of species into groupings (e.g., “take of all finfish, invertebrates, marine plants is allowed” or “recreational take is allowed”).

Table 3.

MPA Name	Changes From RNCP	Department Comments
Samoa Nearshore/Offshore SMCAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearshore “ribbon” MPA created by dividing geography into two MPAs LOP of Offshore MPA increased by removing all take allowances below a Moderate-High LOP 	<p>Nearshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Nearshore Ribbon</u>: Seaward boundary creates a nearshore ribbon. Nearshore ribbons are difficult to enforce. Enforceability can be increased by limiting take to shore-based activities only. Further, ribbon designs within MPA clusters lead to complex designs that reduce public understanding of the regulation. Recommend restricting activities to shore-based only or removing nearshore ribbon. <u>Complex take regulations</u>: See Samoa SMCA in Table 2. <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: See Samoa SMCA in Table 2. <u>Boundary concern</u>: See Samoa SMCA in Table 2. <p>Offshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Boundary concern</u>: See Samoa SMCA in Table 2. <u>Complex take regulations</u>: Concerns for Samoa SMCA in Table 2 still apply.
South Humboldt Bay SMRMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOP increased by removing all allowed take (very high LOP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Boundaries</u>: See South Humboldt Bay SMRMA in Table 2.
Big Flat Nearshore/Offshore SMCAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearshore “ribbon” MPA created by dividing geography into two MPAs LOP of Offshore MPA increased by removing all take allowances below a Moderate-High LOP 	<p>Nearshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Nearshore Ribbon</u>: Seaward boundary creates a nearshore ribbon. Nearshore ribbons are difficult to enforce. Enforceability can be increased by limiting take to shore-based activities only. Further, ribbon designs within MPA clusters lead to complex designs that reduce public understanding of the regulation. Recommend restricting activities to shore-based only or removing nearshore ribbon. <u>Complex take regulations</u>: See Big Flat SMCA in Table 2. <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: See Big Flat SMCA in Table 2. <p>Offshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Complex take regulations</u>: Concerns for Big Flat SMCA in Table 2 still apply.

Table 3.

MPA Name	Changes From RNCP	Department Comments
Vizcaino Nearshore/Offshore SMCAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearshore “ribbon” MPA created by dividing geography into two MPAs LOP of Offshore MPA increased by removing all take allowances below a Moderate-High LOP 	<p>Nearshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Nearshore Ribbon</u>: Seaward boundary creates a nearshore ribbon. Nearshore ribbons are difficult to enforce. Enforceability can be increased by limiting take to shore-based activities only. Further, ribbon designs within MPA clusters lead to complex designs that reduce public understanding of the regulation. Recommend restricting activities to shore-based only or removing nearshore ribbon. <u>Complex take regulations</u>: See Vizcaino SMCA in Table 2. <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: See Vizcaino SMCA in Table 2. <p>Offshore SMCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Complex take regulations</u>: Concerns for Vizcaino SMCA in Table 2 still apply.
Big River Estuary SMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOP increased by removing all take allowances below a Moderate LOP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Complex take regulations</u>: Concerns for Big River SMP in Table 2 still apply. <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Concerns for Big River SMP in Table 2 still apply. <u>MPA Type</u>: See Big River SMP in Table 2.
Navarro River SMRMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOP increased by removing all take allowances below a Moderate LOP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Complex take regulations</u>: Concerns for Navarro River SMRMA in Table 2 still apply. <u>Take allowances that provide for little ecological protection</u>: Concerns for Navarro River SMRMA in Table 2 still apply.

Evaluation of goals and objectives identified for final north coast MPA proposals

The MLPA calls for specific identified objectives for all MPAs [FGC Sub-sections 2853(c)(2) and 2857(c)(1)] developed under the MLPA initiative. In response, the MLPA NCRSG utilized the six MLPA goals as regional goals and the regional objectives corresponding to each goal which the NCRSG approved during Round 2³. The application of these goals and objectives to specific MPAs serves as important design tools, influencing the allowed uses, boundaries, and specific placement of MPAs, and helping to inform future monitoring for MPA effectiveness.

