

California Coastal and Marine Initiative Strategic Plan June 2008

Goal and Theory of Change

The goals of the California Coastal and Marine Initiative (CCMI) are to bring about ecosystem-based conservation of coastal and marine resources in California through more effective statewide policies and programs, and to serve as a springboard for similar efforts on the west coast of North America and nationally. By pursuing these goals, CCMI intends to spur restoration of California's coastal and ocean ecosystems so that they once again support abundant and diverse populations of fish and other marine wildlife, and can sustain the many ways in which people can benefit from them. Keys to achieving these goals are creating meaningful protection of ocean ecosystems, modernizing governance and funding of ocean and coastal programs, and stimulating active public support.

Building on the achievements of CCMI's first phase (2003-2008), the updated strategy for Phase 2 broadens CCMI's focus beyond the central coast of California and reflect the extraordinary opportunities of the next several years. These opportunities include the strong support of California's Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who will remain in office through 2010, as well as the recent shift in national political leadership. Equally important is the foundation established during the first phase of CCMI through the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative, the creation of the Ocean Protection Council, the two pilot ecosystem-based management (EBM) projects, a more active constituency for ocean and coastal conservation, and substantial new sources of public and private funds; but, more needs to be done. In capitalizing upon these opportunities, CCMI will draw upon experience gained over the last five years in fostering lasting and concrete conservation of California's ocean and coastal ecosystems.

Theory of Change

California's coastal lands and ocean waters are home to an extraordinary diversity and abundance of animal and plant life that drive productive ecosystems benefiting Californians in many different ways. The California Current links these ecosystems under state jurisdiction with ecosystems under the jurisdictions of the federal government and of state, provincial, and national governments of Mexico and Canada. These coastal ecosystems attract people and support economic activities, including fishing, farming, industry, tourism, and recreation. The growing intensity of these activities over the past decades, magnified by changes in physical and biological dynamics within the coastal zone, has compromised the capacity of coastal ecosystems to produce the goods and services that people value.

Diverse pressures drive these changes in coastal and ocean ecosystems. In developing CCMI's strategy, RLFF surveyed the impact and dynamic of pressures on

coastal and marine ecosystems off California and the west coast with a view to identifying which would be susceptible to change through strategic investment of CCMI's limited resources. Some pressures already are addressed by governmental and non-governmental activities, although their overall effectiveness may be limited. For example, federal, state, and local governments spend tens of millions of dollars each year in reducing water pollution. Other pressures are beyond the capacity of a program such as CCMI. For example, while CCMI can highlight the impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems, it cannot contribute significantly to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

RLFF identified the following as pressures and conditions that can be addressed through its strategies:

- Depletion of the abundance and diversity of coastal marine ecosystems, primarily through historical overfishing and inadequate restoration measures
- Lack of effective monitoring
- Inadequate understanding of the impact of human activities on coastal and marine ecosystems
- Single-species, single sector research, monitoring, and management
- Common failure to integrate knowledge into decision making
- Lack of public funding and of an effectively engaged public
- Organizational and jurisdictional obstacles to effective governance

RLFF also evaluated opportunities for addressing pressures. One such opportunity is the body of state law that has emerged in the last decade. In 1998, California adopted the Marine Life Management Act, which embodies some of the most advanced principles for fisheries management in the country. A year later, the Legislature passed the MLPA, which includes an unprecedented mandate to develop a statewide network of MPAs.

With Governor Schwarzenegger's signing of the California Ocean Protection Act in 2004, California established a multi-agency Ocean Protection Council to coordinate state policy consistent with EBM. Through the establishment of a Science Advisory Council and other measures, the Ocean Protection Council is establishing itself as a vehicle for governance reform. Similar reform efforts are starting in Oregon and Washington. State voters passed Proposition 84 in 2006, providing \$90 million to the Ocean Protection Trust, to be distributed by the Ocean Protection Council. Voters also approved hundreds of millions of dollars in other bond funds, administered by other state agencies, which can also enhance ocean resources.

