

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative Participants in the Process

The California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative is a public-private partnership with a wide variety of participants, from staff and scientists to stakeholders and the general public.

The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force is chaired by former State Assemblymember Phil Isenberg and includes seven other knowledgeable public leaders selected by the California Secretary for Resources. The task force oversaw the preparation of a master plan framework and recently made a series of recommendations to the State of California regarding long-term funding for the planning and management of a network of marine protected areas. The task force is currently overseeing the development of alternative proposals for marine protected areas along the central coast and in late 2006 will also provide a report on improving the coordination of managing marine protected areas with federal agencies.

The MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team includes a group of leading scientists knowledgeable in marine ecology, fisheries science, marine protected areas, economics and the social sciences, as well as staff from the California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and State Water Resources Control Board. The science team assists the task force, staff and regional stakeholders by reviewing supporting and draft documents, and addressing scientific issues. A sub-team has served to provide more directed advice to the Central Coast Project, where alternative proposals for central coast marine protected areas have been developed.

The MLPA Statewide Interests Group is composed of stakeholders who collectively advise the task force and professional staff on the overall MLPA Initiative process, alerting the task force and staff to issues and opportunities that may improve public involvement in the process.

The MLPA Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group included over 50 primaries and alternates. These key, affected members of the central coast region were able and willing to provide information that assisted in developing alternative proposals for marine protected areas along the central coast. The group met monthly as a formal body over seven months and ultimately developed three proposed packages of marine protected areas for the central coast (packages 1, 2 and 3).

The California Fish and Game Commission is the ultimate decision-making authority for implementation of the MLPA. The principal mission of the other participants is to support the commission in making sound policy decisions required by the MLPA. Although the commission is not involved in the day-to-day work of the initiative, there are regular opportunities for informational meetings and consultation with the commission.

The California Department of Fish and Game serves as the lead agency for the design and implementation of the Master Plan required in the Marine Life Protection Act, including a network of marine protected areas. The department is responsible for exercising its independent judgment regarding recommendations from the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, before forwarding recommendations to the California Fish and Game Commission.

The MLPA Initiative staff includes, among others, an executive director, operations and communications manager, central coast project manager, senior planner, central coast operations and communications manager, and other professional and contracted staff. Advising and assisting initiative staff are a number of staff from the California Department of Fish and Game, including a policy advisor and regional project coordinator.

The general public has been actively involved in the MLPA Initiative by attending and participating in public meetings and workshops, commenting on draft documents, submitting data and information, and helping educate other members of the public about the initiative.

Want to get involved? Visit the MLPA Initiative website for more information: www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa