

Marine Interests Group Working Committee Identifies Hopes for Future of Marine Resources and Key Issues

*Summary Minutes from Thursday, February 27, 2003
and subsequent subcommittee meetings*

Hopes for the Future of the Marine Resources

The Working Committee members discussed their hopes for the future of the marine resources. A subcommittee of Matt Fleming, Hugh Thomas, and Dave Rymal agreed to review the results and prepare a summary of the broadly held shared hopes among the full Committee membership. After meeting and further discussion, they prepared the following list, which the full Committee has adopted:

Shared Hopes for the Future of the Marine Resources Along San Luis Obispo County

Information and Awareness

- 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.

Health of the Ecosystem

- 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.

Preservation of the Fishing Community

- 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.

Management of the Resources

- 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.

Issues and Information Requests

All Committee members wrote issues and information requests that they feel require attention to fulfill the group's Mission. A subcommittee with Dave Sears, Barry Cohen, Dean Wendt, Pam Heatherington, Mike Multari, Marla Morrissey, and Hugh Thomas met with Greg Haas, Sandy Agalos, and Teresa Martinez to review all of the issues and identify potential federal and state officials as well as fishermen, scientists, and others to address them. They completed the listing of issues presented at the end of these minutes. They also made the following recommendations:

1. Range of issues exceeds what could be presented in one workshop.
2. Working Committee needs in-depth discussions with key agencies and experts.
3. Set up workshops for the Working Committee with public notice and opportunities for public to participate.
4. Three workshops of three hours each appear desirable:

a. Status of the Marine Resources (overview of trends, issues, research) and Water Quality

possible speakers:

John Pearse (professor emeritus, UCSC)

Ann Walton (researcher on MBNMS and Channel Islands)

Rick Rayburn (State Parks) on near shore issues

Bob Hardy (CDF&G, retired)

Steve Gaines (UCSB)

Bob Warner (UCSB)

Pete Riamondi (UCSC)

Karen Worcester, RWQCB

Mussel Watch

b. Fisheries

possible speakers:
Historical perspective (archaeological information on resources) [Marla Morrissey to identify contact]
Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Jim Glock staff, Jim Hastie lead scientist) [Barry Cohen to contact, Greg Haas to follow up]
CDF&G [Barry Cohen to contact, Sandy Agalos and Teresa Martinez to follow up]
Researchers--John Pearse, John Stephens* (emeritus, Occidental College), Royden Nakamura* (Cal Poly), John Richards [Dean Wendt to contact]
Additional potential resources--Mark Carr (UCSC); Michael Weber (author From Abundance to Scarcity: A History of U.S. Marine Fisheries Policy, Redondo Beach); Tony Iarocci (commercial fisherman from South Atlantic on recovery of fisheries) [WWF contacts] (Weber and Iarocci also could be prospects for the workshop below)

* = confirmed

c. Potential Ways to Enhance and Sustain the Resources (various alternatives and possibilities, e.g. improved coordination of existing management agencies, separate sanctuary, sanctuary extension, and other options)

possible speakers: [to be determined]

5. In light of the commercial fishing season running May 1 through September, the Subcommittee recommends doing the Fisheries workshop in April. An evening meeting at 6-9 was suggested for best participation. The plan is to use the April 16 date previously identified for the MIG Working Committee.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA FOR FISHERIES WORKSHOP -- rough draft

This is just a rough draft, subject to change with speakers, etc. The idea is to provide an outline for Working Committee members to comment upon and something that we can discuss with prospective speakers. At the suggestion of both the Public Outreach and Issues Subcommittees, we will invite written questions from the public for the speakers to address at appropriate times.

Overview of Marine Interests Group and Purpose for Workshop (15 minutes) [several Committee members and Don Maruska]

Purpose of the Marine Interests Group

Working Committee

Process and how this Workshop fits into it

The Fisheries in Perspective (45 minutes, including responses to questions from Committee and public) [panel of researchers]

Historical perspective

Species of interest to commercial and recreational interests (What are they?)

Where are they? What are the interrelationships in the ecosystems?)

Data sources, trends over time, and topics of concern (What's changed? Where are there concerns about volume and size of species?)

Working Committee discussion of further information needs

Current Fisheries Management Practices Affecting SLO County Resources (60 minutes, including responses to questions from Committee and public) [panel of agency personnel--staff and scientists]

- Role and current policies of Pacific Fisheries Management Council

- Role and current policies of California Department of Fish & Game

- Potential role of other agencies, sanctuaries, etc. in fishery management (address issues/concerns about NOAA role, etc.)