California also benefits from very strong marine science institutions, which are on the cutting edge of research and policy innovation that can support the kind of ecosystem-based approach to management embraced by the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. Finally, survey after survey finds strong public support for taking steps to protect ocean and coastal ecosystems establishing Marine Protected Areas

(MPAs), reducing water pollution, and other measures. Even if most citizens do not become actively involved in supporting specific proposals, decision makers who take important steps will do so with broad support.

Although there has been substantial progress made in the last five years, some pressures continue to increase. With this in mind, as well as the opportunities and capabilities that CCMI enjoys, CCMI's goals over the next five years are to bring about ecosystem-based conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems in California through more effective statewide policies and programs and to inspire similar efforts on the west coast of North America and nationally. In pursuing these goals, CCMI intends to rely upon the five strategies it has successfully executed over the last five years, although the specific outcomes of each strategy will evolve over time. The five strategies are as follows:

- Marine Ecosystem Protection
- Ecosystem-Based Management
- Governance
- Ocean and Coastal Constituency
- Funding

Marine Ecosystem Protection Strategy

Off the west coast of the United States, as elsewhere, dramatic increases in fishing effort and technology during the 1970s and 1980s, coupled with oceanographic shifts, have reduced the abundance of some species of fish and other marine wildlife to dangerously low levels. The explosion of fishing effort during this period reflected governmental policy that reflected the pursuit of maximum sustainable yield of single species, which called for reducing fish populations by 50-75 percent below their original sizes and maintaining them at these much lower levels. One effect of this policy was wholesale removal of older, larger fish and altering the role of entire fish populations in their ecosystems. In some cases, the impact of these removals on ecosystems was evident. In most cases, we simply do not know the specific ecosystem impacts of fisheries under traditional management.

The desirability of incorporating other values including the health and diversity of marine ecosystems has long been recognized but with little impact on policy or practice. Fisheries reform will take time, and there remains much to be learned about most populations of fish and shellfish in California waters. But, the establishment of networks of MPAs can lay the foundation for more holistic approach to restoring and managing nearshore ecosystems. By focusing upon the protection of communities of species in a discrete area, MPAs provide a more practical focus for ecosystem protection. By eliminating exploitation of key species in an area, MPAs provide a means for restoring populations of exploited and unexploited species to something like a natural state. There is evidence showing that well-designed MPAs can return communities within MPAs to a

significantly higher abundance and diversity and, for some species, can increase productivity for adjacent fisheries.

In 2004, the MLPA Initiative, a public-private partnership with The Resources Agency, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation, was launched with the goal of designing and establishing the statewide network of MPAs required by the 1999 MLPA. The first phase of the Initiative, which enjoyed the support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and the Marisla Foundation, culminated in the designation of the first of four regional networks of MPAs. These 29 MPAs cover 204 square miles or 18 percent of the South-Central Coast Region, from Point Conception to Pigeon Point, about half of which is no-take marine reserve. In April 2008, the Initiative's Blue Ribbon Task Force submitted to the California Fish and Game Commission its preferred alternative network of MPAs on the North-Central Coast from Pigeon Point to Point Arena. Three other proposals developed by stakeholders in an Initiative-supported process were also submitted to the Commission. The Schwarzenegger Administration has committed to completing MPA networks in the four regions of the outer coast by the end of 2011.

A key innovation of the MLPA Initiative is its focus on building the state's capacity to meaningfully monitor the statewide network of MPAs while beginning to address the lack of information available for other management programs, such as fisheries management. Effective monitoring of the statewide network of MPAs will also provide an unparalleled opportunity to detect the effect of climate change on nearshore ecosystems. In collaboration with the Ocean Protection Council and other state agencies, RLFF has helped a newly established organization—the MPA Monitoring Enterprise—to build capacity and credibility with state agency partners. Success of this ambitious effort will depend partly upon strategic support from the private sector through its launch phase over the next several years.