Additionally, the MLPA Master Plan for MPAs (Master Plan) provides clear guidance for developing objectives, and states that "...objectives should be realistically achievable, measurable, and defined within a limited time period..." Given the inference that MPA success might be measured against its stated goals and objectives, it is important that objectives which are misaligned with the allowed uses, MPA design or MPA intent be rectified prior to inclusion in the Master Plan.

Overview of Department Guidance Concerning MPA Goals and Objectives

The Department provided guidance to the NCRSG regarding selection of goals and objectives based on the intended purpose of the MPA (i.e., the MPA's site-specific rationale) and the MPA overall design (See Footnote 1). The Department also provided the NCRSG with criteria to meet all MLPA goals and objectives (Table 4) to be used in the Department evaluation. These criteria are founded on MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) science and evaluation guidelines including SAT-determined LOP, MPA size and spacing between MPAs, and habitat replication and representation. The criteria are also based on adherence to Department feasibility guidelines and MLPA Goal 3 guidelines. The criteria table was designed to help determine whether an objective can be realistically achieved based on the MPA design. This criteria table is the primary tool used in the Department's Goals and Objectives Evaluation.

³ California MLPA North Coast Project Goals, Regional Objectives, Stakeholder Priorities, and Design and Implementation Considerations for the MLPA North Coast Study Region. April 26, 2010.

Table 4. Criteria for an MPA to meet MLPA goals and regional objectives used in the Department of Fish and Game evaluation of proposed MPAs.

Table 4.

Regional Goal & Objective¹	Criteria to Meet the Regional Goals and Objectives²
Goal 1. <i>To protect the natural diversity and abundance of marine life, and the structure, function, and integrity of marine ecosystems.</i> Criteria: LOP is moderate-high or above; meets minimum size guidelines; includes a key habitat(s)	
Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 3 Objective 4 Objective 5	LOP must be moderate-high or above; MPA must meet the SAT's minimum size guidelines or is part of a cluster that meets the minimum size guidelines; MPA contains at least one key habitat that meets the SAT's habitat quantity (e.g., size, area, or linear miles) threshold
Goal 2. <i>To help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and rebuild those that are depleted.</i> Criteria: LOP is moderate-high or above; meets size and spacing guidelines	
Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 3	LOP must be moderate-high or above; MPA must meet the SAT's size and spacing guidelines
Objective 4	LOP must be moderate-high or high; MPA must meet the SAT's size and spacing guidelines; state marine reserves should not include this objective
Goal 3.³ <i>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.</i> Criteria: LOP is moderate-high or above, or valid rationale is provided if below this LOP; site-specific rationale refers to intent of Goal 3 per Goal 3 guidelines	
Objective 1	LOP must be moderate-high or above and/or should provide clear rationale for using Goal 3 per the Goal 3 guidelines
Objective 2 Objective 3	LOP must be moderate-high or above and/or be located near a research facility and/or provide for educational opportunities; MPA should provide clear rationale for using Goal 3 per the Goal 3 guidelines if LOP is below moderate-high
Goal 4. <i>To protect marine natural heritage, including protection of representative and unique marine life habitats in California waters, for their intrinsic value.</i> Criteria: LOP is moderate-high or above; meets minimum size guidelines; includes key habitats	
Objective 1	LOP must be moderate-high or above; MPA must meet the SAT's minimum size guidelines or is part of a cluster that meets the minimum size guidelines; MPA contains at least one key habitat that meets the SAT's habitat quantity (e.g., size, area, or linear miles) threshold
Objective 2	LOP must be moderate-high or above; MPA must meet the SAT's minimum size guidelines or is part of a cluster that meets the minimum size guidelines; MPA contains at least one key habitat that meets the SAT's habitat quantity (e.g., size, area, or linear miles) threshold; MPA must extend from nearshore to offshore or

Table 4.

Regional Goal & Objective ¹	Criteria to Meet the Regional Goals and Objectives ²
	contain a range depths
<p>Goal 5. To ensure that California’s MPAs have clearly defined objectives, effective management measures, and adequate enforcement, and are based on sound scientific guidelines. Criteria: This goal must be paired with another goal or other goals and must follow criteria below for each objective</p>	
Objective 1	All MPAs in a proposal link to the regional objectives.
Objective 2	MPA meets at least one SAT guidelines
Objective 3	MPA adheres to Fish and Game feasibility guidelines or State Parks guidelines
Objective 4	MPA site-specific rationale is clear and concise and includes a biological or ecological statement
<p>Goal 6. To ensure that the California’s MPAs are designed and managed, to the extent possible, as a component of a statewide network. Criteria: Key habitats included; meets meeting size and spacing guidelines</p>	
Objective 1 Objective 2	MPA must meet the size and spacing guidelines (i.e. MPA must contain one habitat replicate at Moderate-High and above and be within the spacing guidelines of an adjacent MPA at Moderate-High and above with the same habitat replicate); MPA must contain at least one key habitat that meets the SAT’s habitat quantity (e.g., size, area, or linear miles) threshold

¹ Specific objectives approved by the NCRSG to meet each goal. Objectives can be found in the document titled “California MLPA North Coast Project Goals, Regional Objectives, Stakeholder Priorities, and Design and Implementation Considerations for the MLPA North Coast Study Region (April 26, 2010).”

² On a case-by-case basis, some objectives may be appropriate for an MPA but may not meet the criteria in this table. Justification for the exception should be stated in the rationale.

³ Goal 3 can not be paired with other objectives under Goal 1, 2, 4, and 6 unless it also meets the criteria for those goals.

Evaluation Overview

The Department review identifies goals and objectives that are inconsistent with some of the design elements of the MPA, based on criteria from Table 4. Tables 5 and 6 highlight individual MPAs for both proposals (RNCP and the ECA, respectively), their stated goals and objectives, and goals and objectives that are not likely to be met based on their design. The tables also provide recommendations to remedy MPA design to better help achieve identified goals.

In previous study regions, the BRTF addressed Department concerns regarding MPA goals and objectives by integrating Department recommendations into all stakeholder alternatives and the BRTF-adopted alternative, before being finalized for submission to the Commission. In the NCSR, the BRTF did not direct the Department to realign inappropriate proposed goals and objectives. As a result, the Department still has concerns related to the ability of select MPAs in both the RNCP and ECA to realistically achieve identified goals and objectives based on the MPA design and associated take

regulations. This summary identifies concerns observed in both proposals and makes recommendations on which goals and objectives need to be re-aligned to improve the likelihood that the MPAs will achieve the goals and objectives associated with them.

DETAILED REVIEW OF PROPOSED MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) GOALS AND OBJECTIVES BY PROPOSAL AND CATEGORY

A review of the proposed goals and objectives for MPAs in the MPA proposals is summarized by category and issue in this part of Section II. Comments and recommendations for individual MPAs in the RNCP are also included in Table 5, and for the ECA in Table 6. Note that comments regarding MPAs in the RNCP also apply to the ECA for MPAs that are identical in both proposals, which includes the following: Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA, Reading Rock SMR, South Cape Mendocino SMR, Mattole Canyon SMR, Sea Lion Gulch SMR, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA, and Point Cabrillo SMR.

A. Review of RNCP MPAs (also applies to all MPAs that are identical in the ECA)

Category: MPAs with No Goals and Objectives incompatibilities (6 MPAs)

Issue: Several proposed MPAs had realistically achievable goals and objectives assigned to them.

Recommendation: No further action is required with these MPAs.

