United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
1 Marshlands Road, Fremont, California 94555

July 23, 2014

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

RE: Request to consider MLPA Central Coast Study Region Special Closures

Dear Commissioners,

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) requests the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) to consider evaluating the utility of Special Closures within the network of Central Coast Study Region (CCSR) marine protected areas. Several Special Closures were adopted through the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative in both the North Central and North Coast study regions to protect important seabird and marine mammal breeding areas from human disturbance. In part, this can be attributed to the addition of an objective designed to further meet Goal #2 of the Marine Life Protection Action Initiative, which was added to provide protection of breeding seabirds and marine mammals. During the CCSR planning process, this objective had not yet been added, and Special Closures were not considered.

Several important seabird and marine mammal breeding sites occur within the CCSR that would likely benefit from Special Closures. These small closures can help further the goals of the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and state MLPA by affording additional protections from human disturbance during the critical breeding periods. Baseline monitoring in the North Central Coast Study Region showed apparent declines in boat disturbances to seabird colonies since Special Closures were implemented in 2010 (McChesney and Robinette 2013; http://www.csgc.ucsd.edu/RESEARCH/RESEARCH_PDF/NCCMPA/Final/RMPA-6AB_McChesneyRobinette_FinalReport.pdf). Success was the result in part of outreach and education efforts combined with monitoring by the Seabird Protection Network (Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, USFWS, and others). Thus, Special Closures can deliver quick and effective results.

The USFWS has been in contact with certain stakeholders about the need for Special Closures in the CCSR and are willing to expand our stakeholder discussions if the Commission decides to consider this request. We understand this is the first step in a Commission process, and request this item be added as an agenda item for discussion at the next possible Marine Resources Committee meeting.

Please contact me at (510) 792-0222, x222 or Gerry_McChesney@fws.gov with any questions or comments. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gerry McChesney
Manager, Common Murre Restoration Project (Seabird Protection Network)

cc: David Ledig (California Coastal National Monument)
Maria Brown (Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary)
Paul Michel (Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary)
Dan Robinette (Point Blue Conservation Science)
Torch/Platform Irene Oil Spill Trustee Council
Luckenbach Oil Spill Trustee Council
Becky Ota (CDFW)