Over the next five years, CCMI will continue its support of the MLPA Initiative, targeting the following specific outcomes:

Five-year outcomes:

- Networks of MPAs in the South Coast and the North Coast Study Regions are designed and designated
- MPAs in all four coastal regions are being effectively implemented
- The launch and institutionalization of the Monitoring Enterprise are completed

CCMI will pursue these outcomes through the following activities:

- Continue support to the MLPA Initiative, in partnership with state agencies and other philanthropic foundations
- Provide funding and technical support to conservation organizations in supporting the Initiative

- Develop the capacity of grantees to support implementation
- Provide technical support, capacity building, and strategic financial support to the MPA Monitoring Enterprise
- Secure additional sources of funding for the Monitoring Enterprise

Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) Strategy

As significant as the impact of fishing is upon marine ecosystems, other human impacts, ranging from coastal development to pollution and climate change, stress nearshore ecosystems as well. Management of these activities is hampered by shortcomings such as a focus upon single factors or symptoms rather than suites of factors and underlying causes and a lack of attention to interactions or linkages among sectors. For instance, despite decades of discussion about the linkage between subsidies, certain agricultural or development practices, and water pollution, the impact of these practices on marine ecosystems is rarely addressed, except after the fact.

Managers responsible for coastal resources, the scientists who study them, and those most affected by management decisions face significant obstacles to effective communication with each other, including different institutional cultures, incentives, and timelines. But the lack of this communication prevents the integration of scientific knowledge into decision making and of management needs into scientific research and analysis.

The CCMI strategy includes continuing efforts to overcome the fragmentation of government programs and the poor integration of science into decision making by fostering development of practical applications of ecosystem-based management (EBM) in two discrete sites: Morro Bay and Elkhorn Slough. These pilot EMB projects, which CCMI has supported together with the Packard Foundation's Science subprogram, will continue to serve as laboratories for developing practical techniques.

Five-year outcomes:

- EBM pilot projects at Elkhorn Slough and Morro Bay are successful and being implemented across jurisdictions and public and private practices
- Through pilot projects at Elkhorn Slough and Morro Bay, application of EBM to the central coast is embedded in key state and local programs

CCMI intends to continue collaborating with its partners in supporting the development of practical EBM approaches at the two pilot projects. CCMI will pursue these outcomes through the following activities:

- Collaborate with its partners in providing funding and technical support to pilot projects
- Develop a strategy by year 3 for transition to a regional focus

Governance Strategy

The Ocean Protection Council, established by state law in 2004, provides a vehicle for reform of policies and programs and for more focused state funding to reflect an ecosystem-based approach. For instance, building the capacity of the Ocean Protection Council's Science Advisory Committee can introduce independent science advice into the assessment and design of state ocean and coastal programs in a particularly relevant way. Such analyses and ensuing discussions will enable the Ocean Protection Council to establish standards for conservation of fisheries, water quality, and other actions that agencies can then implement through allocation, regulation, and other methods. Similarly, a thoughtful, state-of-the-art review and revision of the current Ocean Protection Council strategic plan can fashion a statewide agenda for science and investment that will attract both public and private support. Finally, all of these activities at the Ocean Protection Council will inform and drive discussions and cooperative initiatives by the west coast states.

These efforts at reform within California can benefit from the broader collaborative efforts that have been launched in the last several years. The West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, which Governors Schwarzenegger, Kulongoski, and Gregoire signed in 2006, has given impetus to cooperation among the three states on federal policy and on common activities, including ocean and coastal research. The 2008 Action Plan implementing the agreement provides a more practical blueprint for implementing the Agreement and reflects the Ocean Protection Council's Strategic Plan, as well as the recommendations of the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

CCMI intends to build upon the work of the OPC and the West Coast Governors' Agreement by focusing on the following outcomes over the next five years.

