

# California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative Blue Ribbon Task Force

## MEMORANDUM

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**To:** California Fish and Game Commission  
**From:** MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force  
**Subject:** Integrated Preferred Alternative marine protected area proposal for the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region  
**Date:** June 5, 2008

Ken Wiseman, *Executive Director*

### Summary

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the work and outcomes of the deliberations of the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) for the North Central Coastal Study Region of the MLPA Initiative. This information will also support the BRTF presentation to the California Fish and Game Commission at the June 11, 2008 joint meeting in Sacramento, California by providing background information and rationale to support the BRTF's recommendation that the commission adopt the Integrated Preferred Alternative as the preferred alternative MPA proposal in the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region.

Consistent with the BRTF's guidance on March 19, 2008, the MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (NCCRSG) successfully completed all elements of its charge, including generating no more than three marine protected area (MPA) proposals for the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region. The NCCRSG MPA proposals represented the culmination of months of intensive design, evaluation, facilitated negotiation among the stakeholders, and proposal refinement. The three NCCRSG MPA proposals (1-3, 2-XA and 4) were refined based on input from the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) evaluations, MLPA Initiative staff evaluations, California Department of Fish and Game feedback and analyses, and extensive public comment.

The three NCCRSG MPA proposals were forwarded to the BRTF for review and consideration at its April 22-23, 2008 meeting. The BRTF deliberated and took the following three actions during that meeting:

1. Recognizing that all three NCCRSG MPA proposals generally met the science guidelines of the master plan for MPAs, and to

a large extent avoided socioeconomic impacts, the BRTF members unanimously voted to forward all three NCCRSG MPA proposals, as well as the no-action alternative (Proposal 0, existing MPAs) to the California Fish and Game Commission for its review and consideration.

2. The BRTF gave the NCCRSG MPA proposal groups the opportunity to harmonize their MPAs' goals and objectives with the proposed regulations using the California Department of Fish and Game guidance. In addition, two small boundary changes were made to correct staff errors in capturing the original intent of MPAs proposed in Proposal 2-XA.
3. The BRTF created the Integrated Preferred Alternative proposal for the MLPA North Central Coast Study Region by selecting, and in some cases slightly modifying, MPAs from each of the three MPA proposals generated by the NCCRSG. The BRTF created a single preferred alternative intended to meet scientific guidelines and achieve the goals of the MLPA, while also bridging some of the remaining areas of divergence among the stakeholder proposals. The BRTF recommends that the Integrated Preferred Alternative MPA proposal be the preferred alternative for the North Central Coast Study Region.

### **Overview of the Recommended Integrated Preferred Alternative**

The BRTF members developed a consensus recommendation for MPAs in the North Central Coast Study Region, the Integrated Preferred Alternative; this MPA proposal is derived directly from the NCCRSG proposals, with the intent of bridging some of the gaps among Proposals 1-3, 2-XA and 4. This recommendation represents extensive study and deliberation, many hours of input from the NCCRSG members, and useful exchange between the members of the NCCRSG and the BRTF. The BRTF recommends the Integrated Preferred Alternative MPA proposal to the California Fish and Game Commission.

The process of integrating the NCCRSG MPA proposals and creating the Integrated Preferred Alternative was facilitated by both the structure and organization of the NCCRSG, the hard work and commitment of the NCCRSG members and many members of the public, and by the strikingly high degree of geographic convergence achieved among the three NCCRSG proposals—even before the final BRTF deliberations.

The NCCRSG is to be commended for generating a broad set of Round 1 proposals (6 internal options and 4 draft external proposals in October 2007), then refining those proposals based on science guidance and close review of the Ecotrust analysis of socioeconomic impacts, to a more focused set of five draft proposals in Round 2 (in December 2007). Finally, consistent with guidance given by the BRTF, and in recognition of the need to forward a bounded set of options to the California Fish and Game Commission, the NCCRSG succeeded in forwarding three MPA proposals in Round 3 (in April 2008) for BRTF consideration and deliberation.

