



California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 17, 2006

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MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force Sets Milestone with Recommendations for Improving California's System of Marine Protected Areas

Three packages of marine protected areas from Point Conception to Pigeon Point to be forwarded to the California Department of Fish and Game with other recommendations

Seaside, CA – The California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Blue Ribbon Task Force set a milestone on Wednesday by forwarding three packages of proposed marine protected areas for the central coast, bound by Pigeon Point in the north and Point Conception in the south. This decision includes a preferred alternative for implementation and represents one in a series of recommendations to help the State of California improve the design and management of its marine protected areas (MPAs).

“Our effort has extended for 18 months, with over 40 days of formal meetings, to develop and adopt recommended alternative packages of MPAs for the central coast,” said Phil Isenberg, chair of the task force. “We are confident that the Fish and Game Commission has a solid range of alternatives to consider on the way toward increased ocean protection” he added.

The packages are based on the efforts of a group of more than 50 primary and alternate stakeholders that worked with MLPA Initiative staff and professional facilitators in an intensive stakeholder process. Marine constituencies represented in the stakeholder group included recreational angling and diving, commercial fishing, ports and harbors, water quality, conservation, business, and other government agencies with marine protected area responsibilities.

After seven months of formal meetings, numerous informal meetings, and input and review from a science advisory team, the group developed and forwarded to the task force three proposed MPA packages for the central coast, identified as packages 1, 2 and 3. Three additional packages were under consideration by the task force this week: Package 0 (existing MPAs, used as a baseline), Package S (developed by staff at the direction of the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force during its January 2006 meeting), and Package AC (developed outside the regional stakeholder group process).

Summary of Recommended Central Coast MPA Packages (March 15, 2006)

	Number of MPAs	Total Area of MPAs (mi²)	Percentage of Study Region¹
Existing MPAs	13	43.15 mi ²	3.75%
Package 1	29	171.5 mi ²	14.93%
Package 2R	30	221.18 mi ²	19.23%
Package 3R	31	198.74 mi ²	17.28%

¹ The MLPA Central Coast Study Region encompasses 1150.1 square miles.

The task force voted to forward Package 1, a slightly revised version of Package 2, and a revised Package 3, which was selected as the recommended preferred alternative for implementation. The

commission and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) will automatically compare existing MPAs as the “no project” alternative during the state regulatory process. All packages provide some level of protection to living marine resources, with different approaches and emphasis using reserves, parks and conservation areas. The final decision about which packages to forward was reached after the task force received evaluations by the science advisory team and staff, as well as extensive input from stakeholders and the public.

Executive Director John Kirlin stated, “These packages reflect a significant and invaluable amount of work by many people, including our stakeholders and the science team.” He added, “Our hope is that when the commission begins its deliberations about MPAs along the central coast it will recognize the open and transparent process we conducted with stakeholders and the significant amount of time they committed to developing these packages.”

The task force recommendations will be forwarded to DFG, along with a list of issues and concerns that the task force is suggesting the state address. DFG will then review and assess the packages with advice from a science advisory team that has been assisting the task force since January 2005. The next stage of the process will begin in June, when DFG is expected to present its recommendations to the California Fish and Game Commission, the final decision-making body.

In 1999 the state enacted the MLPA, which directs state agencies to reexamine and redesign California’s system of marine protected areas with the goal of increasing its coherence and effectiveness at protecting the state’s marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage, as well as to improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems.

To achieve the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act, the California Resources Agency and DFG partnered with the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation to establish the MLPA Initiative; this public-private partnership is designed to help the State of California implement the MLPA, guided by the advice of scientists, resource managers, experts, stakeholders and members of the public. Led by former Assemblymember Phil Isenberg, the eight-member MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force was formed by Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman to oversee the initiative process.

In April 2005 the task force recommended a draft MLPA Master Plan Framework to DFG, which the California Fish and Game Commission subsequently adopted in August 2005. In December 2005 and January 2006, the task force forwarded to Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman a set of recommendations for long-term funding of a system of MPAs in California. By November 2006 the task force will make recommendations for improved coordination with federal agencies involved in MPA management.

Making recommendations for MPAs along the central coast, utilizing the best readily available science and the advice of stakeholders, is one of a number of steps being taken to comply with the Marine Life Protection Act, implementation of which is part of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s Ocean Action Plan released last year.