Five-year outcomes:

- Key state agencies implement a coordinated ocean and coastal strategy
- The Ocean Protection Council has established itself as a critical source of scientific and policy analysis and program coordination
- The Ocean Protection Council makes key conservation decisions regarding living marine resources and habitats
- The Ocean Protection Council advances key strategies of the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health

CCMI will pursue these outcomes through the following activities:

- Through grants to conservation organization partners, technical support to the Ocean Protection Council and engagement with agencies, secure revision of the Ocean Protection Council strategic plan
- Develop and implement a strategy to carry out key elements of the strategic plan

- Collaborate with the Ocean Protection Council in funding science and policy analyses by the Ocean Protection Council's science advisory committee on key conservation decisions
- Identify high-value initiatives in the Ocean Protection Council strategic plan and the West Coast Governors' Agreement and develop strategies for implementing them
- Build support for collaborative efforts on the west coast

Constituency Building Strategy

The success of these efforts to protect coastal and marine ecosystems will depend greatly upon continued political leadership at state and federal levels. Maintaining this leadership, particularly as political leadership changes, will depend upon continuing to build a statewide constituency for ocean and coastal conservation.

Completing the statewide network of MPAs in the four regions of the outer coast of California over the next three years offers an ideal focus for building a statewide constituency. Unlike other statewide policy efforts, the MLPA Initiative narrows attention to specific areas fostering collaboration among disparate organizations, and building relationships that support later efforts on other issues. Once established, the MPAs themselves serve as continuing reminders of the value and importance of ocean and coastal conservation and the need for continued involvement.

The MLPA Initiative also has demonstrated the value and promise of engaging with California's growing Latino community in support of ocean and coastal conservation efforts. Polling regularly finds even higher support for MPAs and for ocean and coastal conservation among Latinos than among other ethnic groups in California. With CCMI polling and grants, grantees have been building capacity to better understand the interests of Latino communities and other diverse constituencies and to work with the broadest possible range of citizens and organizations with a stake in marine conservation.

Other communities, identified by interests as well as demographics, may also provide unique support for reform. Both commercial and recreational fishing communities include leaders inclined to focus on large-scale and long-term goals and sustainability. Bridges could be built among different constituencies, including the conservation and fishing communities, by fostering dialog and collective action on issues of mutual interest, such as water pollution and habitat degradation.

Over the next five years, CCMI will focus on strengthening and broadening the constituency for coastal and marine conservation by focusing on the following outcomes:

Five-year outcomes:

- Grantee and other organizations have developed a statewide network of support for MPAs, for broadening the Ocean Protection Council's coordinating role, and for other key conservation initiatives
- Organizations and leaders within the Latino community and among groups that have not previously been active in marine conservation have increased their effectiveness in advocating for key conservation initiatives
- Grantee organizations on the central coast build their capacity to maintain effective programs beyond 2013

Effective organizations have been vital to CCMI's strategies over the last five years and will continue to play a critical role, particularly in increasing and maintaining public and political support for strong implementation of the statewide MPA network and other initiatives.

CCMI will pursue these outcomes through the following activities:

- Assess the capacity of grantee organizations statewide and in different regions
- Provide financial and technical support to key organizations
- Develop strategies for sustaining achievements and key programs after the end of CCMI support
- Through financial and technical support focused on the MLPA Initiative, build grantee organization programs in support of ocean and coastal initiatives
- Through grantee convenings, build understanding and common strategies on key goals

Funding Strategy

Effective implementation and monitoring of the statewide MPA network as well as initiatives of the Ocean Protection Council and support for EBM will require strategic use of funding from diverse public and private sources. In the last several years, RLFF has worked with its partners to help restore and maintain funding and staffing to key programs through variations in state and federal budgets. While similar efforts must continue in the future, securing more stable and predictable sources of funding holds the key to the permanence of reforms and to healthy ocean ecosystems. We anticipate that both state and federal budgets in the next several years will have reduced funding for most government programs, including marine conservation programs. Working on long-term public funding sources that are more certain becomes a higher priority due to this prognosis.

The MLPA Initiative demonstrates the potential to trigger major progress in focused areas by combining the unique strengths and resources of both the public and private sectors. By encouraging more strategic use of limited public funds, CCMI intends

to maintain support for high-priority activities. CCMI will also focus on developing more sustained, dedicated funding for ocean conservation programs in California.

