

Public Input on the Draft Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan Summary of Key Themes

INTRODUCTION

Background – The Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan

Ocean Science Trust (OST), in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), released the Draft Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan for public input from May 14, 2014 through June 4, 2014. The monitoring plan will guide implementation of a scientifically rigorous, cost-effective approach to MPA monitoring that reflects management needs and local priorities, and that will assess the performance of Central Coast MPAs relative to the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA).

The Draft Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan was collaboratively developed by OST and CDFW, with extensive initial input in early 2014 from many, including scientists throughout California and beyond, resource managers, native communities, fishermen, and members of the greater Central Coast ocean community. The draft monitoring plan applies California's MPA monitoring framework and is informed by the results of the Central and North Central Coast baseline monitoring programs, and the existing monitoring plans for the North Central and South Coast regions.

During the public input period, electronic copies of the draft monitoring plan were distributed via a wide array of Central Coast channels, including email announcements to a broad list of over 600 Central Coast and other community members, postings on OceanSpaces.org, listings on online community calendars, e-newsletter postings made possible by organizations and groups throughout the region, and messages to all regional libraries. Hard copies of the draft monitoring plan were made available at a number of regional locations, including local harbor offices and CDFW regional offices.

Purpose of This Document

This document summarizes key themes expressed by those who provided input on the Draft Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan, and outlines planned changes to the document as a result of these contributions. It includes input from researchers, fishermen, citizen scientists, non-governmental organizations, native communities, and federal and state agencies. Input was received via email, online comment form, and hard copy. This summary of key themes is available on the [Central Coast region page](#) at [OceanSpaces.org](#) and has been announced via OST's Central Coast email list.

KEY THEMES

Public input ranged from specific suggestions for monitoring metrics and focal species, to more general comments and questions regarding planning and implementation of MPA monitoring. Input and planned changes to the draft monitoring plan are summarized below in five key themes: partnerships, MPA monitoring and adaptive management, using MPAs and MPA monitoring to inform fisheries management, contextual data, and next steps. Many specific comments related to individual monitoring metrics and focal species will be reflected in Chapter 4 of the revised draft monitoring plan. Overall, this wide range of insightful and constructive input contributed by the community will significantly improve the Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan.

Partnerships

Input received expressed support for a Central Coast MPA monitoring program that builds on existing partnerships and establishes new ones, with suggestions for partnerships with federal agencies, the private sector, non-consumptive ocean users, academia, and non-governmental organizations. Public input also expressed a need for improved coordination and data synthesis across monitoring programs and habitats.

These suggestions will be addressed in the revised draft monitoring plan through:

- Updates to *Chapter 7: Developing Monitoring Partnerships* that reflect a broader set of potential partners than was included in the draft monitoring plan. As evidenced in the Central Coast Baseline Program, partnerships with a wide range of organizations, agencies, governments, universities, and other groups are crucial to establishing and maintaining a monitoring program over time. Expanding the role of partnerships will be key to ensuring that the next phase of MPA monitoring in the Central Coast is cost-effective, sustainable, and minimizes duplication of effort.
- The inclusion of additional details about the role of the Central Coast Monitoring Survey in helping to identify potential partnerships in *Chapter 8: Building an Effective Monitoring Program*. As detailed below in Next Steps (page 3), the survey will be used to assess the current landscape of monitoring in the Central Coast, and will be valuable for leveraging and growing new and existing partnerships.

MPA Monitoring & Adaptive Management

Input received described the importance of linking monitoring and adaptive management. This included suggestions to consider the impacts of policy actions on meeting the goals of the MLPA and the impact of both state and federal management on MPAs. Suggestions included additional short- and long-term questions for evaluating MPA design and management.

These suggestions will be reflected in the revised draft monitoring plan through:

- An updated discussion of the connections between MPA monitoring and adaptive management in *Chapter 2: Setting the Scope of MPA Monitoring*, both to clarify these connections and to emphasize their importance. In California, MPA monitoring is guided by a monitoring framework, as detailed in Chapter 2 of the draft plan, that closely links monitoring with adaptive management of MPAs. Monitoring should incorporate two fundamental elements of the monitoring framework: assessments of ecosystem condition and evaluations of MPA design and management effectiveness. Together, both components provide the information needed to inform management decisions. At the same time, monitoring itself is adaptively managed, through regular reviews of the regional MPA monitoring plans that incorporate the results of MPA monitoring, advances in monitoring techniques and procedures, and changes in management priorities and needs.
- The incorporation of some suggested short- and long-term questions for evaluating MPA design and management effectiveness in *Chapter 5: Evaluating MPA Design and Management Decisions*.

