

Support Thriving Ocean Ecosystems

Humboldt
Baykeeper

Inland Empire
Waterkeeper

Klamath
Riverkeeper

Monterey
Coastkeeper

Orange County
Coastkeeper

Russian
Riverkeeper

San Diego
Coastkeeper

San Francisco
Baykeeper

San Luis Obispo
Coastkeeper

Santa Barbara
Channelkeeper

Santa Monica
Baykeeper

Ventura
Coastkeeper

In Brief

California's marine ecosystems face numerous threats—overfishing, degraded water quality, vessel traffic, and climate change-related warming and acidification. As a result, fish and other aquatic life that depend on a healthy ocean are in serious decline. “Marine protected areas” are places in the ocean designated to safeguard marine life and underwater habitats—similar to national parks on land. Numerous scientific studies show that marine protected areas lead to improved biodiversity, larger fish, and more productive ocean habitats such as kelp forests.

Legal Landscape

In 1999, California passed the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), calling for the establishment of a science-based network of marine protected areas along the state's coastline. Scientists, policymakers and stakeholders have since been engaged in the “MLPA Initiative,” a public process guiding the Fish and Game Commission's implementation of the MLPA. In 2007, the California Fish and Game Commission adopted the first network of marine protected areas along the Central Coast. The Commission subsequently adopted a network along the North Central Coast in August of 2009 and along the Southern California Coast in December 2010.

Moving Forward

The current phase of the Initiative is well underway to establish marine protected areas along the North Coast (from the Oregon border to Alder Creek). In August 2010, Humboldt Baykeeper and community stakeholders in the North Coast reached consensus on the first ever unified marine protected area proposal, which the Fish and Game Commission will consider for adoption in 2011. A study is underway to assess the application of the Initiative in San Francisco Bay. Attention is now turning to implementation, enforcement and study of the state's MPA network, a model for the country and the world. Watch a video about the historic MLPA process, and view maps of the marine protected areas established so far, at <http://www.cacoastkeeper.org/programs/healthy-marine-habitats/MLPA>.

Learn More. Keep up on the latest MLPA activities at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/> and at www.caloceans.org.



Emerald Cove, Catalina Island.
Santa Monica Baykeeper.

Key Issues: Oceans, Marine Protected Areas, Fish, Marine Life