

MARINE PROTECTED AREA STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP TEAM

WORK PLAN

FISCAL YEARS 2025/2026 – 2029/2030



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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

BLM	United States Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management
CCC	California Coastal Commission
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDFW LED	California Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division
CFGC	California Fish and Game Commission
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
DMR	Decadal Management Review
FY	Fiscal Year
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MLPA	Marine Life Protection Act
MMAIA	Marine Managed Areas Improvement Act
MPA CN	MPA Collaborative Network
MSLT	MPA Statewide Leadership Team
NMS	National Marine Sanctuary
NOAA	National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration
OPC	California Ocean Protection Council
OST	California Ocean Science Trust
PORTS	Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students
RLF	Resources Legacy Fund
SLC	California State Lands Commission
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TMSN	Tribal Marine Stewards Network
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
WCR	West Coast Region

ABOUT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE MARINE PROTECTED AREA STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP TEAM

California's Marine Protected Area Statewide Leadership Team (MSLT) enhances communication and collaboration among state and federal agencies, tribal government representatives, and partners to facilitate improved management of the statewide Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network.

In 1999, the California legislature passed the [Marine Life Protection Act \(MLPA\)](#)¹. The MLPA required the State to redesign its existing system of MPAs to better support healthy and sustainable marine ecosystems. The fully redesigned statewide network of 124 MPAs was completed in 2012. [The California Collaborative Approach: Marine Protected Areas Partnership Plan](#)², [2016 California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas](#)³, and the [Marine Managed Areas Improvement Act \(MMAIA\)](#)⁴ established a collaborative, partnership-based approach to MPA management. As a result, the MSLT was established in 2014 by the Secretary for Natural Resources. Guidelines for the operational procedures of the MSLT are outlined in the [MPA Statewide Leadership Team Charter](#)⁵.

The multi-sector collaboration of the MSLT is foundational to the effective management of the MPA Network as each member brings unique perspective, knowledge, and resources in supporting the [MPA Management Program](#)⁶. The MSLT focuses on leveraging resources and bridging interagency efforts that cut across jurisdictions and mandates to collectively advance MPA Network management. The MPA Management Program⁶ is also rooted in partnerships between agencies and organizations inside and outside of government to provide a direct venue for local perspectives to be heard. The MSLT includes the following agencies, organizations, and representatives:

- Bureau of Land Management
- California Coastal Commission
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California Fish and Game Commission
- California Ocean Protection Council
- California State Lands Commission
- California Ocean Science Trust
- MPA Collaborative Network
- National Park Service
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries West Coast Region
- Regional Tribal Representatives¹
- Resources Legacy Fund
- State Water Resources Control Board



CALIFORNIA
COASTAL
COMMISSION



CALIFORNIA
OCEAN
PROTECTION
COUNCIL



CALIFORNIA
Water Boards
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS



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¹ The [MPA Statewide Leadership Team Charter](#) outlines the roles of and nomination process for the Tribal Representatives.

Additional partners across the state will also actively contribute to the implementation of this plan and are critical to the function of the MPA Management Program⁶.

ABOUT THE MSLT WORK PLAN

Initially identified as a key task in the California Collaborative Approach: Marine Protected Areas Partnership Plan², the MSLT Work Plan is anchored in the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA)¹, the 2016 California MLPA Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas³, and other guidance documents. This Work Plan is based on the [2022 MPA Decadal Management Review Recommendations \(DMR\)](#)⁷ and builds from the ongoing activities of the [previous MSLT Work Plan \(FY21/22 - FY24/25\)](#)⁸. Key actions were identified for each of the 21 DMR recommendations relevant to the MSLT. As a key tool in directing adaptive management of the MPA Network, this MSLT Work Plan provides a road map for the State and its partners to achieve these specific key actions over a five-year period, from Fiscal Year 25/26 through Fiscal Year 29/30 (FY2025–2029).



Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 2014, the Marine Protected Area Statewide Leadership Team (MSLT) is multi-sector collaboration of various agencies and organizations with jurisdictions and interests in advancing the goals of California’s Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) ¹ and adaptively managing California’s Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network. A key task in achieving this work is this guiding document – the MSLT Work Plan.

This updated Work Plan identifies key actions the MSLT members will pursue over the next five fiscal years: Fiscal Year (FY) 25/26 – 29/30. The key actions are associated with the 21 MSLT-related recommendations from the 2022 Decadal Management Review (DMR)⁷ of the MPA Network and incorporate many of the ongoing activities of the MSLT, including from the previous MSLT Work Plan (FY 21/22 – 24/25)⁸. Each key action has two or more MSLT members listed as co-leads. Co-leads will work together, and with the broader MSLT members, to achieve the key action. The DMR recommendations and corresponding key actions are organized by the four pillars of the MPA Management Program⁶:

1. **Outreach and Education:** Raise awareness of the ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural benefits of MPAs, improve understanding of regulations to increase compliance, and inspire stewardship of the MPA Network
2. **Policy and Permitting:** Ensure equitable, science-based governance of California's MPA Network through adaptive management
3. **Enforcement and Compliance:** Increase capacity and effectiveness of MPA enforcement and compliance statewide
4. **Research and Monitoring:** Develop and implement research and monitoring efforts to evaluate MPA performance and address emerging questions to inform adaptive management.

In response to the DMR and its recommendations, new key actions were developed for this MSLT work plan. The newly-developed key actions under the Outreach and Education pillar focus on improving the access and the organization of MPA outreach products and efforts for various user groups, as well as bolstering efforts to disseminate MPA research, management, and enforcement information. New discrete key actions under the Policy and Permitting pillar highlight the role of the MSLT in advancing tribal engagement and government-to-government relations in MPA management and improving partnership coordination. Additional key actions under this second pillar relate specifically to the adaptive management of the MPA Network, including applying lessons learned from the 2022 DMR, planning for the next DMR process, and identifying a pathway to approve restoration and mitigation. The new key actions to increase Enforcement and Compliance include establishing new partnerships and agreements, improving the analysis and dissemination of enforcement and judicial outcomes, and supporting trainings and coordination of allied agencies. For the Research and Monitoring pillar, the new key actions focus on expanding participation in MPA research and monitoring and integrating external factors (e.g., climate change) that may impact MPAs into research and monitoring efforts.

COMMITMENT TO MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

The MSLT is committed to a collaborative, inclusive, partnership-based approach to adaptively managing the MPA Network. The MSLT defined partner-specific roles and responsibilities within the MPA Management Program⁶ through the establishment of the [Memorandum Of Understanding for Implementation of the California Marine Life Protection Act](#)⁹.

TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

California Native American tribes are sovereign nations that have stewarded their ancestral lands and waters since time immemorial. Tribes have inherent responsibilities to continue that stewardship and inherent rights to exercise sovereign authority over their members and territory. The State of California recognizes these rights and responsibilities and maintains an important government-to-government relationship with California Native American tribes, as affirmed in state and federal law. The MSLT reaffirms and incorporates the principles outlined in [Executive Order B-10-11](#)¹⁰, [Executive Order N-15-19](#)¹¹, and Governor Newsom's [Statement of Administration Policy on Native American Ancestral Lands](#)¹², and is committed to facilitating, strengthening, and sustaining effective relationships between the State and tribes to support collaborative stewardship of the MPA Network. The MSLT is collectively committed to the following meaningful actions:

- Develop mutually beneficial agreements to advance co-management and collaborative stewardship of the MPA Network
- Develop long-term partnerships with California Native American tribes to advance shared priorities related to ocean and coastal stewardship
- Provide meaningful opportunities and adequate resources for tribes to contribute to the development of MPA policy
- Respect tribal science and Traditional Knowledges and recognize their roles in MPA monitoring and adaptive management

- Facilitate ongoing communication and information sharing between the state and tribes regarding the activities of the MSLT and the MPA Management Program⁶
- Conduct early, often, and meaningful tribal consultation and engagement regarding MPA policies

The MSLT respectfully recognizes the essential contributions of the four regional Tribal Representatives nominated and selected to serve on the MSLT. In addition to the expert guidance provided by Tribal Representatives that informs the MSLT's consensus decisions and priority setting, the State will continue to engage and consult with tribal governments and communication with tribal communities.

For purposes of this document, the terms "California Native American tribes", "tribes", and "tribal" include all federally and non-federally recognized tribes.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The MSLT is collectively committed to ongoing meaningful community engagement within the MPA Management Program⁶. The MSLT recognizes the various perspectives, interests, and rights of the people of California, including California Native American tribes, and that environmental burdens and benefits are unevenly distributed throughout communities. The MSLT aspires to identify and address these current and historical discrepancies and commits to consider how decisions may impact various California communities while undertaking existing and future projects and goals.

