

California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative
Summary of Marine Protected Area Planning Guidelines for the
MLPA South Coast Study Region
Revised January 28, 2009

Summary of Key Guidelines for Marine Protected Area Planning

The guidelines in this document have been summarized from several documents provided to the MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (SCRSG) and should be considered in marine protected area (MPA) planning. Note that key guidelines most relevant to MPA planning by the SCRSG are summarized; this is not intended to be a complete synthesis of these documents. Please refer to the original documents for a more complete explanation of the guidance. Documents summarized include:

- California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA)
- *California Marine Life Protection Act Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas* (January 2008)
- *Summary of MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force Policy Guidance to the Central Coast and North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Groups* (staff memorandum revised December 4, 2008)
- *California Department of Fish and Game Feasibility Criteria and Evaluation Components for Marine Protected Area Proposals* (DFG memorandum revised November 12, 2008)
- *California State Parks Guidelines for Creating Marine Managed Areas* (revised November 18, 2008).

Marine Life Protection Act Guidelines

- Use classifications for marine protected areas (MPAs) as defined in the Marine Managed Areas Improvement Act (state marine reserve, state marine park, state marine conservation area)
- Address MLPA goals within each component of the statewide network of MPAs
- 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 MPAs¹

- 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 miles or 27-54 nautical miles)

¹ As of February, 2009, the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team is considering how to apply to the MLPA South Coast Study Region those guidelines identified in the *California Marine Life Protection Act Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas*.

- Replicate key marine habitats in multiple MPAs
- Have three to five MPAs for each habitat type in the biogeographic region
- Include "key habitats" within marine protected area proposals

Guidance from the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force

- Place great weight on science advisory team evaluations
- Strong emphasis will be placed on MPAs that fall within the SAT preferred size and spacing range; proposals should include MPAs with "very high" or "high" levels of protection; marine reserves should be the "backbone" of any proposed network; and proposals may include MPAs with "moderate-high" levels of protection.
- Cross-interest support for MPA proposals and cross-interest involvement in their development is important and will be given great weight
- The regional stakeholder group should forward to the task force no more than three MPA proposals and the regional stakeholder group should strive for convergence in geographies and regulations where possible
- Strong consideration should be given to DFG feasibility guidelines. In final MPA proposals, provide specific rationale for any deviations from the recommendations in the feasibility analysis conducted by DFG.
- Special closures should be used sparingly and selectively

California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) 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 and "distance from shore" boundaries
- Avoid intertidal MPAs that do not have an offshore component

California Department of Parks and Recreation Guidelines

- Consider areas offshore of terrestrial state parks as to their appropriateness and suitability for MPAs
- Consider especially areas offshore of state parks when they provide opportunities for public visitation, help protect representative habitats and species, provide special protection for intertidal species and habitats, provide venues for marine interpretation and education, and facilitate law enforcement
- When designing MPAs offshore of terrestrial parks, consider the state park's general plan as well as existing public use patterns