

December 6, 2007
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Marine Life Protection Act Announces Move to Southern California

State's Proactive Approach to Marine Resource Protection Hailed

SAN DIEGO – California Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman announced today the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative will next move to the southern region of the State. This announcement begins the third of five phases of the State's effort to protect California's ecologically important coastal habitats and marine life. San Diego Coastkeeper, a water pollution watchdog group involved in the coastal protection effort, expressed appreciation for the dedication of both Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Secretary of Resources Mike Chrisman to a successful MLPA process.

"Just as the national parks movement would not have happened without Teddy Roosevelt's leadership, California's effort to create underwater parks is a result of strong leadership and support from local communities and the State," said Bruce Reznik, Executive Director of San Diego Coastkeeper. "We look forward to working to get this unprecedented, forward-thinking initiative in place to protect our valuable marine resources for the benefit of future generations of Californians, be they recreational fishermen, divers, boaters or others who value a healthy ocean."

Signed into law in 1999, the MLPA seeks to develop a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) along the entire California coastline. The first region to undergo the process was the Central coast from Point Conception near Santa Barbara to Half Moon Bay. After several years of planning, a landmark marine protected area plan went into effect on September 21, 2007 with the unanimous adoption of 29 MPAs, encompassing 18% (204 sq. miles) of the central coast. Currently proposals are being drafted for protected areas in the North Central Coast (Half Moon Bay to Point Arena in Mendocino County) as part of the second phase in the MLPA Initiative; completion of this phase is scheduled by 2009.

“Marine protected areas and fully protected marine reserves are a common sense way to help marine life recover from the increasing and varied threats facing our oceans in this century,” said Kate Hanley, Director of the Marine Conservation Campaign for Coastkeeper. “When safe havens are set aside for marine life to recover, scientific studies show certain species can rebound quite quickly, while others become more stable, increasing the chance for a more sustainable ocean heritage for future Californians.”

This initiative to protect southern California’s ocean will take shape over the next few years, and will seek the advice of public policy advisors, marine scientists, economists, fishermen, conservationists and community members through a fair and inclusive process that will ensure that all views are heard. The network of marine protected areas that will be designed and implemented along California's coast will use the best science available, avoid economic impacts, and legally must meet the objectives of the MLPA and protect the richness of California's marine heritage.

The bipartisan support of the first phase of the MLPA Initiative, and the continued collaboration of the second phase, has been highly dependent upon the active involvement of stakeholders and the general public in a variety of ways, including a regional stakeholder group, workshops, public meetings, and providing input on documents and MPA plans as they develop. This next phase in the southern region will again afford many opportunities for public involvement. San Diego Coastkeeper and other community groups look forward to working with various regional constituencies to involve stakeholders in this process.

For more information about the MLPA Initiative and opportunities for involvement, please visit the initiative website at www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa.

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Founded in 1995, San Diego Coastkeeper protects the region’s bays, beaches, watersheds and ocean for the people and wildlife that depend on them. We balance community outreach, education and advocacy to promote stewardship of clean water and a healthy coastal ecosystem.