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Fish and Game Commission



MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE CA Fish and Game Commission

Committee Chairs: Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Sutton

Meeting Summary

August 10, 2012

Crowne Plaza Hotel, San Miguel B Room
450 East Harbor Blvd. Ventura, CA 93001

Summary of MRC Recommendations:

- Forage Policy
 - Recommend Commission consider adoption of the draft forage policy dated August 10, 2012 that reflects the changes made at the MRC meeting.
- Items previously before the MRC
 - Recommend that staff develop a regulatory package, with assistance from the Department, to increase the return rate of lobster report cards.

Meeting Summary

1. Introductions

Commissioners Rogers and Sutton convened the subcommittee meeting with self-introductions from staff and attendees and an explanation of the ground rules for the meeting.

2. Informational updates

a. California Department of Fish and Game

Updates on activities within the Department's Marine Region were provided by Marci Yaremko, Becky Ota, Steve Wertz, and Deb Wilson-Vandenberg.

- The Department is working to implement the recommendations developed by the Dungeness Crab Task Force convened under SB 369 (Evans). Pursuant to CEQA, the Department has prepared a draft Initial Study to Adopt a Negative Declaration for the implementation of the Dungeness Crab Trap Limit Program. The comment period is open until September 10, 2012 and the program is intended to take effect by the 2013-2014 Dungeness crab season. More details are available at: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/invertebrate/traplimit_nd.asp.
- Online harvest reporting for some big game cards became available on July 1, 2012. It is anticipated online harvest reporting will be available for abalone, lobster, steelhead, salmon and sturgeon in early 2013.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service has released a report evaluating California hatchery programs in the Klamath, Trinity and Central Valley Basins. The goal of the hatchery program review was to ensure that anadromous hatchery programs in California are managed to help recover and conserve naturally spawning salmon and steelhead populations and support sustainable fisheries with little or no deleterious consequence to natural populations. The Department will be taking a close look at all recommendations and will continue to work with Commission staff to put together a panel for the full Commission in the coming months. More details of the report can be found at the California Hatchery Review Project website at: <http://cahatcheryreview.com/>.
- The Department has worked with the Ocean Science Trust to convene a workgroup to develop comprehensive criteria for the issuance of scientific collecting permits in marine protected areas. The group is working on a timeline to bring an update and possible recommendations to the MRC in approximately six months. Discussion focused on the potential need for additional regulations to implement the recommendations of the work group and how this effort might help inform the issuance of the scientific collecting permit for the proposed seismic surveys in the Pt. Buchon State Marine Reserve and State Marine Conservation Area. Discussion also highlighted the need to take into account the impacts on docent groups and other educational programs working in Marine Protected Areas.
- The Department will be participating in a workgroup convened by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to review the south of Humbug Mountain Pacific halibut fishery. The workgroup will be preparing a report that is to be completed by the briefing

book deadline for the next Council meeting of August 23. The Department will continue to keep the Commission informed.

- The Department is working on finishing updates to the existing appendices of the MLPA Master Plan to reflect the addition of regulations in the south and north coast study regions for Commission consideration in the coming months. It was proposed that the main body of the Master Plan will be discussed at the State of the Central Coast Symposium to be held in February 2013 in Monterey.

b. California Ocean Protection Council

Catherine Kuhlman, Deputy Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Matters, provided a summary of her background, role as Deputy Secretary, and vision for the Oceans Program at the Resources Agency. The Oceans Program and Ocean Protection Council will continue to work to provide an interface between different government entities and the public to improve dialog, coordination, and science to inform decisions.

3. Update: California spiny lobster Fishery Management Plan

Kristine Barsky, Lobster FMP Project Coordinator, provided an update on the progress of the FMP. An Advisory Committee consisting of 12 members and 6 alternates has been formed to involve all constituencies, and a number of contractors have been hired. The Advisory Committee has completed two of the four scheduled meetings in 2012 and the low return rate for recreational lobster report cards has emerged as one of the primary concerns for the advisory committee. A timeline was presented anticipating a draft FMP for public and scientific review in 2014. Additional details can be found at the lobster FMP website at:

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/lobsterfmp/>. Discussion focused on the benefits of including Law Enforcement Division in the FMP process from the beginning, and the development of a regulatory package to increase report card return rates.

