

**California MLPA North Central Coast Project**  
**Narrative Rationale for the North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder**  
**Group (NCCRSG) Marine Protected Area (MPA)**  
**Proposal 4 (March 19, 2008 version)**  
*Revised March 27, 2008*

The NCCRSG MPA Proposal 4 Work Team set out to create a network of MPAs that really works to protect ocean ecosystems—meeting the MLPA requirements, honoring the spirit of the law, and recognizing the strong public support for ocean protection. The Proposal 4 team used the following principles:

- The heart of the proposed network must do an excellent job meeting the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) guidelines and the MLPA goals;
- Include high quality habitats and centers of biodiversity and productivity;
- Create an enforceable network that fosters learning and adaptive management;
- Minimize socio-economic impacts and select areas that provide long-term benefits

Interests represented on the team include scientists, educators, divers, agency officials, conservationists, local community residents, Indian tribes and recreational anglers. We developed our proposal with extensive input from local residents throughout the region, other NCCRSG members, recreational and commercial fishermen, harbor masters, wildlife watchers, park visitors, divers, scientists and others. The list of individuals consulted fills several pages.

This proposal stands out in a number of ways. First, it does an excellent job of meeting the SAT guidelines and the MLPA goals. Proposal 4's network is anchored by four preferred-size MPA clusters with at least high protection, in addition to several fully protected marine reserves of at least minimum size. This foundation helps create a network that can support a full range of species likely to benefit from MPAs, protecting biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. *This is the only proposal in which the number of preferred-size high-protection areas is comparable to that of the adopted central coast network of MPAs.* Areas that contribute to the core network include clusters at Point Area, Stewarts Point, Bodega, Point Reyes, Fitzgerald and San Gregorio.

Second, we paid close attention to the *quality* of habitat included in high and very high protection. Habitat quality can substantially impact a network's ability to protect ecosystem functions, in addition to its value in creating a legacy for the future. We included an area off Salt Point State Park in a reserve because the rocky habitat is more complex and the kelp more extensive than, for example, off the southern portion of Sea Ranch, and because of the benefits of linking natural heritage areas across land and sea. We included in a reserve the northern portion of the rocky swath off Bodega Head because it has more relief (providing varied habitat and habitat niches) than the flatter and less ecologically diverse southern portion of that rocky area.

Third, we designed the Proposal 4 network to be feasible and encourage adaptive management and learning over time. For example, it contains SMRs ranging in size from the minimum size to near the high end of the preferred range, providing opportunities to improve our understanding of the relationship between size and reserve effects. A stacked cluster at Fitzgerald-Devil's Slide provides the opportunity to compare similar reef habitat in three different levels of protection across a range of depths—a state marine conservation area, a fully protected marine reserve, and an open area.

We included some areas of high quality habitat, such as Saunders Reef and part of Duxbury Reef, with moderate levels of protection. These are places where we made accommodations to maintain fishing opportunities for precarious ports. They serve purposes other than network viability. Saunders Reef is included, for example, because it is a productive kelp and rocky reef habitat with good restoration potential, likely to help meet the purposes of the nearshore fishery management plan which called for

MPAs but deferred their creation to this process. A number of other MPAs do not contribute to the network backbone due to their small size, but serve legitimate purposes as part of the network, such as protecting representative or unique habitat or preserving natural heritage.

The toughest tradeoffs we had to make in developing Proposal 4 involved leaving many outstanding habitats open in order to maintain ample fishing opportunities and minimize potential impacts on precarious ports. We left open prime fishing areas around Arena Cove, from Salt Point to Fort Ross Reef, from Tomales Bluff to the west side of Point Reyes, much of Duxbury Reef, Point Bonita, and most of the Half Moon Bay reef and salmon fishing corridors throughout most of the study region. We left miles of fishing accessible for small boats going north or south (or both) from most boat launches and harbors, because these boats have fewer options. In the second round of evaluations, Proposal 4's worst case commercial impacts were substantially less than those of the adopted central coast network of MPAs.