



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 6, 2007

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Marine Life Protection Act Announces Move to Southern California
Environmental Group Hails Proactive Approach to Marine Resource Protection

SAN FRANCISCO – The California Fish and Game Commission announced today the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative will next move to the southern region of the State. This announcement begins the third of five phases of the State's effort to protect California's ecologically important coastal habitats and marine life. California Coastkeeper Alliance (CCKA), a coalition of 12 Waterkeeper groups spanning the coast from the Oregon border to San Diego, expressed appreciation for the dedication of both Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Secretary of Resources Mike Chrisman to a successful MLPA process.

"Establishing marine protected areas, including reserves, is a critical step towards protecting our invaluable marine and coastal ecosystems, both now and in the future," said Angela Haren, Programs Manager for CCKA. "The recent Cosco Busan oil spill is a tragic reminder of how devastating our interactions with the ocean can be, and underscores the need to diligently protect marine habitats throughout the state." Similar to national parks on land, underwater parks are designed to preserve and protect important places.

"The science is clear that, given time and space to recover, marine life can rebound quickly from ongoing threats such as overfishing and pollution," added Linda Sheehan, Executive Director of CCKA. "California's upcoming focus on the Southern California Bight will bring the benefits of the MLPA to millions more Californians."

Signed into law in 1999, the MLPA seeks to develop a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) along the entire California coastline. The first region to undergo the process was the Central Coast from Point Conception near Santa Barbara to Half Moon Bay. On September 21, 2007 the first, landmark marine protected area plan went into effect with the unanimous adoption of 29 MPAs, encompassing 18% (204 sq. miles) of the Central Coast. Currently, the Fish and Game Commission is assessing proposals for protected areas in the North Central Coast (Half Moon Bay to Point Arena in Mendocino County) as part of the second phase in the MLPA Initiative; completion of this phase is scheduled by January 2009.

The initiative to protect southern California's marine ecosystems will take shape over the next one to two years, and will seek the advice of public policy advisors, marine scientists, economists, fishermen, conservationists and community members through an inclusive process that will ensure that all views are heard. The network of marine protected areas that will be designed and implemented will use the best science available, avoid economic impacts, and meet the objectives of the MLPA to protect the richness of California's marine heritage.

The bipartisan support of the first phase of the MLPA Initiative, and the continued collaboration of the second phase, has been highly dependent upon the active involvement of stakeholders and the general public. This next phase in the southern region will again afford many opportunities for public involvement. California Coastkeeper Alliance looks forward to working with the various regional constituencies to involve all interested stakeholders in this process. For more information about the MLPA Initiative and opportunities for involvement, please visit the Initiative website at www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa.

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The California Coastkeeper Alliance provides a statewide voice for safeguarding California's waters, and its world renowned coast and ocean, for the benefit of all Californians. Member organizations are Klamath Riverkeeper, Humboldt Baykeeper, Russian Riverkeeper, San Francisco Baykeeper, Monterey Coastkeeper, San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, Ventura County Coastkeeper, Santa Monica Baykeeper, Orange County Coastkeeper and its Inland Empire Waterkeeper chapter, and San Diego Coastkeeper. See www.cacoastkeeper.org.