

California MLPA North Central Coast Project

Summary of MLPA Guidelines and MPA Proposal Evaluation Approaches

February 1, 2008

Summary of Guidelines for Creating Marine Protected Areas

The following guidelines and evaluation approaches have been summarized from the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), *California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas* (draft, December 2007), California Department of Fish and Game's Feasibility Guidelines (June 11, 2007), and *Methods Used to Evaluate Draft MPA Proposals in the North Central Coast Study Region* (draft; January 17, 2008).

Marine Life Protection Act Guidelines

- Use classifications for marine protected areas (MPAs) as defined (see handout)
- Address MLPA Goals (see handout)
- Have "specific identified objectives" for each MPA
- Consider existing MPAs
- Replicate habitats in the biogeographic region, to the extent possible, within marine reserves

Science Guidance from the Master Plan for MPAs

- MPAs should extend from intertidal to offshore areas
- Minimum alongshore span is 5-10 kilometers (3-6 miles or 2.5-5.4 nautical miles)
- Preferred alongshore span is 10-20 kilometers (6-12.5 miles or 5.4-11 nautical miles)
- Maximum spacing between habitats is 50-100 kilometers (31-62 mi or 27-54 nautical miles)
- Replicate key marine habitats in multiple MPAs
- Have 3-5 MPAs for each habitat type in the biogeographic region
- Key habitat types in the study region are sandy beach, rocky intertidal, estuary, shallow sand, deep sand, shallow rock, deep rock, kelp, shallow canyon and deep canyon

California Department of Fish and Game Feasibility Guidelines

- Use straight lines (due north/south or east/west)
- Use easily recognizable landmarks
- Use major lines of latitude/longitude
- Use simple regulations
- Consider accessibility
- Avoid unnecessarily complex arrangements of adjacent marine reserves, marine conservation areas and marine parks (e.g. no "doughnut zones")
- Avoid depth contour boundaries
- Avoid distance from shore boundaries
- Avoid intertidal MPAs that do not have an offshore component

MPA Proposal Evaluation Approaches

The MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) and MLPA Initiative staff evaluate draft MPA proposals for the north central coast study region relative to the science guidelines found in the master plan for MPAs and the six goals of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). Key evaluation approaches include:

- **Size and spacing, and habitat replication and representation evaluation:** The SAT evaluates MPA proposals in relation to goals 1, 2, 4 and 6 of the MLPA and the science guidelines in the master plan for MPAs.
- **Level of protection for MPAs:** Each MPA is assigned a level of protection based on allowed activities within the MPA and are considered in other analyses. Levels of protection include low, low-moderate, moderate, moderate-high, high and very high (see SAT methods document for further details).
- **MLPA Goal 3 analysis:** MLPA Initiative staff evaluates MPA proposals based on recreational, educational and study opportunities.
- **Marine birds and mammals:** The SAT evaluates MPA proposals based on protection of breeding, foraging and rearing areas of marine birds and mammals.
- **Socioeconomic impacts:** The SAT, through a contractor, evaluates potential socioeconomic impacts to commercial and recreational fisheries for MPA proposals. The California Department of Fish and Game conducts a separate evaluation for the abalone fishery.
- **Feasibility analysis:** The California Department of Fish and Game provides an evaluation of MPAs relative to department-identified feasibility criteria; it provides guidance on MPA design to help ensure that MPA boundaries and regulations are readily enforceable and understood by the public (see summary of guidelines above).

Brief MLPA Reading List

A brief list of documents covering the MLPA and the process for implementation is provided below. These documents, and many others, can be accessed on the MLPA website (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/>).

Marine Life Protection Act. See sections 2850-2863 of the California Fish and Game Code.

California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas: This document provides an overall plan for implementing the Marine Life Protection Act.

Regional Profile of the North Central Coast Study Region: Regional profiles are created for each study region to summarize information gathered and provide context for regional stakeholders to develop alternatives that will meet the goals and objectives of the MLPA.

Methods Used to Evaluate Draft MPA Proposals in the North Central Coast Study Region (draft; January 17, 2008): This methods document provides rationale and greater detail for evaluation methods, including how SAT guidelines were developed and made operational in the MPA proposal evaluation process.