

California MLPA South Coast Study Region: Round 3
South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (SCRS) MPA Proposal 1
Submitted by: SCRS Work Group 1 (WG1)
September 22, 2009

Detailed documentation of rationale behind potential areas of DFG feasibility or SAT guidance concern regarding the WG1 MPA array

Naples SMCA Justification

Although the Naples MPA is smaller than the minimum size recommended by the SAT, we believe that it meets Goals 3 and 4 of the Marine Life Protection Act. This SMCA captures a highly productive, unique rocky reef with submerged ledges, pinnacles, and caves, a persistent kelp forest, a high diversity of marine species and intertidal habitats, and a harbor seal haulout. The species assemblages found in this area are similar to those found at the northern Channel Islands, providing an opportunity for the public to have an “island” diving experience right on the mainland. This area is revered by divers, surfers, kayakers, and recreational fishermen within the community of Santa Barbara as well visitors to this part of our coastline.

The bioeconomic models that were run by UC Davis and UC Santa Barbara on the Round 2 arrays both indicated that the 2.5-square-mile MPA at Naples would result in benefits to biomass that are essentially equivalent to the benefits to biomass from the 26-square-mile MPA at Point Conception. These results illustrate the ecological value and productivity that will be provided by protecting this small, but diverse and exceptional habitat.

Additionally, because of diversity of habitats and species at Naples, this area has been the subject of several long-term scientific research and monitoring sites for both PISCO and LTER. One of the intentions of Work Group 1 in creating this MPA is to build on this long-term monitoring and to provide opportunities for cooperative research between local fishermen and academic and research organizations such as UCSB and PISCO, among others. Research conducted in the Naples SMCA will provide opportunities for comparisons among areas open to fishing, areas that have been set aside as MPAs with some allowed uses, and the SMRs at Point Conception and Helo that do not allow any take. It will also provide opportunities to understand the ecosystem impacts of allowing some uses within an MPA (kelp harvest and spear fishing) while restricting other fishing activities, by comparing monitoring data before and after the creation of this MPA.

Furthermore, Naples is an area of tribal importance for the Chumash and creation of this SMCA provides recognition of this culturally significant location and creates potential opportunities for Chumash co-management in the future.

Some members of Work Group 1 would have preferred to have at least a minimum size SMR encompassing Naples Reef while others would have preferred to have nothing in this location. Although habitat replication guidelines are met in the Point Conception and Helo SMRs, the Naples SMCA was added as a goal 3 MPA to get cross-interest support for the WG1 MPAs in Santa Barbara. In recognition of the conservation value of this area, concessions were made in other locations in Santa Barbara County by not creating MPAs at St. Augustine, Tajiguas, Refugio, Mohawk, and Carpinteria Reefs and reducing the size of the SMR at Point Conception. Recognizing the importance of this area to recreational fishing, a cross-interest compromise was developed, establishing a smaller-than-minimum-size SMCA that allows for spear fishing of finfish, including sheephead, calico bass, and white seabass. Furthermore, in order to offset the elimination of kelp harvesting that will result from the creation of an SMR at Goleta/Helo, we have allowed for kelp harvest in the Naples SMCA. Because the boundary of this SMCA will not extend to state waters, we have eliminated impacts to the halibut and sea cucumber trawl fisheries out of Santa Barbara Harbor.

Goal 3 of the MLPA states that MPAs should be created to improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal disturbance. Goal 4 states that MPAs should be created to protect marine natural heritage, including representative and unique marine life habitats for their intrinsic value. We believe that the creation of an SMCA in this small, but highly productive, extremely unique, culturally significant, and well-studied location will serve to meet Goals 3 and 4 of the Marine Life Protection Act and represents a cross-interest compromise and balance among the interests within Work Group 1.

Point Dume SMR/SMCA Justification

WG1 recognizes the Point Dume area as an important location for a backbone MPA, as there is a concentration of diverse habitats in this region and it provides connectivity between MPAs to the north (Helo SMR) and south (Palos Verdes SMR). This is also an important area for recreational and commercial fishing, as well as non-consumptive uses, including diving, kayaking, wildlife viewing, paddleboarding, surfing and beachgoing.

This SMR/SMCA cluster encompasses some of the most diverse habitats in Los Angeles County, including an upwelling zone, submarine canyon habitat, unique spur and groove reef structures, extensive kelp, and diverse understory algal habitat, as well as a wide diversity of marine life. It includes all of the habitat replicates within the SAT guidelines that are attainable at this location; it does not include a replicate for hard 30-100m substrate, which is limited in availability throughout the study region and is not present along this stretch of coast. The SMR portion of the cluster encompasses the Point Dume submarine canyon, a SAT-determined unique habitat. This MPA cluster also accounts for the SAT water

quality guidance, as it is co-located with an Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). The cluster is above preferred size and is located within the spacing guidelines to the south (Palos Verdes SMR). It is just above the spacing guidelines to the north (Helo SMR), which was a critical part of the WG1 compromise. WG1 opted to include the submarine canyon and some of the habitats east of Point Dume, as these areas were important to some workgroup members.