The BRTF gave considerable guidance to the NCCRSG in arriving at this milestone. The BRTF asked the NCCRSG to give substantial weight to the science guidelines; to build proposals around a backbone of marine reserves and emphasize preferred size MPA clusters;

to strive for broad cross-interest involvement and support in drafting and reviewing proposals; to minimize, where possible, significant socioeconomic impacts to fisheries, ports, and communities; to seriously consider the California Department of Fish and Game’s feasibility criteria; and finally to give careful consideration to the broad range of public and stakeholder comments submitted verbally and in writing. The BRTF also asked the NCCRSG to sparingly consider special closures, as needed, to protect sensitive bird and mammal populations.

The NCCRSG worked very hard to take all this advice into account as the members crafted their final MPA proposals. The BRTF then created a single preferred alternative intended to meet science guidelines, achieve the goals of the MLPA, and address feasibility issues identified by the California Department of Fish and Game, while also bridging some of the remaining areas of divergence and making a final set of tradeoffs among the NCCRSG proposals.

The Integrated Preferred Alternative MPA proposal includes a total of 22 marine protected areas (MPAs), with 11 state marine reserves (SMR), 9 state marine conservation areas (SMCA), and 2 state marine parks (SMP). There are also 2 state marine recreational management areas (SMRMAs) and 6 special closures included in the recommendation. The Integrated Preferred Alternative is comparable to the final stakeholder proposals in numbers of MPAs and area of the study region included in proposed MPAs (Table 1).

**Table 1. Comparison of MLPA North Central Coast Existing MPAs, Regional Stakeholder Group MPA Proposals (1-3, 2-XA 4), and the Integrated Preferred Alternative (IPA)**

Area Type / Proposal	0 (Existing)	1-3	2-XA	4	IPA
<b>Marine Protected Area (MPA)<sup>1</sup></b>					
State Marine Reserve	1 (<1%)	12 (11%)	9 (9%)	15 (14%)	11 (11%)
State Marine Conservation Area	10 (3%)	10 (10%)	8 (9%)	12 (13%)	9 (8%)
State Marine Park	2 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	2 (1%)
<i>Total MPAs</i>	<i>13 (4%)</i>	<i>23 (22%)</i>	<i>18 (18%)</i>	<i>28 (27%)</i>	<i>22 (20%)</i>
<b>State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA)</b>					
State Marine Recreational Management Area	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (<1%)	0 (0%)	2 (<1%)
<b>Special Closures</b>					
Special Closures <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)	7 (<1%)	5 (<1%)	7 (<1%)	6 (<1%)

<sup>1</sup>Note: These are proposed MPA designations, NOT levels of protection assigned by the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team

<sup>2</sup>Note: The size guidelines do not apply to special closures. Therefore, special closure shapes were specifically designed to address local concerns for birds and/or mammals. As a result, special closures occupy a negligible percentage of the study region

In approximately half of the geographies where the Integrated Preferred Alternative includes an MPA, the boundaries and corresponding regulations are either very similar or identical to all three stakeholder proposals. In three locations, the Integrated Preferred Alternative does not include an MPA where one or more of the stakeholder proposals proposed an MPA; the southern part of Tomales Bay, the northern part of Duxbury reef, and the area adjacent to San Gregorio State Beach.

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More details about the specific MPAs in the Integrated Preferred Alternative, the fate of existing MPAs, and special closures, is attached as an appendix.

We hope you find this information helpful.

cc: Secretary Mike Chrisman, California Resources Agency  
Director Donald Koch, California Department of Fish and Game

Attachment: Appendix

Enclosures: North Central Coast Recommendations Transmission Binder 1  
North Central Coast Recommendations Transmission Binder 2  
North Central Coast Recommendations Transmission Binder 3  
North Central Coast Recommendations Transmission Binder 4