

Press Release
For Immediate Release (07/21/09)

North Coast Governmental Entities Call for MLPA Delay

On Tuesday July 21, 2009 the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District will be forwarding a letter signed by numerous North Coast governmental entities to California Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman asking for a delay in the implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act in the region. Although the entities signing on to the letter agree that additional steps to conserve coastal resources are desirable, none believe that the current MLPA process has sufficient data for decision support or the funds necessary for implementation.

The North Coast MLPA region spans over 200 miles of coast line from Oregon to just north of the Pt Arena. Signatories on the letter include all three counties (Humboldt, Del Norte and Mendocino), five cities (Crescent City, Trinidad, Eureka, Fortuna and Point Arena), all harbor districts (Crescent City, Humboldt Bay, Noyo), services districts (Shelter Cover Improvement District and McKinleyville Community Services District) and the Trinidad Rancheria. Although some cities like Arcata and Fort Bragg did not sign onto the group letter, they agree that the current MLPA process is flawed and will make a request for a delay in separate letters.

The MLPA process has created Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that usually prevent all consumptive use (i.e. fishing) along 20-25% of the shoreline in regions already completed. The areas targeted for closure are usually rocky reefs, headlands, pinnacles and known areas of marine life concentration. While some fisheries like crabbing may be only lightly impacted by closures (losses of 8-10%), declines in rock fishing opportunities and catch may be as high as 40%. North Coast governmental agencies all share concerns that economic impacts related to these potential closures will not be properly evaluated or considered. Those signing the letter requesting MLPA delay are also concerned about the insertion of a Blue Ribbon Task Force into the process that would evaluate the North Coast MPA proposals and recommend their favorite option to the California Fish and Game Commission. This task force is not part of the original MLPA legislation, few or no members are from the North Coast region, and none have special knowledge or training that would give scientific weight to their opinion.

The same governmental agencies signing on to the letter will continue to participate in the Harbor District's North Coast Local-Interest Marine Protected Area Work Group, which is scheduled to meet in early August. For more information call 443-0801.