



## **CDFG, Marine Region**

*Mission Statement: To protect, maintain, enhance and restore California's marine ecosystems for their ecological values and their use and enjoyment by the public*

# **MARINE REGION COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Marine Region of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) was established in 1997 to improve marine resources management. This region incorporates critical fisheries and habitat programs, environmental review, and water quality monitoring into a single organizational unit. The Marine Region is responsible for protecting and managing California's marine resources under the authority of laws and regulations created by the state Legislature, the Fish and Game Commission, and the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

When the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) was passed in 1998, the Marine Region was faced with the process of changing the way it does business. The MLMA recognizes that successful marine fisheries management is a collaborative process requiring ongoing communication and participation from all stakeholders. The MLMA requires that the overall fishery management system meets several objectives regarding constituent involvement:

- The process is open and seeks relevant information from interested people.
- Collaborative management is encouraged, and dispute resolution mechanisms are in place.
- The management system seeks to respond to the concerns of participants in the fishery and to changing conditions in the environment and markets, for instance.

The 1999 Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) directed the state to design and manage a network of marine protected areas in order to, among other things, protect marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage, as well as improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems. To accomplish this, the MLPA requires that DFG prepare a Master Plan which will guide the process to improve California's marine protected areas. The MLPA also requires significant public involvement and input and specifically states:

- The master plan shall be prepared with the advice, assistance, and involvement of participants in the various fisheries and their representatives, marine conservationists, marine scientists, and other interested persons.
- DFG shall take into account relevant information from local communities, and shall solicit comments and advice for the master plan from interested parties.

In order to effectively involve all interested parties in the decision-making process, it is necessary to first establish guidelines for good communication and organize the public involvement process. These tools and resources are designed to help DFG staff accomplish the goals of the MLMA and MLPA. The information found in this online handbook contains key tools and resources that DFG staff should be currently incorporating into their daily work.

The tools and resources found in handbook are broken into four major sections: **Tools for Marine Region Internal Communications**, **Tools for Marine Region External Communications**, **Tools for Internal and External Communications**, and **Tools for Public Involvement**. The information presented here is gathered from several sources: the MLMA Master Plan; the DFG Communication Plan, June 2001 (ComPlan); the DFG Marketing Communication Plan, July 2001 (Marcom Plan); Dr. Jon K. Hooper's workshop, "Natural Resources Communications Workshop"; and other references that are cited throughout the manual. This handbook is a "living document" and will be updated periodically.

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Although DFG has obviously developed internal and external communications over the years, with the passage of the MLMA, it was necessary to create a cohesive communication plan directed at internal and external communications. Specifically, this includes:

***Internal Communications*** is any communication between the Directorate and all personnel, and between all employees throughout the organization.

***External Communications*** is any DFG communication to any individual, group, agency, or the general public achieved through a variety of methods such as e-mails, newsletters, Web site, public hearings or published reports.

## **WHEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE USED**

All DFG Internal and External Communications need to follow the guidelines found in this handbook. In order to "brand" the Marine Region, we need to start sending consistent messages to the public. All DFG staff should be relaying the same key messages. This will greatly increase understanding of the Marine Region's mission and specifically what DFG is trying to accomplish. Whenever DFG staff develops any type of internal or external communications, they should use the guidelines found in this handbook.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

DFG is committed to developing an effective public involvement program and believes that the resulting exchange of information is essential for fishery management to be successful. To achieve meaningful, constructive, and effective participation, DFG believes that it is essential to focus on the following objectives:

- Provide diverse opportunities for constructive participation early in the process of developing and implementing a fishery management
- Provide necessary resources and personnel to successfully develop and implement a public involvement plan for fishery management. Choose appropriate techniques given the complexity of the fishery and varying levels of public concern and interest, ecological concerns, and legal and jurisdictional issues
- Provide wide distribution and dissemination of plain language, user friendly, reliable and timely information about fishery management preparation processes and related marine resource issues using a variety of communication methods
- Ensure that public groups are treated fairly in the development and selection of fishery management objectives, allocations, and management measures
- Encourage collaborative fisheries research with fishery participants, marine scientists, and other interested parties
- Provide a consensus building process that seeks positive and innovative solutions to conflict
- Develop a dispute resolution process, with established guidelines, that involves all interested parties

Provide the opportunity for periodic and regular review, evaluation and amendment of processes and plans

### **WHEN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SHOULD BE USED**

Public involvement is essential in at least three important areas of fishery management:

- Development of fishery management plan (FMP) objectives
- Development and selection of management alternatives to achieve FMP objectives
- Development and implementation of a research plan

There are a variety of ways to involve the public in the fishery management process including notifying the public of DFG's intent to develop an FMP, how the public can become involved and comment, and where and when

FMP documents will be available. This can be achieved through notice of announcements, public notification, fact sheet, informal request for comments, formal public review and comment, questionnaire and comment forms, newsletter, Web site, and other methods.

## **CONTACT**

If you have a question regarding this guide, contact *communications@dfg.ca.gov*.

## **HOW THESE TOOLS AND RESOURCES CAN BE OF VALUE TO YOU**

The tools and resources found in this handbook are aimed at making your job easier and more efficient! They will also provide better communications within DFG and with the public. We recognize that it's challenging to change the way you do your job. But we promise that with these tools, it will be easier and more rewarding for you to get your job done. It's a new and exciting time for the employees of the Department of Fish and Game.