MPAs within this Category: Reading Rock SMR, South Cape Mendocino SMR, Mattole Canyon SMR, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA and Point Cabrillo SMR.

Category: MPAs with Simple Goals and Objectives incompatibilities (1 MPA)

Issue: There was one proposed MPA that had nearly all of the goals and objectives appropriately assigned to them with the exception of one or two objectives that were selected that do not meet the Department's evaluation criteria.

Recommendation: Remove the assigned objectives of concern from the MPA

MPAs in the RNCP with this Concern: Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA.

Category: MPAs with Complex incompatibilities (9 MPAs)

Subcategory: Permissive Take Allowances/LOP Concerns (9 MPAs)

Issue: Many MPAs propose extensive take allowances, resulting in a LOP below the Department and BRTF standard of moderate-high and above. This decreases the likelihood of the goals and objectives being achieved for these MPAs. If the LOP is increased, these MPAs would then contribute to meeting guidelines for spacing and habitat replication, which is attributed to meeting Goals 2 and 6.

Recommendation: Modify the take allowances to only include species and gear types with a LOP of at least moderate-high and above, or eliminate all goals and objectives dependent upon higher LOPs. Please see Table 5 for individual MPA recommendations.

MPAs in the RNCP with this Concern: Pyramid Point SMCA, Reading Rock SMCA,

Samoa SMCA, South Humboldt Bay SMRMA, Big Flat SMCA, Vizcaino SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Beach SMCA, Big River Estuary SMP and Navarro River Estuary SMRMA.

Subcategory: No key habitats captured (1 MPA)

Issue: One MPA does not meet the SAT minimum size threshold for containing any key habitats. This MPA would not likely be able to achieve Goals 1, 2, 4, and 6. While this MPA may not meet SAT guidelines, it may be able to contribute to Goal 3 if it enhances education and outreach opportunities.

Recommendation: Remove all goals except Goal 3, Objectives 1-3.

MPA with this Concern: Navarro River Estuary SMRMA.

Subcategory: MPAs that do not meet Department Feasibility Guidelines (2 MPAs)

Issue: Goal 5, Objective 3 directs that MPA boundaries be easily understood by the public and enforceable, and calls for the MPA to adhere to the Department's feasibility guidelines. In some instances, MPAs that did not meet the Department's feasibility guidelines inappropriately identified this objective.

Recommendation: Resolve the Department's feasibility concerns or remove this objective from MPAs if meeting such concerns is not possible (Table 2 in Section I identifies the feasibility concerns).

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point SMCA and Vizcaino SMCA.

B. Review of ECA MPA Goals and Objectives (for MPAs that were modified from the RNCP)

As with the evaluation of the RNCP, there remain inconsistencies with some of the selected goals and objectives in the ECA, based on criteria to meet the regional goals and objectives (see Table 4). There are several MPAs in the ECA that may not achieve their identified goals and objectives based on the MPA design and take regulations. The following highlights concerns observed in the goals and objectives for MPAs in the ECA.

Category: MPAs with No Goals and Objectives inconsistencies in the ECA (10 MPAs)

Issue: Many MPAs were either revised and improved or were carried over into the ECA with no changes and therefore do not need their goals and objectives realigned from the Commission.

Recommendation: No further action is required with these MPAs.

MPAs in the ECA within this category: Reading Rock SMR, Reading Rock SMCA, Samoa Offshore SMCA, South Humboldt Bay SMRMA, South Cape Mendocino SMR, Mattole Canyon SMR, Big Flat Offshore SMCA, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile SMR, Skip Wollenberg/Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA and Point Cabrillo SMR.

Category: MPAs in the ECA with Complex inconsistencies (6 MPAs)

Subcategory: Permissive Take Allowances/LOP Concerns (4 MPAs)

Issue: Many MPAs were split into two MPAs so that their offshore component could receive a higher LOP through the reduction in take allowances. This created

nearshore ribbon MPAs that still have extensive take allowances, resulting in an LOP below the Department and BRTF standard of moderate-high and above. This decreases the likelihood of the goals and objectives being achieved for these MPAs. If the LOP is increased, these MPAs would then contribute to meeting guidelines for spacing and habitat replication, which is attributed to meeting Goals 2 and 6.

Recommendation: Modify the take allowances to only include species and gear types with an LOP of at least moderate-high and above, or remove all goals and objectives that are inconsistent with MPA design. Please see Table 6 for individual MPA recommendations.

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point Nearshore SMCA, Samoa Nearshore SMCA, Big Flat Nearshore SMCA and Vizcaino Nearshore SMCA.

Subcategory: MPAs that do not meet Department Boundary Guidelines (4 MPAs)

Issue: Goal 5, Objective 3 directs that MPA boundaries be easily understood by the public and enforceable, and calls for the MPA to adhere to the Department's feasibility guidelines. In some, but not all, instances where boundary concerns exist, MPAs that did not meet the Department's feasibility guidelines inappropriately identified this objective.

Recommendation: Resolve the Department's boundary feasibility concerns or remove this objective from MPAs if meeting such concerns is not possible (Table 2 in Section I identifies the feasibility concerns).

MPAs with this Concern: Pyramid Point Offshore SMCA, Pyramid Point Nearshore SMCA, Vizcaino Offshore SMCA and Vizcaino Nearshore SMCA.

Table 5. Department evaluation of **RNCP** proposed MPA goals (G) and objectives (O), identification of goals and objectives that do not meet criteria, and Department comments. Comments contained in Table 5 apply to the MPAs in both the RNCP and the ECA. An “---” indicates that the category of concern (i.e., design or LOP concern) does not apply to the MPA. MPAs shaded in grey do not have goals and objectives concerns.

Table 5.

Proposed MPA Name	Proposed Goals and Objectives (G, O)	Goals and Objectives that Do Not Meet Criteria ²		Department Comments ¹
		Due to MPA design (other than LOP)	Due to LOP (below Moderate-High only)	
Pyramid Point SMCA	G1: (O-1,O-2) G2: (O-2,O-3,O-4) G3: (O-1,O-3) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-1,O-2,O-3,O-4) G6: (O-1,O-2)	G5: (O-3)	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Address Department feasibility concerns (See Tables 2 and 3 in Section 1) • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Point St. George Reef Offshore SMCA	G1: (O-1,O-2) G2: (O-1,O-2,O-4) G3: (O-2,O-3) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-1,O-2,O-3,O-4) G6: (O-1)	G3: (O-2,O-3)	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear justification for including Goal 3
Reading Rock SMR	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-3,O-4)	---	---	No action recommended
Reading Rock SMCA	G2: (O-4); G3: (O-2,O-3)	---	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Samoa SMCA	G2: (O-4) G4: (O-1) G6: (O-1,O-2)	---	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
South Humboldt Bay SMRMA	G1: (O-4,O-5) G2: (O-3) G3: (O-1,O-3) G4: (O-1)	---	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives

Table 5.

Proposed MPA Name	Proposed Goals and Objectives (G, O)	Goals and Objectives that Do Not Meet Criteria ²		Department Comments ¹
		Due to MPA design (other than LOP)	Due to LOP (below Moderate-High only)	
South Cape Mendocino SMR	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-5) G2: (O-2) G3: (O-2) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-4) G6: (O-1,O-2)	All identified meet criteria	---	No action recommended
Mattole Canyon SMR	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-3) G3: (O-1) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-1,O-2,O-3) G6: (O-1)	All identified meet criteria	---	No action recommended
Sea Lion Gulch SMR	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-5) G3: (O-2) G4: (O-1,O-2) G5: (O-3,O-4)	All identified meet criteria	---	No action recommended
Big Flat SMCA	G1: (O-3,O-5) G2: (O-1,O-2) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-2) G6: (O-1,O-2)	---	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Vizcaino SMCA	G1: (O-2,O-4) G2: (O-4) G4: (O-1,O-2) G5: (O-3,O-4) G6: (O-1,O-2)	G5: (O-3)	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats • Address Department feasibility concerns (See Tables 2 and 3 in Section 1) <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Skip Wollenberg/ Ten Mile SMR	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-3) G2: (O-2,O-3) G3: (O-2) G4: (O-2) G5: (O-4)	All identified meet criteria	---	No action recommended

Table 5.

Proposed MPA Name	Proposed Goals and Objectives (G, O)	Goals and Objectives that Do Not Meet Criteria ²		Department Comments ¹
		Due to MPA design (other than LOP)	Due to LOP (below Moderate-High only)	
	G6: (O-2)			
Skip Wollenberg/ Ten Mile Beach SMCA	G2: (O-4) G4: (O-1) G6: (O-2)	---	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Skip Wollenberg/ Ten Mile Estuary SMRMA	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-4,O-5) G2: (O-1,O-3) G3: (O-1) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-4) G6: (O-1,O-2)	All identified meet criteria	---	No action recommended
Point Cabrillo SMR	G3: (O-1,O-3)	---	---	No action recommended
Big River Estuary SMP	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-4,O-5) G2: (O-1,O-3) G3: (O-1,O-2,O-3) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-4) G6: (O-1,O-2)	None meet criteria	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Navarro River Estuary SMRMA	G1: (O-1,O-2,O-4,O-5) G2: (O-1,O-3) G3: (O-1,O-2,O-3) G4: (O-1) G5: (O-4) G6: (O-1,O-2)	None meet criteria	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats • Increase size of MPA to capture a key habitat <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives

¹ These are the recommended suggestions to improve the likelihood the MPA will meet the goals of the MLPA. If the design and/or associated regulations of the MPA are not altered, then the Department recommends that unrealistically achievable goals be removed or the MPA removed from the proposal.

² The Department evaluation of stated goals and objectives partitions the proposals into two basic categories: 1) Consideration of design elements other than proposed take (i.e., unrelated to LOP); and 2) Consideration of proposed take (commercial or, in this case recreational)

that generates an LOP below moderate-high. This approach highlights the limitations in the ability of MPAs to meet desired MLPA goals and objectives when the LOP drops below moderate-high. Additionally, this evaluation provides overarching comments on the RNCP and on the ECA. Options are provided for how to address the identified concerns and better align the MPA design and its goals and objectives.

Table 6. Department evaluation of **ECA** proposed MPA goals (G) and objectives (O) for MPAs in the ECA that were changed from the RNCP, a summary of changes in the MPA from RNCP, identification of goals and objectives that do not meet criteria, and Department comments. Comments contained in Table 5 also apply for MPAs that are identical in both the ECA and the RNCP.

Table 6.

Proposed MPA Name	Changes in MPA From RNCP	Goals and Objectives that Do Not Meet Criteria	Department Comments ¹
Pyramid Point Offshore SMCA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate-High, which meets more criteria.	G5: (O-3); All others meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address Department feasibility concerns (See Tables 2 and 3 of Section I) <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Pyramid Point Nearshore SMCA	Nearshore ribbon created - Proposed take and associated LOP unchanged in area.	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Address Department feasibility concerns • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Reading Rock SMCA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate-High, which meets more criteria.	All identified meet criteria	No action recommended
Samoa Offshore SMCA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate-High, which meets more criteria.	All identified meet criteria	No action recommended

Table 6.

Proposed MPA Name	Changes in MPA From RNCP	Goals and Objectives that Do Not Meet Criteria	Department Comments ¹
Samoa Nearshore SMCA	Nearshore ribbon created - Proposed take and associated LOP unchanged in area.	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
South Humboldt Bay SMRMA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate-High, which meets more criteria.	All identified meet criteria	No action recommended
Big Flat Offshore SMCA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate-High, which meets more criteria.	All identified meet criteria	No action recommended
Big Flat Nearshore SMCA	Nearshore ribbon created - Proposed take and associated LOP unchanged in area.	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Vizcaino Offshore SMCA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate-High, which meets more criteria.	G5: (O-3); All others meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address Department feasibility concerns. <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Vizcaino Nearshore SMCA	Nearshore ribbon created - Proposed take and associated LOP unchanged in area.	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Decrease spacing between adjacent MPAs with replicate habitats • Address Department feasibility concerns (See Tables 2 or 3 in Section I) <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives

Table 6.

Proposed MPA Name	Changes in MPA From RNCP	Goals and Objectives that Do Not Meet Criteria	Department Comments¹
Big River Estuary SMP	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate only.	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above or • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives
Navarro River Estuary SMRMA	LOP increased: Proposed take modified to increase LOP to Moderate only.	None meet criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase LOP to moderate-high or above • Increase size of MPA to capture a key habitat or • Remove inconsistent goals and objectives

¹ These are the recommended suggestions to improve the likelihood the MPA will meet the goals of the MLPA. If the design and/or associated regulations of the MPA are not altered, then the Department recommends that unrealistically achievable goals be removed or the MPA removed from the proposal.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Both MPA proposals submitted by the BRTF to the Commission include several SMRs and higher protection SMCAs that have the capacity to improve the State's marine life, habitat, and ecosystems in localized areas. However, the proposals also include multiple MPAs that allow permissive take and lack adherence to the minimum scientific guidelines specified in the Master Plan⁴. As a result, both proposals will fall short of achieving their intended goals and objectives and, hence, not achieve the goals of the MLPA.

The legislative findings in the MLPA state that, for many reasons, "the existing array of MPAs in California created the illusion of protection while falling short of its potential to protect and conserve living marine life and habitat" (§2851(a), Fish and Game Code), and mandates a reevaluation and redesign of its MPAs. The RNCP includes MPAs that are intended to fulfill the mandates set forth by the MLPA, but provide insufficient protection due to extensive allowed take that lowers the LOP provided by these MPAs to the living marine life and habitat within the ecosystem.

The MLPA also states, "The MPA network and individual MPAs shall be of adequate size, number, type of protection, and location to ensure that each MPA meets its objectives and that the network as a whole meets the goals and guidelines of this chapter" (§2857(c)(5), Fish and Game Code). To meet the MLPA goals, the BRTF has provided guidance that the network of MPAs should be based on a backbone of MPAs that meets science guidelines for size and spacing, and provide a LOP of moderate-high or above. This BRTF guidance has been consistent across all study regions. With respect to LOP, the Department agrees that the goals of the MLPA would be best met by a regional and statewide network of MPAs that offer an LOP of moderate-high or above, and that MPAs below this LOP could not reasonably be expected to contribute to key ecological and ecosystem objectives of the MLPA. Therefore, the Department evaluation highlights MPAs that are identified as contributing to the backbone of strong MPAs, but are below a moderate-high LOP due to take allowances. The Department also recognizes that for certain MPAs with specific goals and objectives, a lower LOP may be utilized while still contributing to some of the goals of the MLPA, but that these special instances do not constitute a strong backbone of MPAs.

In both the RNCP and the ECA, many of the proposed MPAs intended to meet the goals of the MLPA, and in particular the network component of the MLPA, provide insufficient protection (i.e., have LOPs below moderate-high) due to extensive allowed take regulations (i.e., extremely long lists of species allowed for take). Extensive allowed take also compromises an MPA's contribution to the network established throughout the rest of California, and may jeopardize some of the potential benefits in other areas of the state down current of the NCSR. Importantly, it is reasonable to suspect that a lack of strongly protective MPAs in one region could negate some of the benefits and impair the functionality expected from a statewide network of MPAs otherwise offering a relatively high LOP.