

AGENDA
Marine Interests Group Working Committee
3:00 - 6:00 p.m., Friday, November 7
Morro Bay Community Center, 1001 Kennedy Way

Objectives for Meeting

- * Prioritize suggested actions to clarify desired activities
- * Review potential vehicles or options to accomplish them
- * Identify potential preferred options through a straw poll
- * Select a preferred option and one or more acceptable back up options

Here are some notes about the session.

1. Prioritize Suggested Actions

Working Committee members will review the attached draft list of suggested actions and provide a preliminary assessment of which ones have the highest priority for action. [See the list that follows.]

2. Discuss Negatives and Positives of Potential Options to Enhance and Sustain the Marine Resources

This is a summary of the range of options that the Working Committee developed at its October 29 meeting. [The list at the end of this email and also in the attached file provides some additional description of each option.]

- a. Maintain status quo (no action)
- b. Conduct periodic meetings of Marine Interests Group with agencies and interested parties.
- c. Expand Morro Bay National Estuary Program to include marine issues in its non-regulatory model.
- d. Create an independent non-regulatory group (like MBNEP, but separate) to address marine issues.
- e. Propose extension of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to the remainder of San Luis Obispo County.
- f. Propose creation of a new National Marine Sanctuary for the San Luis Obispo County area.
- g. Advocate a Marine Protected Area (no-take zone) for a portion of the San Luis Obispo County Coast.

3. Identify Any New Options (and review as above)

4. Identify Potential Preferred Options through a Straw Ballot

Each Working Committee member at the meeting will receive a card on which to identify what she or he believes is the best option to fulfill the Shared Hopes for the future of the marine resources AND any other options that would be acceptable and help fulfill the Shared Hopes (although not as effectively as what she or he listed as the best option).

5. Discuss the Results and Select a Preferred Option and One or More Acceptable Options

6. Review Next Steps (for meeting at 6-9 p.m., Wednesday, November 19, MB Community Center)

- a. Begin to check out the means of implementing the preferred option and other acceptable options.
- b. Develop preliminary plans and desired milestones for the priority action items.
- c. Review and revise the summary material on what the Committee has learned and suggested actions.
- d. Discuss opportunities to disseminate the information and gain further public comment.
- e. Prepare a summary presentation with the following components:
 - Objectives of the Marine Interests Group
 - Working Committee Members and ex-officio support
 - Shared Hopes for the Future of the Marine Resources
 - Key Workshops and Activities
 - Collaborative Research Project Results
 - What the Committee Has Learned
 - Suggested Actions and Preliminary Priorities
 - Preferred Options for Supporting the Marine Resources
 - Additional Public Comments
 - Suggested Next Steps and Desired Milestones

Draft Summary for the Marine Interests Group of What the Working Committee Has Learned and Suggested Actions

What follows is a rough draft of what appeared to be the areas that had broad agreement concerning Information and Awareness, Health of the Ecosystem, Preservation of the Fishing Community, and Management of the Resources. [The categories of Shared Hopes the Working Committee developed at the outset of its work. See www.mbnep.org/mig.]

Shared Hopes for Information and Awareness [from the Committee's original work]

- Establish a good baseline of data to determine necessary and desirable actions.
- Learn the status of the resources and then determine what needs help. Bring the best fisheries and scientific resources to the task and provide accurate information to policy makers.
- Enhance public awareness and understanding of the resources with accurate information and provide educational outreach programs.

What the Committee Has Learned

1. The San Luis Obispo County marine resources have special value. This area is a unique transition zone geologically, oceanographically, and biologically between the colder northern waters and warmer southern currents. Currently available data show a high degree of diversity and richness of species assemblages. For example, the rocky shoreline benches found in this area provide favorable conditions for a high diversity of intertidal life.
2. Detailed data about the health of the species within this area are limited. The extrapolation of data from other areas in an attempt to fill this local void raises concerns about accuracy and credibility.
3. Naturally occurring variability like changing cycles in water temperature, appear to have major effects that can sometimes mask or outweigh human activities. There is a need to understand these better.
4. Significant dynamics exist among species (e.g. interactions among marine mammals, fish, and people) that are not broadly understood and perhaps are not being managed effectively.
5. Some key monitoring programs (e.g. Mussel Watch) have lost funding and raise concerns about gaps in the baseline and trend data needed to understand what's happening with the resources and how to manage them.

6. The broad stakeholder structure that the Marine Interests Group has provided is a valuable way to learn about the resources from a wide range of perspectives.
7. The collaborative research project approach is desirable. There is demonstrated interest and support from fishermen, scientists, and environmental groups to work together to develop a better understanding of the resources. It appears to be a good approach to get things done.

Suggested Actions

1. Complete the inventory of public and private agencies and their activities.
[currently underway]
2. Compile existing data and identify currently planned research programs.
3. Develop good baseline data on physical processes (tides, geological, weather, etc.) and biology (fish other vertebrates and invertebrates) with an agreed upon protocol to analyze the information in order to resolve key issues.
4. Examine how this area is connected with other areas in order to manage the resources appropriately. For example, is this area a haven for certain species or a seeding population for other areas?
5. Study regime changes further and their interrelationships with human impacts to improve understanding and management strategies.
6. Gather and analyze socio-economic data on the marine resources and uses (fisheries, tourism, recreation, etc.) in order to understand the cost-benefit of resource use.
7. Enhance public education to build understanding of the resources and to support good stewardship. Solicit input from the public on the importance of the resources to gain clearer direction on desirable actions.
8. Establish a process for information exchange among agencies and other interested parties to address the items above.

Shared Hopes for the Health of the Ecosystem [from the Committee's original work]

- Ensure a clean ocean to sustain the fisheries for future generations and to serve food, sport, and ecosystem health interests. Good water quality is like a good blood supply. It's the cornerstone of marine resources.
- Preserve sensitive areas and biological resources to protect habitat, sustain diversity, and serve the public interest.

- Increase the quality and quantity of marine resources consistent with what the habitat can sustain in a balanced way.

What the Committee Has Learned

1. The area has remained relatively clean and habitats are in pretty good shape, which makes it important to protect the resources.
2. There is a sensitive and viable intertidal area along the San Luis Obispo Coast (e.g. black abalone).
3. Some species are thriving (e.g. sea lions) and some are not (e.g. withering foot abalone).
4. Some indicators (e.g. observations by recreational fishermen) suggest healthy fish populations in this area.
5. Current and potential sources of pollution (e.g. agricultural runoff or potential dumping) threaten the health and diversity of the resources. Terrestrial impacts can have important consequences for the marine environment and need monitoring. The Farm Bureau and landowners are increasing their awareness of impacts on watersheds and marine resources. Point source pollution impacts remain unclear and agencies need to coordinate their activities.
6. Pollution sources from the South pose a potential risk to this area via transport with the seasonal southern current.
7. It's a process to understand what a healthy ecosystem means (e.g. the balance among species). This is a challenging issue. There is a lack of clarity about measures, protocols, and conclusions concerning health of the ecosystem.
8. Decisions about the health of the ecosystem get made at a distance. There's a need for a local voice.

Suggested Actions

1. Enhance public awareness to take proactive action to prevent adverse impacts.
2. Develop and agree upon a set of indicators for a healthy ecosystem and means of measuring and tracking them. Establish clear protocols for the acquisition and use of data (including data from participant-providers). Display trends of resources over time (e.g. mammals, fish, etc.) and identify linkages with policy actions.
3. Nurture the continued existence of a diverse stakeholder group to identify issues, offer solutions, and, overall, be a good steward of the resources.

4. Encourage or require regular local meetings of regulatory agencies.
5. Explore prospects of regulatory management on a more localized ecosystem basis (e.g. Point Sur to Point Purisima).
6. Examine the unintended consequences of regulation—e.g. concentration of fishing in nearshore area and impact on fish stocks.
7. Reassess marine mammal populations, their effects on land and marine resources, and the laws and policies to manage these species in balance with other species.

Shared Hopes for Preservation of the Fishing Community (from original work)

- Preserve a lifestyle and culture around sustainable fisheries that reflects that the ocean is a good, healthy place to be and can provide a good sport and quality family experience.
- Provide local access to seafood and promote local providers.

What the Committee Has Learned

1. There is broad support for sustainable fisheries. People want to see real fishing communities.
2. Fishing and the desire to fish (recreationally and commercially) have deep cultural roots.
3. Studies have not kept up with the needs for regulatory management. Collaborative oversight may help improve commitment to better information and its use.
4. Multiple agencies (federal and state) regulate fisheries and sometimes lack coordination.
5. Controversy continues over what are good data.
6. Widely varying data about fish stocks have caused disruptive regulatory swings with severe effects on the fishing community.
7. Collaborative research is a good approach to gathering data, building understanding among stakeholders, and encouraging use of the information.
8. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary has not directly impacted fishing regulation.

