



CALIFORNIA'S MARINE PROTECTED AREA STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Work Plan FY 15/16 - 17/18: Executive Summary

The California legislature passed the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) in 1999, responding to the need to redesign California's marine protected areas (MPAs) and improve their effectiveness at supporting healthy and sustainable marine ecosystems. The fully redesigned network was completed in 2012. Through the science-based and stakeholder-driven process to implement the MLPA, state resource managers realized a key component to success was a focus on building strong, active partnerships.

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and Fish & Game Commission are charged with management of the statewide MPA Network, while the Ocean Protection Council serves as the state's policy lead. The Department of Parks & Recreation and Commission are also designated as a managing agency for some types of MPAs. Regulatory agencies (e.g. California Coastal Commission, State Lands Commission, and State Water Resources Control Board) have jurisdictions that overlap with MPA management activities, as does the West Coast Regional Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. California Ocean Science Trust works in close partnership with these agencies to support a science-based approach to ocean and coastal management, and to design and implement MPA monitoring programs. Effective stewardship of the MPA network requires a coordinated approach among these agencies and organizations, as well as other partners.

In April 2014, the MPA Statewide Leadership Team (Leadership Team) was convened as a standing body to ensure active and engaged communication among MPA network management partners. The Leadership Team has developed a work plan to guide their partnership efforts as capacity allows over the next three years and is comprised of strategic priorities, actions, and outcomes within four focal areas, as summarized below:

Outreach and Education

The Leadership Team recognizes the fundamental importance of improved outreach and education efforts for promoting awareness of the MPA network among California visitors and residents and cultivating long-term public engagement. Members of the Leadership Team have identified three Strategic Priorities that capture a wide variety of initiatives that will be used to achieve success:

1. Build support and durability of the MPA network goals and performance through improved public awareness
2. Create a broad understanding of regulations and increase compliance
3. Develop consistent messaging with state, federal, and other partners

Diverse communications strategies, enhanced collaboration within and among agencies and partners, and leveraging existing outreach efforts by local community organizations are crucial components of this focal area.

Enforcement and Compliance

The ultimate success of the MPA network will depend in large part on the degree to which regulations are followed. This requires public understanding of and compliance with MPA regulations paired with consistent enforcement. While targeted outreach efforts to users play an important role in cultivating compliance, this focal area identifies actions nested under one strategic priority:

1. Increase the capacity and effectiveness of enforcement.

The use of new technology, cooperative relationships among CDFW wildlife officers and other enforcement agencies, and ensuring regular outreach to court officers are some of the key initiatives in this focal area.

Research and Monitoring

Research and monitoring are essential for understanding the ecological and socioeconomic conditions and trends within MPAs and for evaluating performance of the statewide MPA network. These activities will also enhance our understanding of the network's contribution to bolstering ecosystem health and resilience in the face of changing ocean conditions. The following strategic priorities address these goals:

1. Establish a benchmark of ecosystem and socioeconomic conditions in all MLPA coastal regions that informs the initial regional network management reviews
2. Design and implement a partnerships-based monitoring program that assesses MPA network performance and informs multiple mandates
3. Develop an approach to statewide MPA network assessment that builds upon the monitoring framework to inform decisions at a statewide scale

Agency, academic, tribal and citizen scientists, as well as other experts, will play important roles in implementing the strategic priorities of this focal area.

Policy and Permitting

The policy and permitting aspects of MPA management are both overarching and fundamental to success. Continued coordination among regulatory agencies is required to maintain a cohesive vision for the MPA network into the future. Related actions are nested under the following strategic priorities:

1. Improve governance of MPA network through adaptive management
2. Integrate MLPA and MPA network goals, objectives and partnership-based management approach into relevant management documents
3. Enhance protection for MPA resources is provided in relevant resource agency authorizations
4. Identify marine resource enhancement/mitigation opportunities and impact avoidance strategies within or associated with MPAs

This work requires investment of entities whose mandates are specifically tied to MPAs as well as those more indirectly linked.

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