The members of the MSLT will work together to increase transparency, trust, support, and accountability to the engagement commitments outlined in this plan throughout the MPA Management Program⁶. The MSLT is committed to the following meaningful actions:

- Identify opportunities and reduce barriers for members of the public to provide meaningful input into MPA management decisions
- Understand the impacts of MPA management decisions and policy development on coastal communities and key stakeholder groups
- Work to expand equitable access to MPAs for all Californians
- Include and fund a variety of researchers and community partners in research and monitoring of the MPA Network
- Improve collaboration and cultivate spaces that are welcoming to all throughout the work of the MSLT
- Acknowledge the process of ongoing learning and support creating, continuing to implement, and refining these commitments in the MPA plans and policies of MSLT members
- Work with federal partners to enhance MPA science, education and outreach, and enforcement

The MSLT accepts and understands that these commitments require dedication to learn from unexpected outcomes and adapt accordingly and holds itself accountable to prioritize and uphold these commitments.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The MSLT members, either collectively or individually, successfully accomplished the following actions and outcomes from the recently completed Work Plan FY 21/22 – 24/25⁸ in the four pillars of MPA Management Program⁶.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Recognition of the MPA Network through the International Union for Conservation (IUCN) Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, as the first protected area network in the world to achieve Green List status
- Completed the outreach efforts related to the 2022 Decadal Management Review⁷ (e.g., “Ask the Researcher” web series)
- Finalized the brand identity (e.g., logo, graphics, and webpage design) for the MPA Management Program⁶
- Installed MPA signage throughout the state, including tidepool signs to address compliance issues in the rocky intertidal
- Developed a process for community-vetted translation of MPA materials and completed Spanish translations, with several other languages pending
- Conducted various outreach and education activities, including youth and subsistence fishing trips, multilingual MPA film screenings, tabling at ocean and fishing events, presentations to schools and community groups, and MPA photo contests
- Hosted a special session on lessons learned from the MPA Network implementation process at the Fifth International MPA Congress in Vancouver, Canada.
- Created three identity-based community groups (i.e. Latine, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black communities) and collated lessons learned to inform future engagement of underrepresented and underserved communities

- Developed a best practices guidance document to inform engagement, relationship building, and partnership with tribes
- Developed and disseminated outreach resources, webinars, and research projects to understand the role of MPAs in building climate resilience
- Created MPA Interpreter Reference Guides for State Park Districts and National Marine Sanctuaries

POLICY AND PERMITTING

- Completed the [2022 Decadal Management Review](#)⁷, a report which synthesized a breadth of information to understand how the MPA Network and Management Program is performing towards meeting the goals of the MLPA.
- Completed a rulemaking process through the California Fish and Game Commission (CFGC) to resolve permitting issues for maintaining structures inside state MPAs that pre-date the establishment of the Network while also maintaining the integrity of the Network
- Facilitated engagement with partners on policy processes (e.g., hosting 14 community climate forums, 14 community compliance forums, 30x30 webinar, and regulatory and management recommendations-focused meetings)

ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

- Enhanced the use and dissemination of enforcement statistics to identify enforcement hotspots (e.g., via use of the eFINS data entry system)
- Hosted trainings and symposia, including MPA enforcement trainings for allied agency officers for each coastal county, a MPA compliance symposium on how to synthesize patrol presence and effort, and trainings for judges' association about MPA regulations
- Incorporated tribal information, including traditional take methods and cultural practices, into enforcement resources for officers

- Continue to update, print, and distribute MPA reference guides for enforcement officers
- Supported the MPA District Attorney Task Force with outreach to District Attorney offices in each coastal county to share prosecutorial best practices across counties
- Created an online training for violators of MPA regulations, turning enforcement actions into educational opportunities and reducing repeat offenses

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

- Funded and convened scientific expert working groups to synthesize and deliver various 2022 Decadal Management Review⁶ products (e.g., [Climate Resilience and California's MPA Network](#)¹³, [Decadal Evaluation Working Group](#)¹⁴)
- Supported the development of the [Examining the Role of Community and Citizen Science in Marine Protected Area Implementation](#)¹⁵ report by UC Davis to inform the 2022 Decadal Management Review⁶
- Achieved a cohesive long-term ecological monitoring program by providing continuous funding across all habitats
- Funded four Climate and MPA projects to understand impacts to and resilience of habitats and species across the MPA Network
- Hosted 14 forums to discuss compliance with MPA regulations and tracked COVID-related impacts to coastal habitats



WORK PLAN KEY ACTIONS

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

DMR Recommendations ⁷	Key Actions	MSLT Member Leads
<p>07 DMR Rec: Expand targeted outreach & education materials and events to under-represented user groups</p>	<p>1) Assess current and previous efforts and identify best practices and strategies to reach underrepresented user groups</p>	<p>MPA CN, OPC, CDFW, RLF</p>
	<p>2) Develop and implement a phased approach for creating and disseminating multiple outreach products and efforts (e.g., materials, social platforms, events, ways to participate, etc.) to reach a variety of underrepresented user groups</p>	<p>State Parks, MPA CN, CDFW</p>
<p>08 DMR Rec: Evaluate the accessibility of MPAs to</p>	<p>1) Clarify scope and terms of reference with respect to accessibility, community groups, and other</p>	<p>CFGC, OPC, OST, MPA CN</p>

various community groups	important terms needed to evaluate accessibility of MPAs	
	2) Assess access-related research findings and policies to identify gaps, and to inform shared work and management actions	OST, MPA CN, CDFW
	3) Identify and align investments/programs from MSLT members to address gaps in accessibility	OPC, SLC, CCC, CDFW
15 DMR Rec: Evaluate outreach needs, assess effectiveness of resources, identify and pursue the most impactful and cost-efficient outreach tools for increasing MPA awareness & compliance	1) Identify communication needs, target audiences, effective messaging, and existing/new partnerships using behavioral science and community marketing approaches	OPC, MPA CN, OST, CDFW
	2) Align existing outreach efforts across MSLT members, including developing a repository of teacher toolkits and other curricula (e.g., Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Student (PORTS) and National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS))	MPA CN, State Parks, CDFW

<p>16 Conduct more targeted outreach to specific audiences to connect stakeholders with coastal resources and to encourage stewardship and compliance with regulations</p>	<p>1) Support outreach efforts (e.g., webinars) that highlight MPA research and management</p>	<p>MPA CN, BLM, OST</p>
	<p>2) Facilitate the participation of MSLT members in individual agency events (e.g., CCC coastal clean-ups)</p>	<p>All</p>

POLICY AND PERMITTING

DMR Recommendation ⁷	Key Actions	MSLT Member Leads
<p>01 Improve state agencies' Tribal engagement and relationship building efforts</p>	<p>1) Support the application of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Tribal Consultation Policy and Best Practices document and/or similar policies for organizations and agencies outside of CNRA</p>	<p>OPC, CDFW, MSLT Tribal Representatives</p>
<p>02 Create a clear pathway to Tribal MPA management</p>	<p>1) Support the implementation of the upcoming CNRA Tribal Stewardship Strategy and other efforts to establish co-management and collaborative stewardship pathways</p>	<p>All</p>
	<p>2) Identify and address capacity needs and internal barriers for state agencies and tribal governments</p>	<p>CDFW, MSLT Tribal Representatives</p>

	3) Support the development of a definition of Tribal Subsistence Harvest and implement throughout the MPA Network	OPC, CFGC, CDFW, MSLT Tribal Representatives
04 Apply what is learned from the first DMR to support proposed changes to the MPA Network and Management program	1) Summarize and distribute the lessons learned from the DMR process and the information gaps for adaptive management decision-making	CDFW, CFGC, RLF, MPA CN
	2) Summarize and distribute the suite of MPA Network adaptive management pathways (i.e., administrative, policy, and regulatory and non-regulatory options) to communicate how the public can engage with MPA management	CDFW, MPA CN, CFGC, OPC
	3) Enhance access to MPA data through tool and visualizations development to support decision-making and manage expectations	OPC, CDFW

	4) Use the lessons learned to define the scope, analyses needed, report components, and development process for the next DMR	CDFW, OPC, CFGC
09 Continue to coordinate and collaborate with OPC and other agencies on California's ocean and coastal priorities to enhance coastal biodiversity, climate resiliency, human access and use, and a sustainable blue economy	1) Synthesize MPA-focused recommendations and actions outlined in existing state action plans and reports that focus on coastal biodiversity, climate resiliency, human access and use, and a sustainable blue economy	SWRCB, SLC, CFGC, OPC
	2) Implement MSLT subgroups centered on these priority focal areas to strengthen collaborative action, interagency coordination, information sharing, and engagement opportunities	All
10 Improve partnership coordination across the four pillars of the MPA Management Program ⁶	1) Develop a 'map' of overlapping MPA-related programs, jurisdictions (permitting authority), and agency points of contact to assist staff with external and internal coordination	BLM, SLC, CCC