4. Update: Groundfish

Joanna Grebel, Sr. Environmental Scientist with the Department's Marine Region, provided an update on recreational groundfish. The update provided a preview of items that will be presented to the full Commission at its October meeting to conform with federal actions as well as a briefing on the Department's work on barotrauma. There has been little change in the status of most overfished stocks (yelloweye, canary and cowcod) resulting in status quo for depths and seasons for the 2013/2014 season with two exceptions. Because of a small increase in the recreational yelloweye harvest guideline, the season will increase slightly to run through Labor Day in the Mendocino Area. Additionally, because of recent

increases in interaction rates with cowcod in Southern California, the depth restriction in the southern area will be constrained from 60 fm to 50 fm to reduce cowcod encounters.

The most recent assessment for bocaccio was more optimistic, and will allow for additional recreational fishing opportunities that include an increase in bag limit from two to three fish and removal of the size limit. There will also be options for retention of shelf rockfish in the Cowcod Conservation area in depths shallower than 20 fm.

The Department is continuing to engage in studies to evaluate the efficacy and increase the use of descending devices to minimize mortality of groundfish due to barotrauma. The Department is working with the Council's Groundfish Management Team to develop ways to provide survivorship credits for yelloweye and cowcod, the two most constraining species, for incorporation in 2013.

5. Update: MPA Monitoring Enterprise

Dr. Liz Whiteman, Program Director, and Dr. Madhavi Colton, Associate Scientist, at the MPA Monitoring Enterprise provided an update on their activities throughout the state. Monitoring in the south coast is underway and planning for the development of the north coast monitoring plan is commenced the week of August 13-16 with a series of informational meetings on the north coast.

The Monitoring Enterprise announced the launch of OceanSpaces, a new community platform where interested parties can access and share information, learn about marine ecosystems, and access MPA monitoring data. OceanSpaces can be accessed on the web at: <http://oceanspaces.org/>.

The central coast baseline program was established to provide an ecological and socio-economic benchmark against which future MPA performance can be measured. The results of the baseline program will be shared through OceanSpaces, a summary report, and at the State of the Central Coast Symposium in Monterey, February 27 – March 1.

6. Update and Discussion: Planning for the central coast MPA symposium

Commission, Department and Monitoring Enterprise staff provided a brief update on the planning for State of the California Central Coast symposium in Monterey, February 27 – March 1 (www.StateoftheCACoast.org). At this symposium, resource managers, policy makers, stakeholders and scientists will reflect on the first five years of marine protected area monitoring and management in California's Central Coast region. The MRC was briefed on the proposed governance and enforcement sections that are proposed to focus on the past, present,

and future for the design, implementation and adaptive management of the central coast MPAs.

Discussion focused on the MRC Co-Chairs interest in participating in the symposium and commitment to ongoing adaptive management of the State's network of marine protected areas.

7. Update and Discussion: Items previously before the MRC

Dr. Craig Shuman, Marine Advisor for the Commission, provided an update on items previously before the MRC:

- Commission and Department staff are responding to the request from the Lobster Advisory Committee and are exploring options to develop a regulatory package to increase return rates for lobster report cards. It is anticipated that a regulatory package will be brought to the Commission before the end of the year to initiate the regulatory process.
- Commission staff are coordinating with Department staff to continue to think about fees and are tracking legislation that would modify the structure used to establish fees for commercial fisheries.
- Commission and Department staff continue to engage in discussions with the California Abalone Marketing Association to explore the viability of an experimental fishery for red abalone at San Miguel Island. After discussion, the MRC requested that staff work with the Department to prepare a detailed presentation on the issues for an upcoming meeting of the MRC.

8. Discussion: Components of effective Commission policies

Dr. Craig Shuman, Marine Advisor for the Commission, provided a summary of the Commission's existing policies and recommended a revised approach to policy formation. Discussion focused on developing policies that are visionary and broad, address the causes, not the symptoms of a problem, and are not prescriptive.

9. Discussion: Development of Commission policy on forage species

Dr. Craig Shuman, Marine Advisor for the Commission, presented the text of the draft policy on forage species that was developed by the ad-hoc committee composed of Commission and Department staff and representatives from industry and the environmental community. After discussion and edits to the draft text, the MRC finalized a draft that will be recommended to the full Commission for adoption later this year.

10. Meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm