

State of California  
Fish and Game  
Commission

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### **Commission Gives Final Approval for Central Coast Marine Protected Areas**

BODEGA BAY- In a landmark decision, the California Fish and Game Commission today adopted regulations to create a new suite of marine protected areas (MPAs) designed for the Central Coast of California, the first region considered for the State. This move effectively launches the state's Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Program, which was designed to better conserve marine resources for their long-term sustainability while also enhancing outdoor recreation and ocean research opportunities along the coast.

"With our action today, California has embarked upon something historic and extraordinary," said Richard Rogers, president of the Commission. "With this vote, we have taken the first step to return our ocean waters to the place they used to be; an ocean full of sustainable abundance."

The Commission voted unanimously in favor of its preferred alternative: 29 MPAs representing approximately 204 square miles (or approximately 18 percent) of state waters with 85 square miles designated as no-take state marine reserves along the Central Coast, which ranges from Pigeon Point in San Mateo County south to Point Conception in Santa Barbara County. The adopted network includes the following specific decisions on options in the regulatory notice:

- Año Nuevo SMCA: Allowing commercial kelp harvest by hand only for the existing leaseholder in this area until the lease expires.
- Soquel Canyon and Portuguese Ledge SMCAs: Allowing harvest of pelagic finfish only.
- Edward Ricketts SMCA: Allowing recreational hook and line fishing (at all times in the entire MPA) and commercial kelp harvest with the limits recommended by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG).
- White Rock (Cambria) SMCA: Allowing commercial kelp harvest by hand for the existing leaseholder in the area until the lease expires.

An overflow crowd of more than 200 people attended Friday's Commission adoption hearing with many providing final testimony on three MPA packaged proposals, including the Commission's preferred alternative, which was initially voted on at the Commission's August 2006 meeting in Monterey. Each proposal underwent the required state environmental reviews and regulatory analysis.

The newly established Central Coast MPAs represent the culmination of a two-year public process with nearly 60 public meetings held for stakeholders and scientists, as well as the

oversight of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, convened by Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman.

The DFG, the lead agency charged with managing the state's marine resources, will be responsible for implementing the MLPA program, including all enforcement and research and monitoring activities. The Central Coast MPA regulations will go into effect this summer after the appropriate filings with the Office of Administrative Law and Secretary of State.

The Central Coast study region is a productive, biologically diverse marine environment. Habitats range from the muddy bottom seafloor to deep marine canyons and rocky nearshore reefs to estuarine eelgrass beds, open waters and sandy beaches. Coho salmon, steelhead, sea otters, sea lions, seals, kelp, Dungeness crab, lincod and other groundfish, nearshore rockfish, squid, gray whales, common murre, cormorants, and brown pelicans calls this ecosystem home.

The second regional process of the MLPA Initiative, the North Central Coast, which covers the area from Alder Creek in Mendocino County south to Pigeon Point in San Mateo County, was launched last month. More than 175 people participated in five workshops and were provided with details about the MLPA process.

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