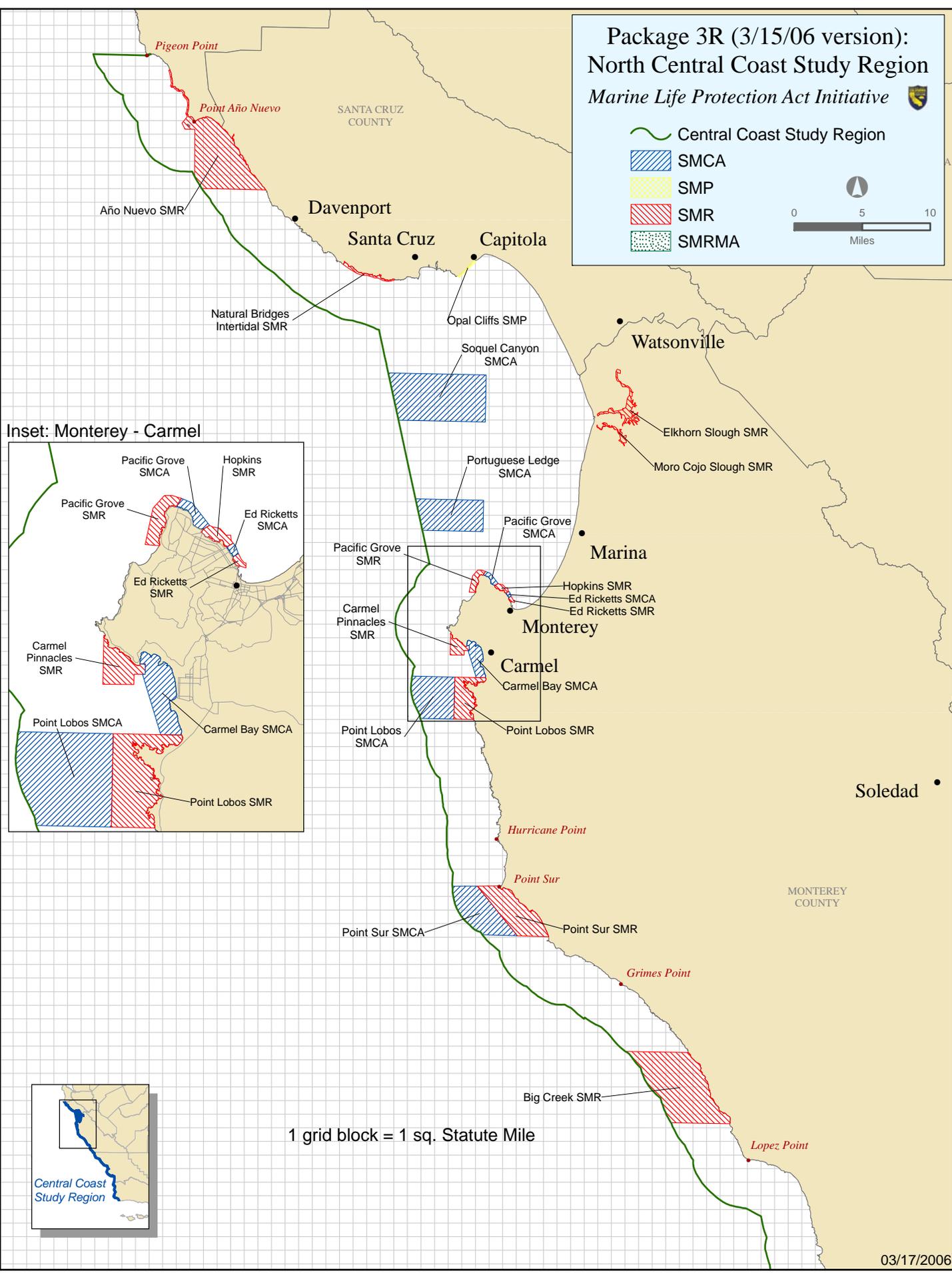
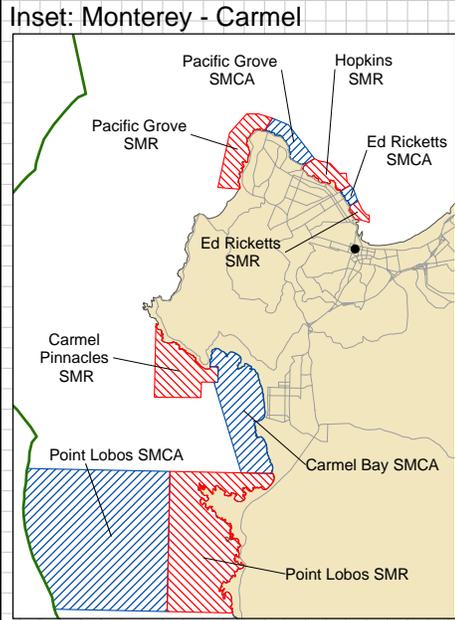
Attached are maps of the proposed MPAs in Package 3R, the recommended preferred alternative. For more information about the packages being forwarded to DFG, please visit the initiative website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa/centralcoast.html>.

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Package 3R (3/15/06 version):
 North Central Coast Study Region
 Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

— Central Coast Study Region
 SMCA
 SMP
 SMR
 SMRMA

0 5 10
Miles



1 grid block = 1 sq. Statute Mile



SMCA = state marine conservation Area SMP = state marine park
 SMR = state marine reserve SMRMA = state marine recreational management area

Package 3R (3/15/06 version): South Central Coast Study Region

Marine Life Protection Act Initiative



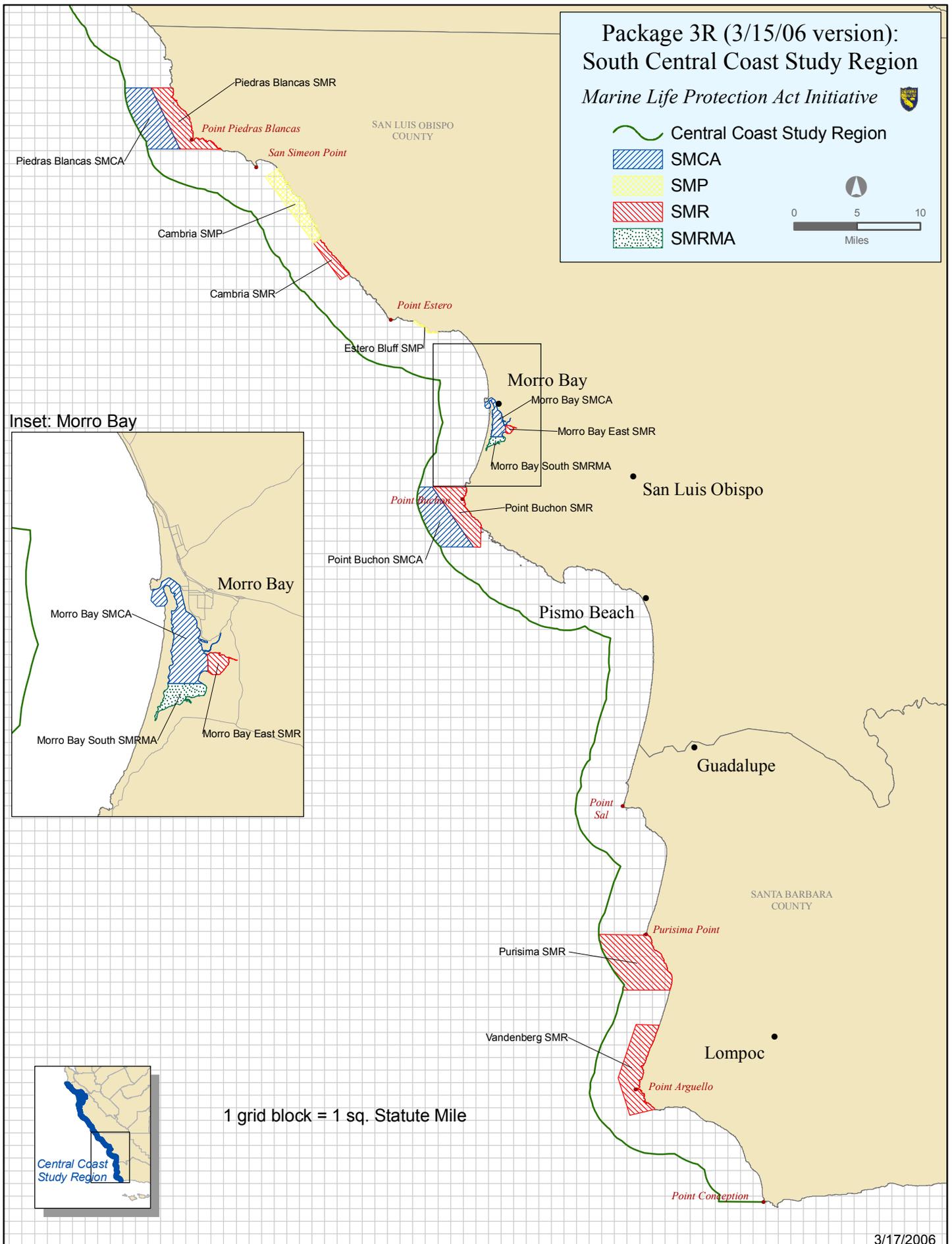
Central Coast Study Region

SMCA

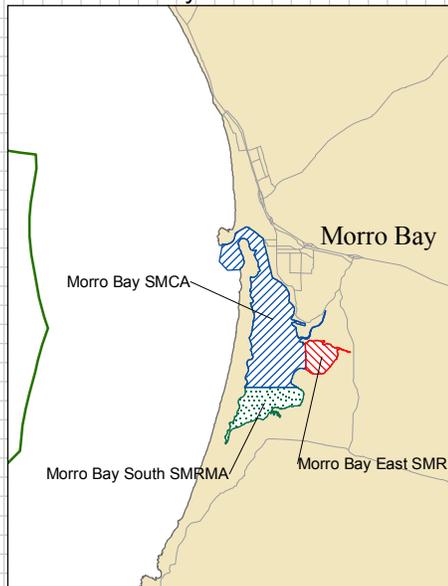
SMP

SMR

SMRMA



Inset: Morro Bay



1 grid block = 1 sq. Statute Mile



3/17/2006

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