The revised CCMI strategy uses the potential of private philanthropy and policy support to trigger strategic changes in the conservation of marine ecosystems, in government programs, and in public support. By selecting the best tool or combination of tools, CCMI is well-positioned to achieve the outcomes described below.

Five-year outcomes:

- Annual state funding for key conservation programs is created and secure
- A strategy for securing new sources of funding is developed and launched
- New sources or allocations of state and federal funds stabilize funding for the statewide MPA network, the MPA Monitoring Enterprise, and other important initiatives

Securing stable funding for implementation of the statewide network of MPAs, including the MPA Monitoring Enterprise, is a core goal of CCMI over the next five years. Year-to-year variations in state funding reduce efficiency and frustrate planning. By year 2, CCMI intends to have developed and launched a comprehensive strategy for securing such funding.

RLFF will pursue these outcomes through the following activities:

- Support analyses of annual appropriations for key programs and identify alternatives
- Develop and execute a strategy for securing sustainable sources of funding and ensuring accountability

Tools for Implementing the Strategy

In executing its strategies, RLFF relies upon a range of tools, both singularly and in combination. These tools include grants and contracts, technical assistance, and policy and strategic advice. In the first five years of CCMI, grantees ranged from national conservation organizations to local resource conservation districts and citizens groups to carry out activities ranging from research and analysis of wildlife in the California Current to education and outreach about MPAs in Latino communities. Many of these grants were enhanced by consulting advice provided directly by RLFF or by its consultants. For example, a series of grants aimed at building the capacity of the conservation community to assist in the implementation of newly designated MPAs on the central coast was based upon a plan developed under contract by the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation; this plan, in turn, was informed by a communications strategy prepared by Spitfire Strategies and based in part on a survey of public attitudes by Fairbanks, Maslin, and Maullin, all under contract to RLFF.

RLFF also provides both technical assistance and policy support to partners other than grantees. For instance, a RLFF consultant's analysis and design work formed the basis for the MPA Monitoring Enterprise. RLFF staff also are regularly consulted regarding both technical and policy matters by agency leaders and staff.

In addition to its investments and technical assistance, RLFF has developed a monitoring and evaluation program that will assist in real-time learning across all five major CCMI strategies. This monitoring and evaluation program will focus on using a suite of indicators to assess progress towards achieving a targeted set of conservation outcomes. In the next five years, RLFF will collaborate with its grantees and other stakeholders to help develop and share this learning.

Schedule

The CCMI program was initially designed in 2003 to be reviewed in five years. In 2007, RLFF commissioned an independent evaluation of its progress in achieving the program's outcomes. The evaluation found that CCMI was well on its way to achieving its outcomes and identified refinements in grantmaking to assist in fully doing so. Based partly on this evaluation, RLFF revised the CCMI strategy. The revised strategy will guide CCMI's activities through 2013.

Evaluation

In revising the CCMI strategy, RLFF has also redesigned its grantmaking process in order to sharpen its focus on outcomes and on efficiently collecting information with which to monitor and evaluate its activities. RLFF will conduct reviews of major elements of its program once a year and intends to commission a more thorough independent review in 2011. This evaluation will provide the basis for any changes in strategies or approaches through 2013. RLFF will contract for a comprehensive independent evaluation in 2013.

Budget

The Foundation is providing \$30 million over six years, 2008-2013, in support of CCMI activities. Other Foundations supporting elements of the activities described here include the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Marisla Foundation, the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment, and the Annenberg Foundation.

Conclusion

California's coastal and ocean resources, among the most beautiful and diverse in the world, have attracted people and supported economic activities for many decades. Although the state's coasts and oceans are currently threatened by intensifying pressures from population growth, coastal development, fishing, pollution, and other human impacts, the current decade presents an opportunity to apply tools and strategies to reverse declines in ecosystem health and rebuild populations of wild species. This will

not be an easy task. However, CCMI is poised to enhance the efforts of partners in government, the conservation community, and the public to bring about lasting conservation outcomes.

Figure 1. Overall Logic Model

