

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 28, 2024

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Proposed Expansion of Marine Protected Areas

Recommended Action: Authorize the Mayor to sign a letter opposing, unless amended, the petition pending at the California Fish and Game Commission, which modifies the California Marine Protected Areas Network to expand the Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve and establish a new Marine Protected Area at or near Pleasure Point.

Background: In 2023, a petition was submitted to the California Fish and Game Commission by the Environment California Research and Policy Center, a nonprofit political organization that lobbies for environmental legislation, and Azul, a Bay Area-based ocean conservation non-governmental organization, to modify the California Marine Protected Area Network to provide enhanced protections for the state's resilient kelp forests. The proposal includes the expansion of Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve (SMR) and the establishment of a no-take new Marine Protected Area (MPA) at or near Pleasure Point.

During the City Council meeting held on March 14, 2024, Mayor Brown requested that staff draft a letter expressing opposition to the expansion of the Natural Bridges SMR and establishment of a new MPA at or near Pleasure Point for the City Council's consideration.

Discussion: In the petition, Environment California has also proposed the creation of a Pleasure Point State Marine Conservation Area (MCA) as an alternative to an MPA. This alternative would allow for recreational hook-and-line fishing and spearfishing, striking a balance between kelp forest protection and recreation and low-impact subsistence fishing.

Staff recommends submitting the attached letter to the California Fish and Game Commission opposing the current petition, unless amended to propose a new MPA rather than MCA near Pleasure Point, preserving recreational activities while promoting environmental sustainability.

Fiscal Impact: None.

Attachments:

1. Draft Letter

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager

Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk, Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager