

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
Charter of the MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group
March 31, 2007

Official Name: This group officially will be designated as the MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCCRSG) to the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (2007-2008).

Background: The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) was tasked by the 1999 Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) to prepare, or cause to be prepared, a master plan, with recommended alternative networks of marine protected areas within the state's coastal waters, for proposed adoption by the California Fish and Game Commission. The MLPA requires DFG to engage other interested parties to contribute to the master plan, including scientists, geographic information system experts, commercial and recreational fishermen, divers, and other individuals knowledgeable about the state's underwater ecosystems, the history of fishing effort or marine protected area management, or other relevant subjects. DFG is also required to take into account relevant information from local communities and solicit comments and advice from interested parties.

Developing a statewide master plan for marine protected areas (MPAs), while engaging the various interested parties, requires considerable work and analysis that is too complex to implement along the entire California coast at once. Through a 2004 memorandum of understanding (MOU), the California Resources Agency, DFG, and Resources Legacy Fund Foundation created a public-private partnership, known as the MLPA Initiative, to help the state implement the MLPA. One element of the initiative was a pilot project along the central coast (Pigeon Point in San Mateo County to Point Conception in Santa Barbara County) where a combination of the efforts of prior working groups, available scientific resources and potential partnerships provided a sound foundation for beginning implementation of the MLPA. The MOU expired in December 2006 and a second MOU was signed for the purpose of continuing the public-private partnership in the north central coast (Alder Creek in Mendocino County to Pigeon Point in San Mateo County).

Consistent with the MLPA and MOU continuing the MLPA Initiative, the NCCRSG will be convened to enhance the state's ability to carry out the mandates of the Marine Life Protection Act, and to ensure that regional knowledge and interests are reflected in alternative proposals for MPAs along the north central coast.

Membership: The NCCRSG is composed of individuals who are able and willing to provide information that will assist in developing alternative proposals for MPAs along the north central coast. The chair of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) and the director of DFG shall have sole discretion to select members of the group. In selecting members, the chair and director may consider professional expertise or experience, diversity of perspectives, geographic location, willingness to express fundamental interests as opposed to fixed positions, access to and effective use of a communication network, willingness to convey the interests of one or more important stakeholder groups, capacity to work with diverse viewpoints, ability to work collaboratively and seek to integrate the interests of a broad range of constituencies, ability to balance a north central coast regional perspective with localized knowledge, and commitment to completing all aspects of the charge of the group by June 2008.

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Term: Each member of the NCCRSG shall serve for the duration of the MOU, through December 2008, or until relieved of duties. Each member shall serve at the pleasure of the chair of the BRTF and the director of DFG.

Charge: In cooperation with a facilitation team, a science advisory team, DFG staff, and MLPA Initiative staff, the NCCRSG will provide assistance in the following key tasks:

- Provide local knowledge of the north central coast region for refining a regional profile and informing the MLPA planning process;
- Evaluate existing marine protected areas within the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region in relation to the goals of the MLPA, guidance provided in the draft California Master Plan for MPAs, and a statement of feasibility criteria from DFG;
- Provide information to other members of the NCCRSG that may be helpful in designing alternative MPA packages;
- Developing alternative proposals for packages of marine protected areas within the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region, that meet the requirements of the MLPA, for consideration by the BRTF and the California Fish and Game Commission;
- Conduct outreach to constituent groups for involvement in the MLPA North Central Coast Project; and
- Identify potential panel speakers to present stakeholder group recommendations and commentary at meetings of the BRTF and other public meetings.

The NCCRSG will work with a facilitation team, a science advisory team, and MLPA Initiative and DFG staff. The primary focus of deliberations will be public sessions of the group. The NCCRSG will not finalize any proposals outside the public sessions of the group.

Note that the charge of the NCCRSG is not to:

- Debate the virtues of the Marine Life Protection Act or whether MPAs should be established,
- Debate the validity of MPAs as a fisheries management tool (fisheries management is not the main goal of the MLPA), or
- Debate the detailed guidance of the draft California Master Plan for MPAs (it is guidance adopted and/or under consideration by the commission)

Attendance: The members of the NCCRSG, or their alternates, are expected to attend all regular meetings of the group, which shall generally be scheduled as needed from May 2007 through June 2008. These meetings will move throughout the region. The NCCRSG may have "sub-group" meetings, where geographically defined sub-groups meet separately for one-day meetings. NCCRSG members are invited to participate in any sub-group meetings.

Remuneration: Members and alternates of the NCCRSG, upon request, will be reimbursed for actual travel expenditures related to the MLPA Initiative, but not for time.