

**California MLPA North Coast Project  
1 February 2010**

**External Proposal Title: “Northern Redwoods Oceanic Array”**

**Contributing and Supporting Organizations:**

- Conservation First
- Natural Resource Defense Council
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Sierra Club, Mendocino Group
- School of Natural Resources, Mendocino High School
- Coastal Land Trust
- Coast Action Group

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**Please note: Both Linda Perkins and Mary Walsh have “Intent to Submit Array” forms on file with the MLPAI.**

**California MLPA North Coast Project**  
**Narrative Rationale for the North Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCRSG)**  
**Marine Protected Area (MPA)**  
**External Proposal — “Northern Redwoods Oceanic Array”**  
**1 February 2010**

**Proposal Rationale:**

The primary goal of this proposal (the “Northern Redwoods Oceanic Array”) is to conserve and protect marine resources through the science-based development of a backbone of marine protected areas that enhances habitat and factors in potential socio-economic impacts and benefits. The proposal contributors studied the guidelines for development of an array on the North Coast, took numerous anecdotal reports from people potentially affected by this proposal, and from this information, crafted an array that stretches from the Oregon/California border to just north of Point Arena. Given the information currently available from various sources, the array proposed here constitutes our best effort at approaching the guidelines that includes Ecotrust and Department of Fish and Game documents, MarineMap data layers, and interviews with local ocean users. We understand that members of the Regional Stakeholder Group will be able to improve on this array as more information, including the evaluation by the Scientific Advisory Team (SAT), becomes available.

We attempted to create an array that does the following:

- Comes close to meeting the science guidelines and MLPA goals
- Includes high quality habitats and centers of biodiversity and productivity
- Keeps MPAs as far from harbors as possible to create “safe areas” near those ports
- Minimizes socio-economic impacts to the region
- Selects areas that can provide long-term benefits as well as “science laboratory” sites
- Recognizes that ceremonial gathering and other uses by indigenous tribes should not be impeded by marine protected area designation
- Supports the intent of the “Tribal External Array” narrative developed by the Smith River Rancheria

Additionally, we designed the array by seeking input from constituents from the three counties in the region. We eventually blended a draft array from discussions with representatives of the both sectors. During the process, it became clear that the regional split at the Mattole River allowed both sections together to encompass the full diversity of habitat on the North Coast. What resulted from these discussions is an array that we believe is credible and feasible in terms of adaptive management planning and regulations enforcement. A variety of MPAs were developed that underline this philosophy. For example, the Point Cabrillo cluster of MPAs presents an opportunity to study the interrelationship between areas currently closed to urchin harvest (South Caspar Bay—a state special urchin closure site), near an area where urchin harvesting is allowed (south of Russian Gulch). Today, between these two zones, a small SMCA exists off the Point Cabrillo lighthouse. The Northern Redwoods Oceanic proposal expands the existing conservation area north and south and makes it an SMR in the on-shore section, while adding a SMCA designation to the off- shore water to allow salmon trolling. This is a good example of

how existing study areas can be expanded and monitored over time to help assess the impacts urchin harvest has on other species.

Further north, we understand from our discussions with other stakeholders that proposed Usal SMR would have some impacts to crabbing. And yet, we believe the placement is warranted due to spacing and habitat replication needs. This is a remote area, seldom visited by land access due to extremely steep cliffs and few roads. The Usal Beach area to the north is the only public access point near Usal Creek. The rocky shoreline of this area makes it a very desirable study area for birds, mammal, invertebrates, and other species as well as an ecological hotspot worth protecting.

While all the data for substrates is not currently available for the Punta Gorda area, we expanded the existing reserve there. This SMR captures submarine canyons and a variety of unique habitats, including important marine bird and mammal areas and the only occurrence of “blue” hydrocoral we’re aware of in relatively shallow water. The area can be accessed, but is generally lightly used for recreational fishing. Thus, because of the strategic location of this area near the western-most point in California, and its importance as an upwelling area, we believe this section of the coast deserves protection and future study. This area at Punta Gorda will serve as an example of how currently existing protected areas can help in the process of understanding how these areas contribute to the marine protection objectives of the MLPA.

Throughout the process of creating this proposal, we also made tough decisions *not* to protect certain areas, despite the likely long-term benefits of protection in these places, to take into account potential short-term socio-economic impacts or other concerns. For example, we omitted protected areas at the following places: (1) We left open Mendocino headlands and bay, an excellent example of rocky habitat and kelp that most likely serves as a highly productive nursery area, to accommodate urchin and seaweed harvesters, abalone and recreational fishing; (2) We left open the area in the lee of Patrick’s Point, a biodiversity hotspot and important foraging area for a diverse array of bird species, to accommodate local fishing and boating safety; (3) We left open Castle Rock and the area off Point Saint George—the Farallones of the north coast, a biodiversity hotspot and a productivity center for rockfish—to allow for a ten-mile safety zone around Crescent City Harbor.

Even with these significant omissions, we believe this array would create significant conservation value, and we submit it in the interests of learning as much as possible, through the Science Advisory Team evaluation, about alternative concepts for protected areas. We hope it provides useful information for the Regional Stakeholder Group.

Finally, our proposal did not change or modify the two existing marine conservation areas at Van Damme or MacKerricher State Parks. These two protected areas will continue to serve as small conservation study areas adjacent to parks areas that receive heavy recreational use. Please note that three of the existing MPAs in the region, Punta Gorda, Point Cabrillo, and Russian Gulch SMCAs, are either expanded in this proposal, or incorporated into the new design this plan offers.