- Working Committee discussion of information

Potential Ways of Improving the Abundance of Fisheries Off SLO County Coast (45 minutes, including responses to questions from Committee and public) [mix of previous panel members]

- Possible options and what's known about them (buyout option, use of reserves or protected areas to rebuild stocks?, other ideas?, etc.)

- Examples of experiences elsewhere

- Working Committee discussion of further information needs

Next Steps and Feedback (15 minutes) [Don]

- Future Workshops

- Feedback/Survey form for attendees [comments about issues to address further; potential options for Committee to consider, etc.]

Public Outreach

A subcommittee of Leslie Krinsk, Pam Heatherington, Steve Moore, and Nancy Castle met to discuss ways to engage the full range of people with interests in the marine resources. They provided the following recommendations:

1. Broad public involvement is desirable with video recording for broadcast on public access TV to extend the reach.
2. Multiple locations (e.g MB Vet's Hall and Ramona Center in Arroyo Grande) and multiple times (Wed or Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings) are desirable.
3. Particular effort is needed to reach fishermen before their season May 1 - September 30.
4. Some Subcommittee members are pursuing ways to reach Hispanic and other underrepresented interests.
5. Use existing public forums to explain the Marine Interests Group -- e.g. KVEC, Good A.M. SLO, etc.
6. Consider developing a PowerPoint presentation on the MIG that could run without charge on the public access TV channel.

Potential Pilot Collaborative Research Opportunity

One of the discussions at the informal meeting of MIG Working Committee members at the Cal Poly Marine Research Institute on March 22 was about how to develop quality,

independent scientific data about the fisheries resources off the coast of SLO County. This idea considers involving fishermen, Cal Poly faculty and students, and regulatory agencies in a collaborative research effort. Several attendees--Marla Morrissey, Dean Wendt, Carolyn Moffatt, and Hugh Thomas agreed to develop a brief outline of this concept for possible presentation at the April 16 workshop. They are encouraging MIG Working Committee members and others with fishing expertise to lend their ideas.

Issues and Information Requests From Marine Interests Group

[Note: This is a first cut organization of the topics raised at the February 27, 2003, meeting of the Marine Interests Group Working Committee and email submissions from other interested members of the public. The Issues Subcommittee met on Wednesday, March 12, and reviewed these issues to develop potential workshop topics and identify desirable speakers. The Subcommittee advised developing the first workshop on the topic of fisheries resources.]

Baseline Information

Current status of the resources

1. What is out there—natural, geological, and man-made? Inventory of species (particularly special status species).
2. What studies are available about the status of the marine resources? What does the peer-reviewed scientific literature offer?
3. Can the studies be available at a central location for people to access?
4. How do we separate fact from fable, credible from non-credible data sources?
5. What is the current level of health for the ecosystem?
6. Are “indicator” animals (or plants) increasing, decreasing, or stable in populations?
7. What abnormalities are there in the marine ecosystem?
8. What are the statistics on commercial and recreational use of the resources (trend lines would be desirable)? How do they correlate with other variables like population growth? What are the interactions with shore and sea wildlife?
9. What economic benefits come from the ocean?
10. What’s the inventory of contamination areas in the coastal zone?
11. What are priority areas of concern (e.g. water quality, specific marine resources—fish, invertebrates, kelp)?
12. What needs protection that isn’t protected now?
13. Are there too many sea lions and sea otters for a healthy ecosystem? What is the status and relative importance of each of these species?
14. How does the SLO coast fit into whale habitat importance?

Desired information about the status of marine resources

1. Is any additional baseline research underway? If so, what are the indications?
2. What synergies need monitoring and explanation?
3. Ocean floor survey like the southern byte study would be desirable.
4. What data need to be collected? How can people agree on what's needed? How will future data be gathered? Who will pay for it?
5. How can the agencies coordinate their efforts for scientific studies?
6. What are the threats to marine mammals from acoustic effects?

Suggested Data Sources

1. Science, Nature, Fisheries Bulletin, Estuaries, Limnology & Oceanography
2. Professor Ray Hillborn, Univ. of Washington
3. Regional Water Quality Control Board with pathogen and other research

Water Quality Concerns

Current status

1. Who is monitoring ocean water quality and what's the current status?
2. How "clean" is our ocean?
3. What are the types and sources of pollution?
4. What is the impact of development and pollution in San Luis Creek estuary on fisheries?
5. How does urban runoff affect the marine resources?
6. What is the impact of vessel discharges?
7. How does power plant cooling affect the ocean environment?
8. How does sewage treatment outfalls affect the resources? Are there desirable alternatives (e.g. farther out)?
9. How does disposal of harbor dredge materials affect the marine resources? Are there alternatives for it?
10. What are the trends in ocean water quality over the last 20, 30, 50 years?

Potential threats

1. What are the potential threats from oil development, mineral extraction, and vessel traffic? Are these uses allowed? What could happen?
2. What is status of Bureau of Reclamation plans for dumping of toxics?
3. What would an oilrig do to our coastline? What are the risks?

Possible actions

1. How effective are different pollution prevention or reduction methods?
2. Examine the existing Agricultural Water Quality Program that is supported by the Monterey Sanctuary and Regional Water Quality Control Board for application in SLO County.

Fishing Concerns

Current situation

1. Need to identify the fisheries.
2. What data are available for fish and invertebrate fisheries for SLO County?
3. What is the relevance of SLO coast ocean currents (as a food supply) to California coast fish populations?
4. What scientific studies exist showing the increase or decrease of local fisheries (size and quantity) and the causes?
5. What is the impact of pinniped populations on fish populations (locally and world-wide)?
6. What are the impacts of climate changes to this area on fish harvest?
7. What are concerns about fishing harvest; types and amounts of by-catch; unintended gear loss; incidental take of sea birds, marine mammals; future of harvest for people?
8. If current fishery is at least 50% less than in the 20's and 30's, what baseline will be used for analysis?
9. What is the efficacy of existing fisheries management by state/federal governments? How is it measured (methodology) and how are data compiled? How accurate are F&G data?

Improvement opportunities

1. What is a better way than stock assessments to determine what resources are out there and to protect any in trouble while allowing access to those that are thriving?
2. How can we improve the fisheries resources? How can we return to the past abundance?
3. Request best available science and incorporate in maximizing opportunities for rockfish to proliferate.
4. Review the Agricultural Water Quality Program that works on conservation practices and farm and ranch management plans.

Bird Life

1. Bird life along the shores, especially birds that breed there (e.g. Pigeon Guillemots along the rocky shoreline) – which species are present? What are the threats?
2. Pelagic environment – what is the importance of it off SLO County?

Resource Regulation and Management

Current responsibilities

1. Who's accountable for what? [Outline the mission, authority, relevant budget, and activities for each agency related to the SLO County marine resources] What is now being protected and by whom?
2. What are the existing laws and regulations (federal EPA, State EPA, RWQCB, Coast Guard, Cal F&G, NFWS, NOAA, etc.)?
3. What geographical or ecological areas are regulatory agencies currently using for the decisions they enforce in this offshore area?
4. What is the cumulative result of regulations from all jurisdictions in terms of biological benefits and socio-economic costs? How do these compare with desired goals and criteria?
5. What are the impacts of the time and expense of permit processes for conservation projects and what effects do these impacts have as disincentives to improve water quality?
6. Can existing agencies do the task of regulating the ocean?
7. What non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are currently involved and how?

Improvement opportunities

1. How can functions be consolidated and coordination enhanced?
2. How can permit streamlining encourage conservation practices?
3. Are there options to manage without regulating?
4. What are models for best protection of resources, with special attention to the future (i.e. giving best protection to the best ocean resources)?
5. How to be good stewards so that future generations of humans and other species can enjoy?
6. If we want to protect resources, enhance tourism, and promote further ecotourism, what gets us there most effectively?

Sanctuary questions

1. What's the legal definition of a sanctuary?
2. What are the options for how a sanctuary could work along SLO County?
3. Do we currently have a scientifically valid study that would tell us if our marine resources are sufficiently unique to qualify for marine sanctuary status? This is a baseline need.
4. What could the geographic boundaries be?
5. Can an extension of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) provide an autonomous local forum (e.g. Sanctuary Advisory Council)?
6. How relevant are SLO County ocean currents to MBNMS?
7. What regulations would result from establishing a marine sanctuary?
8. Whom and what would a sanctuary impact?
9. Who pays for the management?
10. What might be the unintended impacts of a sanctuary?
11. Can a sanctuary be revoked?

Marine Reserves, Marine Protected Areas

1. Are there any existing data that prove that Marine Reserves actually work?

2. What effects have marine protected areas had on fisheries in terms of abundance?
3. Do size limits serve as an adequate alternative?

Decision-making

1. Who is going to determine valid, appropriate uses and negative uses and (subjective) criteria for deciding?

Public Involvement

1. Develop public input methods to get community direction

Notes submitted by: Don Maruska, independent facilitator and public information contact.