

**MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**CA Fish and Game Commission**

Committee Chairs: Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Sutton

**Meeting Summary**

May 25, 2011

Harbor Classroom  
125 Harbor Way, Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
Second floor of Marine Center Building

\*All agenda items are informational and/or discussion only. The Marine Resources Committee does not have authority to make policy or regulatory decisions on behalf of the Commission.

1. Informational updates

a. California Department of Fish and Game

Marine Region Manager Marija Vojkovich reported on several current projects within the Marine Region. The Marine Region is continuing to look into data related to the perceived declines in the bass complex (barred sand bass, kelp bass, and spotted sand bass) that have been raised at the MRC and by members of the public at recent Commission meetings. Department staff are looking into possible management measures to minimize the apparent decline and protect the most vulnerable part of the population, particularly for barred sand bass. It is expected that the Department will bring a range of alternatives to the Commission for consideration in late summer or early fall.

Settlement funds from the Cusco Buson oil spill were less than expected. While work will continue in partnership with the Herring Research Foundation, the previous plans for the immediate development of an FMP will be put on hold until additional resources are available.

The California Ocean Protection Council approved the request for funding for the Department to engage in development of a FMP for spiny lobster. The first step of the process will be the development of a timeline and schedule. The Department will use the MRC as the primary venue to keep the Commission involved in the development of the FMP and anticipate bringing a package for Commission consideration in 2014.

The Department is moving forward with the management options for the north coast recreational abalone fishery. It is anticipated that the options will be presented to the Commission at its June meeting, with the intention of having any regulation changes adopted and implemented prior to April 1, 2012.

The Marine Region is working with the Pacific Fishery Management Council on amendments to the salmon FMP to meet new requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Council is expected to make a decision in June to establish criteria or thresholds to determine how overfishing is defined and how to establish fishery control rules.

b. California Ocean Protection Council

The Commission's Marine Advisor, Craig Shuman, conveyed an update of OPC activities. The Council's second meeting of 2011 was held on May 12 in Sacramento. The meeting was focused on the future of California fisheries and provided the opportunity for representatives from state and federal agencies, tribes, commercial and recreational fisheries, and environmental organizations to discuss their ideas on protecting and enhancing California's fisheries and ecosystems. More details about the meeting can be found on the Ocean Protection Council website at [www.opc.ca.gov](http://www.opc.ca.gov).

The next OPC meeting is scheduled for August 11 and will focus on marine renewable energy and the draft five-year strategic plan.

2. Discussion: Lease of kelp beds for exclusive harvest

Marine Region Manager Marija Vojkovich led a discussion on administrative issues within the kelp program. A general overview of the kelp lease and kelp harvesting program was provided and a variety of issues were highlighted including the overlap of MPAs with kelp lease boundaries, fees, contents and process for application of kelp leases, and regulatory clean up needs.

MRC discussion focused on immediate needs to clarify application procedures and how to address the leasing of kelp beds that overlap with MPAs as well as longer-term needs related to the policy and philosophy governing kelp harvesting in the state. The MRC requested its Marine Advisor to continue to work with the Department to develop recommendations to address the short-term issues for further discussion at the next MRC meeting.

3. Discussion: MRC priorities and approach to review of Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Fisheries

The Commission's Marine Advisor led a discussion on MRC Priorities and the previous guidance of the MRC to initiate a review of the Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries. Current MRC priorities were reviewed as well as the recommendations that came out of the MLMA Lessons Learned Report. Due to limited resources, it was determined that a comprehensive review of the Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries and how the policy applies to different fisheries would not be possible at this time. It was also determined that many of the identified MRC priorities were not endpoints, but rather focal areas that were being addressed, in one form or another, by the Department and the MRC.

The MRC priority of Scientific Collecting stood out as an issue that required immediate attention, especially when applied to activities within MPAs. It was also suggested that this issue was confined enough in scope that it could be effectively addressed with existing resources.

The MRC requested its Marine Advisor to work with the Department, Ocean Science Trust, and others to develop recommendations for how to address scientific collecting in MPAs. The MRC recognized the continued need to review restricted access fisheries and suggested that reviews should be addressed on a case-by-case basis as time and resources permit.

#### 4. Discussion: Groundfish management and federal conformance

Marci Yaremko from the Department's Marine Region briefed the MRC on the groundfish management issues within the Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA) and conformance with Federal rules. At issue were the continued federal rules prohibiting retention of shelf rockfish caught shoreward of the 20 fathom contour within the CCA. The Department's assessment revealed limited interaction with cowcod in waters less than 20 fathoms and the possibility for required discards of shelf rockfish to create waste.

Discussion focused on the pros and cons of allowing retention of shelf rockfish in waters less than 20 fathoms in CCA. The MRC concluded that enforcement concerns warranted conformance with the federal rules.

#### 5. Presentation: Report by MPA Monitoring Enterprise on South Coast MPA Baseline Monitoring Program and Development of South Coast MPA Monitoring Plan

Dr. Liz Whiteman, Program Director with the MPA Monitoring Enterprise, reported on the development of the South Coast MPA Monitoring Plan and South Coast MPA Baseline Program. A one month comment period on the draft monitoring program ended on May 27. MPA Monitoring Enterprise staff will assimilate comments and revise the plan for presentation to the full Commission at its June meeting and possible adoption as an appendix to the Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas at its August meeting. The plan was developed over the course of the last year in close coordination with Department staff and included extensive input from stakeholders and scientists.

The South Coast MPA Baseline Program is designed to assess and understand the ecological and socioeconomic starting points and initial changes in the two to three following implementation. A Request for Proposals was released in early February and close to forty proposals were received by the deadline on April 7. Proposals are currently under review and it is anticipated that final selections will be made and funding will be made available in July. More information on the South Coast MPA Baseline Program and Monitoring Plan can be found at the MPA Monitoring Enterprise website at <http://monitoringenterprise.org/>.

Discussion focused on the importance of partnerships and efficiency in monitoring as well as the value of existing data sets and monitoring programs. The importance of reporting results was addressed and it was suggested that a symposium type approach be explored to inform adaptive management options when sufficient data are available.

#### 6. Consideration of MRC support of proposed legislation

After discussion, the MRC decided to recommend the following proposed legislative bills for Commission support:

- a. AB 337 (Monning) Ocean resources: OPC: sustainable seafood
- b. AB 376 (Fong) Shark fins