

California MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group
Narrative Rationale for SCRSG Marine Protected Area Proposal 1
September 17, 2009

MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (SCRSG) Work Group 1 (WG1) based its marine protected area (MPA) proposal on the Round 2 MPA Proposal Topaz, and included many of the original members of that group, along with some additional members from the Lapis and Opal groups who had shown an interest and ability to work in the context of competing interests and continuing compromise. WG1 was charged with achieving a high level of cross-interest support while developing an MPA proposal that improved the Topaz group's achievement of Science Advisory Team (SAT) guidelines.

WG1 was comprised of 25 regional stakeholder group (RSG) members from a wide range of interests represented on the SCRSG, including commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, non-governmental conservation organizations, education, academic, tribal, and local, state and federal government interests.

WG1 began negotiations at the August 3-4 RSG meeting as an entire work group; at this meeting they discussed many alternatives for each geography along the South Coast. Throughout August, they met in small geography-based subgroups to narrow down individual MPA alternatives to bring back to the work group during the September RSG meeting. During the first day of the September meeting, they were split into three cross-interest subgroups (comprised of 5-6 people/group) and directed to develop a full MPA proposal for the South Coast as a small group. On the second day, they presented these 3 proposals to the entire work group, and selected 2 of the 3 proposals to use as platforms for the creation of a final WG1 proposal, which was developed on days 2 and 3 of the RSG meeting.

The group placed a strong emphasis on meeting the science guidelines and creating a backbone of preferred size State Marine Reserves (SMRs), as directed by the Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF), although in some areas the group chose to endorse MPAs below the preferred size due to economic concerns. WG1 also sought to minimize negative socioeconomic impacts, as demonstrated in the creation of State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCAs) in places with high fishing value, such as Malibu and Catalina. In some areas, the focus was also on the creation of efficient shapes that met science guidelines, while minimizing socioeconomic impacts, such as the MPAs at Helo, Palos Verdes and Laguna Beach.

In some areas, WG1 worked creatively to identify MPA boundaries that minimize socioeconomic impacts, yet adhere as closely as possible to the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) feasibility guidance. Some of the final MPAs may not be preferable by DFG, but the group felt these were important innovative solutions to meet SAT guidelines, while minimizing socioeconomic impacts (e.g. in Laguna Beach the work group created an SMR that took into consideration avoiding a wastewater outfall, leaving waters in South Laguna adjacent to public access open to fishing, and reducing the offshore extent of the MPA to minimize socioeconomic impacts to several offshore fisheries; and the Palos Verdes SMR leaves some inshore extent open to fishing while protecting waters offshore).

Some members of the group were also focused on research opportunities, so site-specific rationale was given for certain MPAs to highlight these opportunities. For example, the La Jolla SMCA/SMR cluster is divided between an SMR and SMCA, allowing some uses, and subsequent comparison. The existing invertebrate closure on the lee side of Catalina is

decreased in size to allow for a presence/absence study after the removal of an MPA; moreover the new MPA has distinct boundaries and creates a more enforceable shape.

For many of the geographies, compromises using tradeoffs were utilized to develop the proposal. In challenging areas where it was difficult for the work group to identify a tradeoff, votes were taken, but options were not seriously considered unless substantial cross-interest support was demonstrated. Key compromises achieved by work group 1 exist throughout the study region.

In the Santa Barbara area, there was a lot of discussion about whether or not the work group could support an MPA at Naples Reef. This area has been a long-stated area of importance for conservation value, as well as commercial and recreational fishing. At the August RSG meeting and during subgroup discussions, WG1 members had broad agreement that backbone SMRs should be placed at Point Conception and Isla Vista; they also generally agreed on the boundaries and size of these SMRs. Consumptive interests had concerns about placing a goal three MPA at Naples given the size and habitat represented in the two backbone SMRs. After much discussion, the group agreed to place a small SMCA at Naples Reef and draw the western boundary of the SMR at Point Conception back one minute to open up more of St. Augustine's reef, which is an area important to commercial and recreational fishing. The SMCA at Naples allows for kelp harvest and spearfishing. This is important because the proposed SMR at Isla Vista covers the current kelp lease, and Naples is an alternative site for kelp harvest.

In the Los Angeles area, WG1 negotiated a key tradeoff between Point Dume and Palos Verdes headlands that are the boundaries of Santa Monica Bay. Finding consensus for an MPA at Palos Verdes amongst work group members was difficult due to the rich ecosystem importance of the area, as well as its value and importance to commercial and recreational fishing. The Topaz Round 2 map focused on the western side of the peninsula, but missed some habitat replicates identified in the SAT guidelines. The WG1 shape was proposed by fishing interests in an effort to achieve the science guidelines, while minimizing negative economic impacts and splitting any economic impacts evenly between commercial and recreational fishing interests. Conservation representatives were concerned about the limited shoreline extent of this shape and possible edge effects, but ended up supporting this shape paired with the shape at Point Dume, as conservation values are also represented on the east side of Point Dume, which is partially included in the WG1 Point Dume SMR. The eastern boundary of Point Dume remains the same as that in the Round 2 Topaz map, which was a compromise between fishing and conservation interests during Round 2 because it splits a popular reef in that area, Big Kelp Reef.

At Catalina, WG1 created backbone MPAs of at least minimum size on the front and back sides of the island in areas that capture important habitats and key species. Catalina was a particular challenge because of high levels of commercial and recreational use, and the military constraints on San Clemente Island. WG1 worked to satisfy most SAT guidelines while minimizing socio-economic impacts. At Farnsworth Bank the goal was to protect rare purple hydrocorals on the underwater pinnacle without a no-anchorage designation (safety issue) and without a state-owned mooring (which the group recommends as a follow-up effort). Pelagic

surface activities were allowed as these would not negatively impact the key species of purple coral.

The Blue Cavern SMR on the front side of the island was chosen for its key and unique habitats. A smaller footprint MPA already exists; enlarging it into this MPA carries the advantage of its proximity to the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center, and it has been well studied and enforced by local staff. Ecologically important but economically significant Bird Rock was included to comply with feasibility guidelines, while Isthmus Reef, ecologically similar but entirely submerged, was not included in the MPA to provide a comparative research site. These two backbones are accompanied by a small SMR at Long Point to capture Black Sea bass spawning aggregations and more of the key and unique species and habitats also found in the Blue Caverns SMR. Other legacy MPAs were retained for their importance to islanders and tourists. WG1 discussed creating an MPA to capture deep rock habitat at the south end of the island, but ultimately did not move forward with this option due to concerns that the negative socioeconomic impacts of creating an MPA to capture an individual habitat were merited.

In the San Diego area, there was a lot of discussion regarding La Jolla and northern San Diego County. The final shape in northern San Diego county represents a compromise between centering an MPA at Swami's (preferred by conservation interests), or centering it at Del Mar (preferred by fishing interests). Our final shape includes the deep rock habitats at Del Mar, and some of the kelp in the Solana Beach area near Swami's. This decision was paired with a compromise at La Jolla. Conservation interests felt strongly that the southern portion of the La Jolla reef needed to be included in an SMR; however consumptive interests stated the importance of the entire La Jolla peninsula to fishing. The final map features a below-minimum size SMR/SMCA cluster that includes some of the important habitat in the central part of the La Jolla peninsula within the SMR, while leaving the southernmost portion (closest to Mission Bay) open to lobster, urchin and hook and line fishing. This area was specifically designed to further cooperative fisheries research opportunities on kelp forest ecosystem interactions.

A third compromise was made across geographies. WG1 discussed many areas of tribal importance. Specifically, tribal interests recommended seven proposed heritage MPAs for tribal co-management or partnership: Kashayit SMP (at Gaviota), Naples SMCA, Pt. Dume SMCA, Pt. Dume SMR, Bolsa Chica SMCA, Crystal Cove SMCA, and Batiquitos Lagoon SMR. These MPAs are located at Traditional Cultural Places and each plays a significant role in the maritime cultures of the participating coastal tribes: Chumash, Tongva, Juaneño/Acjachemem, and Luiseño. Based on Tribal interests, WG1 is recommending Tribal government and non-government entities explore the formulation of MOUs with appropriate State departments (e.g. Fish and Game and Parks and Recreation) to promote 1) education and outreach, 2) marine stewardship, and 3) indigenous maritime cultural preservation and revitalization. It is proposed that cultural practices would fall within permitted recreational uses of these MPAs. Some of the area of tribal interest overlap with MPAs that WG1 was considering independently (e.g. Naples and Batiquitos Lagoon), while others were new areas for consideration. The Round 2 Topaz map featured a cultural SMCA in Malibu at Nicholas Canyon that allowed for some commercial and recreational fishing uses. After much discussion, tribal interests indicated they prefer SMPs, which do not allow for commercial fishing uses. WG1 decided to add a new cultural SMP along the Gaviota coast, but remove the cultural SMCA along the Malibu coast to leave

important areas near Leo Carillo and Nicholas Canyon open to fishing. In the Malibu area, the Point Dume SMR/SMCA cluster that was already agreed on by the work group was recognized as an area of tribal importance.