

# Embedding Ocean Conservation into California's DNA

## The Campbell Foundation's role in making marine protected areas stick

The good news: legislation passes that your foundation cares about. The rub: government demonstrates limited capacity to implement it.

Situations like these often give philanthropy cause for pause. When should foundations step in to support implementation of government mandates? What circumstances make that the right thing to do? If foundations get involved, how do they best partner in a way that builds government capacity and prevents foundations from taking on what should be the responsibility of government?

Here's the story of how The Campbell Foundation—established to improve the conditions of America's largest and most ecologically diverse and productive estuary systems—played a key role in collaborative efforts to implement a state law calling for the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs) and how that public-private partnership established an enduring legacy of marine conservation for the state of California.

In 1999, California's Legislature enacted a law mandating the creation of a statewide network of marine protected areas. This legislation, called the



## What are Marine Protected Areas? What's their status in the U.S.?

A marine protected area (MPA) is an area of ocean, estuary, or large lake where human activities are more strictly regulated than the surrounding waters—similar to state or national parks on land. MPAs have special legal protections such as limits on fishing or other human impacts and are designed to protect natural or cultural resources. Some MPAs, often referred to as “marine reserves”, allow no fishing or harvest of any kind, while others may restrict fishing to certain species or gear. An estimated less than 3 percent of oceans are currently protected by MPAs. Approximately one quarter of U.S. marine waters are protected as a form of MPA but only 3 percent are in no-take marine reserves, which are places in the ocean that are completely protected from uses that remove animals and plants or alter their habitats.

See a National Geographic map of MPAs worldwide:  
[ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/take-action/marine-protected-areas](http://ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/take-action/marine-protected-areas)

Learn more about the status of U.S. MPAs:  
[marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov/aboutmpas/status-of-usa-mpas-2016.html](http://marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov/aboutmpas/status-of-usa-mpas-2016.html)

See who's funded MPAs on the funding map:  
[FundingtheOcean.org](http://FundingtheOcean.org)

Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), promised a way of securing the state's marine and coastal ecosystems, on which so many Californians and the state's economy rely. While the law forged new ground in the protection of U.S. coastal wildlife and habitats, it came with a familiar twist. The ambition of its conservation vision was not matched by the level of resources made available to support its implementation.

When it came to the MLPA, philanthropy stepped in after two unsuccessful attempts at implementation by the state. Numerous factors, including strong opposition from fishermen to new regulations and the economic recession, kept the MLPA from reaching the finish line. In 2004, five foundations—the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Marisla Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and The Campbell Foundation—set implementation of the law on a clearer course. Working with the Resources Legacy Fund, a nonprofit that advances the conservation of natural resources through creative solutions customized to the philanthropic goals of donors, the State of California and its private partners created the MLPA Initiative, formed by an initial legal memorandum of understanding that laid out a transparent implementation process with milestones and timelines that would trigger the foundation support.

Under the MLPA Initiative, foundation dollars were used to support a robust, science-based public process to design MPAs along California's 1,000 miles of coast, taking a regional approach that divided the state into four sections: North Coast, North Central Coast, Central Coast, and South Coast. Thousands of hours were spent hosting live webcast public meetings all over the state, where all stakeholders, including Native American tribes, government officials, fishermen, and interested citizens could contribute to the design of the MPAs. The public could and did weigh in on issues ranging from the technical details of marine science to the specific proposals for MPA locations, boundaries, and regulations.





All five foundations invested in a pooled fund managed by the Resources Legacy Fund to support the MLPA Initiative. In addition, The Campbell Foundation also made direct grants to nonprofits engaged in MPA efforts. The Campbell Foundation recognized the extensive experience the Resources Legacy Fund brought and the value of the pooled fund, although it had its own reasons for making grants itself. “We wanted direct relationships with grantees that created additional opportunities to understand the work they were doing,” says Samantha Campbell, president of The Campbell Foundation. This gave the foundation additional perspective on the MPA implementation process. Grantees benefited too. “It was capacity building for smaller groups to gain experience managing multiple funders and multiple grantee reports,” says Kaitilin Gaffney, ocean coast and fisheries director at the Resources Legacy Fund.

In 2012, eight years after the MLPA Initiative got underway, California approved the nation’s first science-based network of MPAs. California’s MPAs were designed to cover about 16.5 percent of California’s state waters—a total of 850 square miles from Oregon to the border of Mexico.



“We needed to help the state not just implement, but also monitor the MPAs”

SAMANTHA CAMPBELL, THE CAMPBELL FOUNDATION



This might have been a logical exit point for foundation funders. According to Samantha, there was an argument for that. “We had funded the designation of MPAs for several years. Some wondered, especially while juggling other funding priorities, if it was the right time to move on to something new.” Samantha felt strongly that the foundation needed to stay the course. “We needed to help the state not just implement, but also monitor the MPAs. Monitoring is integral to telling the story of the MLPA. It could help us see the results from the creation of the MPAs, and clearly understand how this policymaking improves the environment, or learn what could have been done differently to achieve a better outcome. Either way, monitoring was critically needed to create a feedback loop of information.”

Samantha decided to appeal to her four funding partners for multi-year support through a first round of monitoring, so that the MPAs were positioned to be managed with adequate baseline information. “The goal of this work was to help the state embed MPA implementation and monitoring into its DNA,” says Samantha. The participating foundations had good reason to expect their continued support could help accomplish this goal. “The MPA design effort had stayed on track, on budget, and on time, largely due to well written memoranda of understanding with clear roles, responsibilities, and timelines,” says Kaitilin. “As experienced conservation funders, they also knew the risk of investing in a design phase without a focus on long-term effective management, which in many previous cases has led to ‘paper parks.’”



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**KAITILIN GAFFNEY, RESOURCES LEGACY FUND**



Recognizing the importance of science, the State of California invested \$16 million over a period of several years in a series of scientific studies leading to a baseline characterization of the new MPAs. Samantha and her foundation colleagues realized they also had an important role to play, supporting design of a public web portal that could be used to access the MPA monitoring data and share information. Through this website, MPA-related studies and data are available to the public and to the research community. This facilitates public reporting, as well as reporting internally within the state. “The intention was for the state to feel it’s easy to

## Want More Background on the Evolution of California MPAs?

This case study focuses on The Campbell Foundation; however, many actors collaborated to make California’s MPAs a reality. In 2013, the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation released *Securing California’s Ocean Legacy*, a report which provides context and history leading up to the enactment of the MLPA, as well as many more details regarding the evolution of MPA implementation and monitoring, including how private foundations and state government were involved.

Read the report: [resourceslegacyfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Securing\\_Californias\\_Ocean\\_Legacy\\_Final.pdf](https://resourceslegacyfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Securing_Californias_Ocean_Legacy_Final.pdf)



invest in other priorities. I know that MPA implementation is ultimately the responsibility of the state, but we need a little more time to secure this effort.’ The funders trusted that commitment and the state came through. The following year, California began dedicating \$2.5 million annually in the state budget to support ongoing MPA monitoring.”

Campbell and the other foundations have remained committed, knowing implementation of policy often takes decades to fully take root. Together, they recently promised an additional phase of support for MPA implementation until 2020. Through their funding, these foundation partners continue to support community engagement and data collection for the MPAs, including “citizen science” efforts. These range from school groups monitoring tide pools, to training volunteer SCUBA divers that count fish in kelp forests, as well as efforts to promote local stewardship including education and outreach programs. Ultimately, their long-term support has helped embed the new MPAs throughout California. “It’s not just money, but there’s been a shift in the way the state perceives its role in monitoring.



It's not done or perfect, but it's a real change," says Samantha. The success of the MLPA has in turn helped to spur a more collaborative and partnership-oriented approach to a range of other ocean conservation efforts in the state, including efforts related to state fisheries management and ocean acidification.



Implementing the MLPA required strong collaborative effort among the participating funders, each bringing their unique strengths to the effort. The Campbell Foundation brought "a deep knowledge of the details," says Kaitilin. "They also brought an important pragmatic perspective. They got that things like this take time and can be very complicated. They understood the importance of coming at this challenge from multiple angles and that there wasn't an automatic end date to the work. When it comes to public policy, it's important to stay engaged long enough to ensure you don't undermine the initial success achieved and to consider the cost of moving on to other things. The Campbell Foundation really understands the value of perseverance."

## Discover more information

[campbellfoundation.org](http://campbellfoundation.org)

[ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/take-action/marine-protected-areas](http://ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/take-action/marine-protected-areas)

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[resourceslegacyfund.org](http://resourceslegacyfund.org)

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This case study was developed as a companion piece to stories shared through Foundation Center's Funding the Ocean project

**FundingtheOcean.org.**

These case studies showcase the rich and varied narratives of giving in the ocean conservation space through comprehensive storytelling techniques, giving insight to the philanthropy landscape and approach for foundations, researchers, and practitioners.

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This case study was written by Anna Pond.

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