Additional compromises are represented in this cluster. To minimize potential negative socioeconomic impacts to fisheries in the area, the SMCA allows for commercial fishing by pelagic seine for squid and coastal pelagic finfish, dipnet for squid, and harpoon for swordfish. It also allows for recreational spearfishing of pelagic finfish, bonito, and white seabass. The eastern boundary of the SMR also represents a compromise: at 118.47.3, it leaves Escondido (an important kayak launch location) and part of Big Kelp Reef, which is a popular kayak- and spear- fishing location, open to fishing. Some workgroup members preferred that more of the east side of Point Dume be protected, while others preferred that less be protected. The bioeconomic models that were run by UC Davis and UC Santa Barbara on the Round 2 arrays both indicated that MPAs protecting the east side of Point Dume resulted in higher benefits to biomass than MPAs centered in other locations, which illustrates the ecological value and productivity of this area.

This area also represents a WG1 compromise to exclude the Goal 3 tribally focused SMCA at Nicholas Canyon that was separate from the Point Dume SMCA/SMR cluster in the Round 2 Topaz map. The Chumash recommended goals and objectives were included in the Point Dume SMCA/SMR cluster in the WG1 map to gain cross-interest support for the MPAs in the Malibu area.

This cluster was also an important element in the cross-geographical compromise between Palos Verdes, Catalina and Point Dume to get cross-interest support (see WG1 Narrative Rationale).

Palos Verdes SMR Justification

WG1 recognizes the Palos Verdes area as an important location for a backbone MPA, as well as an area with high recreational and commercial fishing value. It is also an important area for non-consumptive uses such as diving and kayaking. This SMR includes all of the habitat replicates within the SAT guidelines (except for beaches, which are met in other MPAs), a persistent kelp forest, and a wide diversity of marine life, all within an area that features a small shoreline extent and larger offshore component. This MPA is above minimum and just under preferred size, at 17.2 square miles, and is located within the spacing guidelines to the north (Point Dume SMR/SMCA cluster) and south (Laguna SMR).

The Palos Verdes SMR was created based on input from a variety of stakeholders in WG1. It features creative usage of the DFG feasibility guidelines, with the northern extent running along a 1/10 minute latitudinal line (33.47.1), and the southern extent running directly off Rocky Point, a prominent landmark, with the boundary line on 1/10 minute longitudinal line (118.25.7).

The habitat in the northern portion of this MPA is so rich that WG1 was successful in capturing all of the habitat replicates (except for beaches) under the SAT guidance, with a shoreline extent that is less than one mile long, including the difficult-to-meet 30-100m hard substrate. This innovative design minimizes impacts on both commercial and recreational fishing in the area by straddling the existing District 19 line, which limits commercial fishing within the Santa Monica Bay. It leaves a wide area of the northern Palos Verdes peninsula open to recreational fishing, which is important for spear, kayak and CPFV fishing. It also leaves important areas along the western Palos Verdes peninsula open to fishing, such as Lunada Bay, the southern portion of Rocky Point, Long Point, and Abalone Cove.

Some of the members of WG1 would have preferred an MPA in the Palos Verdes area focus on the southern end of the peninsula; however, it is difficult to include all of the habitat replicates in this area, especially persistent kelp and hard 30-100m. Moreover, the southern shore is downcurrent from the Superfund site on the Palos Verdes shelf that is slated for remediation, and contains other unfavorable conditions stemming from the White's Point sewage outfall. Other WG1 members preferred an MPA with a longer shoreline extent along the northwestern portion of the peninsula, but this raised many concerns regarding potential negative economic impacts. Ultimately, the group decided that the Palos Verdes SMR featured in the final WG1 map represented the best compromise by splitting the economic impacts along the District 19 line, representing habitat replicates under the SAT guidance, and limiting the shoreline extent to minimize economic impacts.

Orange County MPAs

The Orange County MPA array was designed to meet as many of the primary science guidelines (size, spacing, and habitat replicates) as possible while minimizing economic impacts and avoiding areas of water quality concern. There was early agreement on establishing an MPA in the Laguna area (due to its equal distance from the ports at Newport Beach and Dana Point and role in spacing between Palos Verdes and San Diego) and for the need to maintain the intertidal protection that currently exists along the Orange County coast. The Laguna SMR was designed in a wedge shape that meets preferred length of coastline while capturing the maximum kelp habitat replicate (the preferred kelp replication guideline is not attainable in this area); it was also designed to avoid the sewer outfall near Aliso Creek. The reserve narrows to a point offshore to reduce the economic impact on offshore fisheries and keep the overall reserve size to just over the minimum requirement of nine square miles.

The two SMCAs on both sides of the Laguna Reserve are designed to address DFG feasibility issues that are presented by the seven existing SMCAs, while maintaining the intertidal protection that currently exists. These SMCAs are designed to protect kelp habitat by eliminating the take of sheephead, which are predators to sea urchin that can harm kelp beds. These SMCAs also allow for commercial urchin take, resulting in economic benefit to this commercial fishery and potential beneficial influence on kelp.

La Jolla SMR/SMCA Justification

Although the La Jolla SMR/SMCA cluster is smaller than the minimum size recommended by the SAT, we believe that it meets Goals 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Marine Life Protection Act. It is an important area to both consumptive and non-consumptive ocean users. This cluster has been designed to provide protection for a portion of the most diverse and extensive representation of marine life and habitats within the entire South Coast study region. It includes some of the oldest, long-term and well studied temperate marine systems with current research and education being conducted by UCSD, SCRIPPS, SIO, La Jolla Ecological Reserve, SDSU, and CRANE. Some members of WG1 would have preferred to site a minimum-sized SMR at this location, while others preferred that backbone MPAs be sited elsewhere in the San Diego portion of the study region. Although habitat replication guidelines are met in the Del Mar and Point Loma SMRs, the La Jolla MPA cluster was added as a Goal 3 MPA to get cross-interest support for the WG1 MPAs in San Diego.

The small SMR includes part of a biological hotspot includes dense kelp forest, rocky and sandy intertidal areas, rocky reefs, and the scarce hard 30 -100 meter habitat. The SMCA was specifically designed to minimize negative socio-economic impacts and to further cooperative fisheries research opportunities with fishing, academic and other interested parties on kelp forest ecosystem interactions. The SMCA allows for recreational take of kelp bass, barred sand bass, white seabass, bonito and pelagic finfish by hook and line, commercial take of lobster and urchin, and spearfishing of white seabass. This area was also established with cooperative fisheries research in mind, and WG1 recommends that a process be established requiring commercial fishermen entering the area to collect data under designated scientific protocols.

The placement of the SMCA/SMR cluster leaves the northern portion of the La Jolla area open to fishing, which is a very important area for kayak fishing, as well as the southernmost extent of the reef open to fishing, which is important for CPFV operations. WG1 consciously made the decision to keep the western edge of the cluster from extending out to the 3-mile state waters line (even though extending to state waters is preferred for feasibility reasons by the DFG) because of offshore Department of Defense operations in this area. It was also important to the workgroup that each portion of the cluster be given relatively equal representation, which is reflected by the center boundary at 32.48.8 (both the SMR and SMCA extend 8/10 minute).

Catalina Justification

At Catalina, WG1 created backbone MPAs above minimum size on both the front and back side of the island in areas that capture important habitats and key species. Catalina was a particular challenge because of high levels of commercial and recreational use, and the military constraints on San Clemente Island. WG1 worked to satisfy most SAT guidelines while minimizing socio-economic impacts. The front side and backside of the island have very different socio-economic impacts (as commercial fishing is already limited on the front side), and a lot of time was spent trying to balance the discomfort for each interest group around the island. WG1 discussed creating an MPA to capture deep rock habitat at the

south end of the island, but ultimately did not move forward with this option due to concerns that the negative socioeconomic impacts of creating an MPA to capture an individual habitat were not merited.

Discussion at Farnsworth Bank centered on how best to protect the purple coral on this underwater pinnacle without a no-anchorage designation (safety issue) and without a state owned mooring (not the appropriate venue to pursue this). The Farnsworth SMCA is above minimum size and includes the coast off China Point to encompass nearshore habitats. It is designed for a high Level of protection, while still allowing for some commercial and recreational fishing, including spearfishing for pelagic finfish, bonito, and white seabass; commercial fishing for coastal pelagic finfish and market squid by seine; commercial and recreational dipnet for coastal pelagic finfish and market squid; recreational and commercial hook and line for jumbo squid; and commercial harpooning for swordfish. We also agreed to allow for recreational hook and line fishing for striped marlin IF it is assigned a high level of protection by the SAT.

The Blue Cavern SMR on the front side of the island was chosen for its key and unique habitats. A smaller footprint MPA already exists; enlarging it into this MPA carries the advantage of its proximity to the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center, and it has been well studied and enforced by local staff. Ecologically important but economically controversial Bird Rock was debated for inclusion in this SMR and was eventually added to comply with DFG feasibility guidelines. Ship Rock was not included in an MPA because of the difficulty of creating an MPA shape that would meet feasibility guidelines.

These two backbone MPAs are accompanied with a small SMR at Long Point to capture black seabass spawning aggregation area and more of the key and unique species and habitat also found in the Blue Caverns SMR. Final discussion centered around legacy and Goal 3 MPAs around Catalina. These smaller MPAs were very important to the island community. It is WG1's recommendation that education and enforcement of all the legacy and Goal 3 MPAs be assisted by local docents associated with various camps, local enforcement and the local marine institute.