Using MPAs and MPA Monitoring to Inform Fisheries Management

Input received placed an emphasis on ensuring that MPA monitoring can inform and complement fisheries management at both state and federal levels. Suggestions included using population models, movement data, and fisheries-independent data to inform both adaptive management of MPAs and fisheries management. Suggestions also included additional short- and long-term questions for evaluating MPA design and management that may help to connect MPA monitoring with fisheries management.

This input will be reflected in the revised draft monitoring plan through:

- A more detailed discussion of the ways in which MPA monitoring can inform fisheries management in *Chapter 3: Adopting an Ecosystems Approach*;
- Incorporation of some suggested questions for evaluating MPA design and management in *Chapter 5: Evaluating MPA Design and Management Decisions*; and

- The addition of an appendix that explores the ways in which MPA monitoring can inform fisheries management in response to emerging management and policy needs.

Contextual Data

As guided by the MPA monitoring framework, MPA monitoring in California focuses on ecological and socioeconomic data that can be used to assess both ecosystem condition and trends, and MPA design and management effectiveness. Beyond this ecological and human use monitoring, the monitoring of Central Coast ecosystems can focus on a range of natural and anthropogenic influences such as physical conditions (e.g., oceanographic conditions or water quality), human influences (e.g., economic conditions or land-use patterns), and compliance (e.g., types and levels of compliance).

The use and importance of data on these natural and anthropogenic influences, referred to in the draft monitoring plan as “contextual data,” are discussed in general terms throughout the document. Input received emphasized that consideration of contextual data is vital to: 1) accurately interpreting MPA monitoring results; and 2) better understanding ecosystem condition and trends by linking MPAs to larger oceanographic and atmospheric systems, ecological conditions, and human impacts. Commenters suggested that the discussion of contextual data should be expanded and strengthened in the draft monitoring plan.

This input will be reflected in the revised draft monitoring plan through:

- An expanded discussion of what contextual data are and why they are important in *Chapter 3: Adopting an Ecosystems Approach*;
- Addition of specific examples of contextual data to *Chapter 4: Assessing Ecosystem Condition and Trends*; and
- An expanded and more detailed discussion about leveraging partnerships for collecting and analyzing contextual data, and incorporating results into analysis of ecological and human-use monitoring, in *Chapter 7: Developing Monitoring Partnerships*.

Next Steps

In their input, members of the public expressed interest in learning more about the next steps in the monitoring planning effort, and what role the Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan will play in that effort. For example, individuals requested more information about funding levels and costs for Central Coast monitoring, and the roles and responsibilities of OST and its partners in monitoring and in the analysis and reporting of monitoring results.

To address this feedback, more details about building and implementing the next phase of Central Coast MPA monitoring will be added to *Chapter 8: Building an Effective MPA Monitoring Program*. Many of these details will reflect developments in the planning effort that occurred after the draft monitoring plan was released for public input.

The next steps in the monitoring planning effort are as follows:

- The draft monitoring plan is under revision in consideration of all comments received during the public input period. Following revision, the draft monitoring plan will be presented to the California Fish and Game Commission in Summer/Fall 2014.
- In early July 2014, OST will release the Central Coast Monitoring Survey - an online survey of Central Coast monitoring activities. The survey will examine the geographic and temporal coverage of monitoring activities in the region and their compatibility with the indicators and metrics outlined in the draft monitoring plan. It will help to identify gaps, overlaps, potential partnerships, and key capacities in

the region. This information will help OST, DFW, and the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to build a cost-effective, partnerships-based monitoring program in the Central Coast. Results of the survey will be publicly available on OceanSpaces.org in mid-Summer 2014.

- During the June 10, 2014 OPC meeting, up to \$3 million was authorized to support and seed the next five years of MPA monitoring in the Central Coast region. OPC funds will be leveraged through a partnerships-based approach to monitoring. OST, CDFW, and OPC will develop a workplan for disbursement of these funds during Summer 2014; disbursement is contingent upon adoption of the monitoring plan by the California Fish and Game Commission and OPC approval of the workplan. Monitoring will be guided by the Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan and results of the Central Coast Monitoring Survey, and it will likely be implemented through partnership agreements, contracts, Requests for Proposals (RFPs), and Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) staged as appropriate over the course of the next five years.

STAYING INFORMED

Visit the [Central Coast region page](#) on OceanSpaces.org for more information about the Central Coast MPA monitoring planning effort, including a project timeline and program announcements throughout the planning process.