9. Fishing community requires support facilities and infrastructure, including preservation of harbor facilities (e.g. dredging), and the current permitting process is cumbersome.
10. There is limited socio-economic data about the local fishing community and its role in the economy.

Suggested Actions

1. Review models of regulation and self-regulation that work elsewhere (e.g. Maine lobster fishery, New Zealand, etc.) for possible application in this area.
2. Clarify definition of good data and ways to obtain and evaluate them. Clarify the relative impacts of natural phenomena and human actions.
3. Apply a precautionary approach to managing the resource while gathering better data.
4. Develop a focused collaborative research program with an overall plan, objectives, and milestones.
5. Assess minimum fishing infrastructure needs and ways to maintain them.
6. Develop more predictable and cost-effective dredge spoils policies.
7. Support fishing community with education and marketing opportunities (e.g. educate public on wild vs. farmed salmon).

Shared Hopes for the Management of the Resources (from original work)

- Manage the marine resources to be sustainable with public access and use (both consumptive and non-consumptive) while protecting from damaging uses.
- Exercise good stewardship in order to ensure the widest compatibility and use of resources.
- Streamline and enhance the effectiveness of management with better coordination and communication among regulatory agencies.

What the Committee Has Learned

1. Current management is fragmented, uncoordinated, not sufficiently effective, and not sufficiently locally based. Agencies are evolving and showing some improvement.
2. Abrupt, drastic changes in regulation can have negative results (e.g. rock cod closure).

3. Managers of regulatory agencies don't get together regularly to coordinate activities.
4. Collaborative approach among stakeholders is key.
5. A grassroots initiative may be needed to get parties together and establish priorities.
6. Multiple issues and multiple facets need to be considered (e.g. fisheries, intertidal areas, and streams) to manage the ecosystem effectively.

Suggested Actions

1. Complete an inventory of stakeholders and their activities.
2. Establish a venue with an agenda for regular meetings to review events, research news, planned management activities, and funding resources for collaboration. Encourage or require agency direct participation or written reports.
3. Continue work with NOAA (through MBNMS) for mapping of resources and other data collection efforts.
4. Support sustainable funding for research.
5. Develop a program for San Luis Obispo County marine research, education, conservation, enhancement, and coordination with funding to implement it.

Potential Options for Pursuing Desired Actions

a. Maintain status quo (no action).

Leave regulatory and stewardship activities in the hands of current agencies and interested parties to pursue through existing vehicles.

b. Conduct periodic meetings of Marine Interests Group with agencies and interested parties.

Continue collaborative research and convene agencies and other interested parties in the San Luis Obispo County area on a periodic basis to discuss the resources.

c. Expand Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) to include marine issues in its non-regulatory model.

Request that MBNEP develop programs and obtain funding to address marine issues in the areas of research, education, fisheries, conservation, and other areas of broad interest.

d. Create an independent non-regulatory group (like MBNEP, but separate) to address marine issues.

Establish a new group (e.g. Central Coast Conservancy) to develop programs and obtain funding to address marine issues in the areas of research, education, fisheries, conservation, and other areas of broad interest.

e. Propose extension of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) to the remainder of San Luis Obispo County.

Request that NOAA extend the MBNMS to include the remainder of the San Luis Obispo County Coast. Include the Marine Interests Group format as an advisory group for the southern portion of the Sanctuary.

f. Propose creation of a new National Marine Sanctuary for the San Luis Obispo County area.

Request that NOAA create a new National Marine Sanctuary for the San Luis Obispo County area.

g. Advocate a Marine Protected Area (no-take zone) for a portion of the San Luis Obispo County Coast.

Request that California Dept. of Fish and Game or NMFS establish a no-take zone for some portion of the San Luis Obispo County Coast. This would receive consideration through the established processes for identification and creation of marine protected areas.

Other suggestions:

1. Consider supporting an Ocean Sanctuary (a statewide effort to restrict pollution).
2. Lobby for legislation to fund grassroots efforts to address issues and fund consensus projects.
3. Seek collaborative funding from multiple interests to pursue projects where there is broad support.