	<p>2) Identify and implement strategies to improve knowledge gathering and sharing across MSLT members</p>	<p>All</p>
	<p>3) Continue to add representatives to the MSLT as partnerships expand</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>18 Utilize OPC's Restoration and Mitigation Policy to develop a framework to evaluate and approve appropriate restoration and mitigation actions within MPAs and MMAs</p>	<p>1) Identify circumstances under which restoration would be appropriate to consider in an MPA and the types of MPAs in which restoration may be considered</p>	<p>CDFW, CFGC, OST, OPC, CCC</p>
	<p>2) Develop a structured decision-making approach for case-by-case determinations regarding restoration in MPAs</p>	<p>CDFW, OPC, CFGC, CCC</p>
	<p>3) Determine appropriate permitting pathways, assess capacity challenges, and fund gaps to ensure efficient permitting</p>	<p>CDFW, OPC, CCC</p>

<p>24 Work with CFGC and partners to better incorporate marine cultural heritage into the design of the MPA Network</p>	<p>1) Assess opportunities to improve protection of cultural heritage sites</p>	<p>FGC, State Parks</p>
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ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

DMR Recommendation ⁷	Key Actions	MSLT Member Leads
<p>19 Create and implement a cohesive and actionable MPA enforcement plan</p>	<p>1) Identify MPA enforcement gaps and key threats to establish new key partners, roles, and enforcement agreements with MSLT members and tribes</p>	<p>CDFW, MPA CN, State Parks</p>
	<p>2) Continue to support enforcement and compliance training, outlets, and information for allied agencies and partners</p>	<p>CDFW, MPA CN, OPC, RLF</p>
	<p>3) Support the improvement of measurements, metrics, and dissemination of enforcement actions outcomes for CDFW and allied agencies</p>	<p>CDFW, MPA CN, OPC, NOAA ONMS WCR</p>

<p>20 Increase enforcement capacity</p>	<p>1) Identify funding needs and gaps to improve enforcement and compliance capacities, including support for allied agencies</p>	<p>CDFW, MPA CN, OPC, State Parks</p>
<p>22 Increase information gathering regarding MPA violation prosecutions and judicial outcomes</p>	<p>1) Disseminate information on MPA prosecutorial tools and programs (e.g., California Online Ocean Regulations Training) to increase court officer awareness</p>	<p>CDFW, MPA CN</p>
	<p>2) Support projects that collect data and highlight MPA judicial outcomes to improve compliance</p>	<p>CDFW, MPA CN, NOAA ONMS WCR</p>

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

DMR Recommendation ⁷	Key Actions	MSLT Member Leads
<p>03 Build Tribal capacity to participate in MPA management activities</p>	<p>1) Assess funding and training opportunities to continue to support tribal capacity</p>	<p>OPC, MSLT Tribal Representatives</p>
	<p>2) Support tribally-led MPA monitoring and pursue collaborative opportunities to incorporate tribally-led research and monitoring efforts into the long-term MPA monitoring program</p>	<p>OPC, CDFW, MSLT Tribal Representatives</p>
<p>06 Include and fund more diverse researchers and stakeholders in research and monitoring projects that directly contribute to the MPA Monitoring Program</p>	<p>1) Identify current composition of research partners, and the barriers to and opportunities for expanding participation in MPA research and monitoring</p>	<p>OPC, CDFW</p>

<p>12 Invest in improving understanding of the human dimensions of MPAs and develop a human dimensions working group and research agenda</p>	<p>1) Disseminate final outcomes of Social Science Working Group to develop a shared understanding around current recommendations/best practices for social science research in MPAs</p>	<p>OPC, OPC, CDFW</p>
	<p>2) Identify investments to improve and fill gaps in social science research and monitoring for MPA management</p>	<p>OPC, CDFW, OST</p>
<p>14 Develop a comprehensive community science strategy for MPAs and better utilize community science to supplement core monitoring programs</p>	<p>1) Provide input on a statewide framing of community science efforts and data use that will be established in the upcoming OPC Community Science Strategy</p>	<p>OPC, RLF</p>
	<p>2) Coordinate on the development of a shared hub for community science projects and resources underway by/with MSLT members</p>	<p>OPC, BLM</p>

<p>25 Develop and implement climate change research and monitoring priorities and metrics for California's MPA Network</p>	<p>1) Identify overlap and gaps in climate monitoring efforts across MSLT member agencies</p>	<p>OPC, SLC</p>
<p>28 Further integrate influencing factors into ecological and human study designs and interpretations of MPA performance</p>	<p>1) Identify gaps and investment needs in research and monitoring efforts on external (negative and positive) influencing factors that may impact MPAs (e.g., wildfires; ocean acidification; hypoxia; marine heat waves; water quality; stewardship; outreach & education)</p>	<p>SWRCB, OPC</p>
	<p>2) Update the MPA Monitoring Action Plan to reflect knowledge gaps and emerging monitoring priorities</p>	<p>OPC, CDFW</p>

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