

MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CA Fish and Game Commission

Committee Chairs: Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Sutton

Meeting Summary

February 16, 2010

Veterans Memorial Building
112 West Cabrillo Blvd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Informational updates

1. California Department of Fish and Game (DFG)

DFG Deputy Director Sonke Mastrup provided an overview of the unstable budget situation and the potential for it to significantly affect the ability of the Marine Region to complete existing projects, let alone take on new projects. Ongoing furloughs and additional budget cuts are anticipated to severely impact resources of the Marine Region.

Marija Vojkovich, DFG Marine Region Manager, summarized an issue paper describing the permitting process for research and monitoring in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The presentation and ensuing discussion highlighted the large number of applicants for permits and associated workload for review, the lack of a comprehensive tracking and reporting system, and the lack of clear guidance from the Fish and Game Commission indicating what level of extractive research or monitoring is acceptable in MPAs.

The MRC agreed that scientific collecting and research permits in MPAs is a critical issue and will recommend to the Commission that this issue be put on the agenda for an upcoming meeting for further discussion.

2. California Ocean Protection Council (OPC)

Dr. Amber Mace, Executive Director of the OPC, provided a summary of the numerous OPC projects that overlap with interests of the MRC including the pending release of the Aquaculture Programmatic Environmental Impact Report, the close of nominations for the California Sustainable Seafood Panel (AB 1217), and a renewable energy panel at the next OPC meeting on March 3 in Sacramento. Key announcements included the hiring of a new Executive Director of the Ocean Science Trust, Dr. Skyli McAfee, the pending announcement of the awards for the MPA North Central Coast Baseline Monitoring Project, and the release of a job announcement for a Director of the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program.

Informational presentation on spot prawn trap permits

Dr. Craig Shuman, Marine Advisor, gave a presentation on California spot prawn trap permits summarizing the status of the fishery and permit structure. The presentation described the permitting and fee structure for the fishery highlighting the current capacity goal and limited data describing the stock status in California. Mike McCorkle from Santa Barbara explained his

request to issue new non-transferable Tier 3 permits to replace those that have been lost due to attrition.

Based on the current information available and budget crisis currently facing the Department, the MRC agreed to recommend to the Commission that the request to allow new entrants into the fishery is not granted at this time.

Next Steps MLMA Lessons Learned Project

Dr. Craig Shuman provided an update of the status of the MLMA Lessons Learned Project and initiated a discussion surrounding the next steps for the project. The public comment period closed on January 31, 2010 with several comments received. Due to the extensive comments received and anticipation that the final report will include considerable modifications from the draft, the draft recommendations were not discussed. Rather, the MRC concluded that the final report should be presented at its next meeting in Monterey on April 28 at which point the MRC will develop a set of recommendations for implementation for the Commission to consider.

The existing MRC priorities were briefly reviewed. It was decided that a full review of the MRC priorities will take place following the completion of the MLMA Lessons Learned report. It was also discussed that many of the MRC informational priorities overlap with OPC projects and that Dr. Shuman should work with Dr. Mace to coordinate the dissemination of this information to the MRC and Commission.

Input from the public highlighted concerns over the lack of integration of MLPA and the MLMA and the cost of implementing Fishery Management Plans. It was also suggested by the public that a forum should be developed with fishermen to work on a variety of issues including commercial fees, transferability, and prioritization of issues.

Report from California Abalone Advisory Group (AAG)

The final report from the AAG commenced with introductory remarks by Ian Taniguchi, DFG Marine Biologist, and a summary of the AAG process and recommendations by Rebecca Tudin of Concur, Inc. Proponents of each of the four AAG recommendations explained their respective options, focusing on two primary questions: 1) should an abalone fishery be opened at San Miguel Island and under what conditions; and 2) if a fishery is to open, what does it look like? Options and presenters are listed as follows:

Option A: Red Abalone Demonstration Fishery – Chris Voss

Option B: Conditional Demonstration San Miguel Island Fishery – Bill Bernard

Option C: Precautionary Experimental Harvest – Jessie Altstatt

Option D: Assurance Approach – Dr. Daniel Geiger

A presentation was given by Ian Taniguchi providing the Department's evaluation of the four options and recommendations for next steps. The assessment of options was focused on operational issues related to workload, risk to population, and enforcement. A summary of the Department's evaluation is summarized below:

Option A:

Work load: High

Resource Risk: High

Enforcement Issues

Option B:

Workload: Moderate
Risk: Low to Moderate
Enforcement issues

Option C:

Workload: Moderate to High
Risk: Low to Moderate
Enforcement issues

Option D:

Workload: Low to High
Risk: Low
Enforcement issues

Recommendations for next steps by the Department consisted of completion of the supplemental modeling to evaluate long-term risk and the completion of details for operational implementation for all options.

A discussion ensued with the MRC, AAG members and Department to discuss the relative pros and cons of the different options. The Department indicated that it was committed to securing the funding necessary to complete the supplemental modeling work. The Department also highlighted concerns related to workload for other fisheries (e.g., possible lobster FMP) and growing concerns about the status of the north coast red abalone recreational fishery.

Following the discussion and comment by 17 members of the public, the MRC concluded that there was not sufficient information to inform a decision at this time and offered a series of next steps:

1. Complete the supplemental modeling work
2. Develop a comprehensive cost estimate to implement options A-D, including CEQA
3. Recess AAG until more information is available
4. Revisit at MRC after results of supplemental modeling and cost estimates are available.

Deputy Director Mastrup expressed concern that it would be difficult to develop reliable cost estimates with the level of detail currently available. Because of this, the Department will continue to work with the option proponents to refine the details to further inform cost estimates. It is estimated that the supplemental modeling work will be completed in the fall and that this item will be before the MRC near the end of the year.

The final report from the AAG and appendices can be found at:

http://ftp.dfg.ca.gov/Public/R7_MR/BIOLOGICAL/AAG/AAG_Report/

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm