



California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

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To: South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (SCRSG)
From: MLPA Initiative Staff
Subject: Evaluation Methods for Existing MPAs and South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group MPA Proposals Relative to MLPA Goal 3
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Goal 3 of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) is:

“To improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems that are subject to minimal human disturbance, and to manage these uses in a manner consistent with protecting biodiversity.”

MLPA Initiative and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) staff will evaluate existing MPAs (Proposal 0), as well as MLPA South Coast Regional Stakeholder Group (SCRSG) marine protected area (MPA) proposals for their fulfillment of Goal 3 of the MLPA.

Access is a key issue for recreational, education and study opportunities; the evaluation focuses on proximity of MPAs to access points, boat and kayak launches sites, state parks adjacent to the ocean, and marine research institutions. The number of long-term monitoring sites inside MPAs and the replication of habitats within MPAs were also tabulated.

Seven parameters will be used to evaluate MPA proposals relative to Goal 3:

1. Coastal access points within and near proposed MPAs.
2. Boat and kayak launch sites within or near proposed MPAs.
3. Ports and harbors within given distances of proposed MPAs.
4. California State Parks located adjacent to MPA boundaries.
5. Major marine research and educational institutions within given distances of proposed MPAs
6. Long-term marine research monitoring sites located within proposed MPAs.
7. Replication of habitats within the study region.

Two additional evaluations that take Goal 3 of the MLPA into consideration are:

- The California Department of Fish and Game's feasibility analysis
- The Ecotrust evaluation of potential impacts to areas of importance to recreational fishing modes

Methodology

MLPA Initiative and DFG staff will use simple metrics and the best readily available geographic information system (GIS) data to evaluate the extent to which MPA proposals address Goal 3 of the MLPA. This evaluation will compare MPA proposals relative to one another and to the existing MPAs (Proposal 0).

Evaluation of recreational opportunities focuses on accessibility of different types of MPAs, specifically:

- *Coastal access points within and near proposed MPAs.* In total, there are 404 access points that are mapped in the MLPA South Coast Study Region. Existing data on access points come from the California Coastal Access Guide. For this parameter, it is evaluated to determine the number of access points located inside MPA boundaries or within 2 miles for proposed MPAs with: a) very high level of protection (LOP), b) high and moderate high LOP, and c) all levels of protection. Only shoreline MPAs will be considered in the evaluation of access. Access points that are within the border of a MPA and within 2 miles of another MPA are only counted once.
- *Boat and kayak launch sites within or near proposed MPAs.* There are 116 sites that are mapped in the study region and they include: boat ramps, kayak launch sites, and boat launch sites. Launch sites will be counted if located inside MPA boundaries, within 2 miles, or within 2-5 miles of proposed MPAs. This parameter is also evaluated for proposed MPAs with: a) very high level of protection (LOP), b) high and moderate high LOP, and c) all levels of protection. The distance of 5 miles reflects potential use of MPAs by users with small water craft.
- *Ports and harbors within given distances of proposed MPAs.* Eighteen ports and harbors exist in the study region. Each proposed MPA will be evaluated to determine the number of ports and harbors: within 0-5 miles, 5-15 miles, or 15-50 miles. Proposed MPAs are separated out by those with: a) very high level of protection (LOP), b) high and moderate high LOP, and c) all levels of protection.
- *California State Parks located adjacent to MPA boundaries.* There are thirty-two state parks located on the coast adjacent to the Pacific Ocean in the south coast study region. The information is provided by California State Parks with individual park information from the various districts in the region. State parks will be counted if they intersect (are adjacent to) onshore MPAs and their associated boundaries. This parameter is also evaluated for proposed MPAs with: a) very high level of protection (LOP), b) high and moderate high LOP, and c) all levels of protection. In addition to providing recreational opportunities, these parks also provide one or more educational opportunities.

Evaluation of educational and study opportunities focuses on:

- *Major marine research and educational institutions within given distances of proposed MPAs.* The evaluation is limited to the major research and educational institutions in the region and there are 49 in total. These institutions include: aquariums, research and

educational institutes, education only institutes, and research only institutes. For this parameter, it is determined how many institutes are within 15 miles or within 15-50 miles of proposed MPAs by the following level of protections: a) very high, b) high and moderate high, and c) all levels of protection.

- *California State Parks (with educational components) located adjacent to proposed MPAs.* There are thirty-two state parks located on the coast adjacent to the Pacific Ocean in the south coast study region. State parks will be counted if they intersect (are adjacent to) onshore MPAs and their associated boundaries. This parameter is evaluated for proposed MPAs with: a) very high level of protection (LOP), b) high and moderate high LOP, and c) all levels of protection. These parks also provide one or more recreational opportunities.
- *Long term marine research monitoring sites located within proposed MPAs.* This parameter considers the key, long-term monitoring sites in the study region and includes nearly 1,400 sites. This parameter is evaluated for the number of monitoring sites located within proposed MPAs with: a) very high level of protection, b) high and moderate high LOP, and c) all levels of protection.
- *Replication of habitats within the study region.* There are sixteen habitats under consideration and they include: sandy beaches, rocky shore, surfgrass, soft substrate (0-30 meters), soft substrate (30-100 meters), soft substrate (100-200 meters), soft substrate (200-3000 meters), hard substrate (0-30 meters), hard substrate (30-100 meters), hard substrate (100-200 meters), hard substrate (200-3000 meters), kelp, estuary, coastal marsh, tidal flats, and eelgrass. A habitat is considered to be present within a MPA if at least a critical amount of that habitat is present, based on the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) evaluation methods. The number of habitat replicates is counted within a MPA proposal. Habitat replication will be considered for proposed MPAs at a) very high, b) high or moderate-high level of protection, and c) all levels of protection.