



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** California Ocean Protection Council  
**FROM:** Jenn Phillips, Policy Advisor, and Sara Briley, Sea Grant Fellow  
**DATE:** April 7, 2017  
**RE:** Update on International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification and UN Ocean Conference

**1. International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification**

California, with Ocean Protection Council (OPC) as its representative, is one of the founding members of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (OA Alliance; [oaalliance.org](http://oaalliance.org)). The Alliance brings together nations, subnational entities, tribes, first nations, and non-governmental organizations and entities to jointly address ocean acidification. Mechanisms for addressing ocean acidification at an international scale include the development of jurisdictional action plans, efforts to increase awareness of this climate change impact on our ocean, and concomitant funding commitments. The OA Alliance was initiated within the Pacific Coast Collaborative (PCC) subcommittee on ocean acidification. Specifically, the Pacific Coast Climate Leadership Action Plan that the Governors of California, Oregon, and Washington and Premier of British Columbia signed in June of 2016 commits the PCC to: “Initiate the development of an international network of countries, states, provinces and cities that will work together to address the threat of changing ocean conditions with a particular focus on ocean acidification.”

This past June, members of the OA Alliance, including California, participated in the [UN conference to implement Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development](#). The conference was convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York, coinciding with World Oceans Day on June 8.

California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird announced the [OA Alliance voluntary commitment](#) to increase its membership and support members in releasing action plans throughout 2018 and 2019. He also described related commitments on ocean acidification across the states of [Washington](#), [Oregon](#), and [California](#) that are intended to implement United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 14.3: Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels. In addition to voluntary commitments related to Sustainable Development Goal 14.3, California submitted several other voluntary commitments related to our work on marine protected areas, marine pollution, sustainable fisheries, data management, sea level rise, and marine renewable energy.

Those voluntary commitments can be accessed here, and by filtering by 'Ocean Protection Council': <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>

Also while in New York, the OA Alliance, including members Chile, France, the State of California, the State of Washington, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Taylor Shellfish and Scripps Institute for Oceanography, hosted a side event on World Oceans Day, which included formal remarks from the following UN Members:

- Honorable Dr. Puakena Boreham, Minister of Natural Resources, Tuvalu
- Catherine Chabaud, delegate for Marine and Coastal Affairs at the French Ministry for Ecological Transition
- Ambassador Isauro Torres, Director for Environment and Oceanic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile

Speaking to the importance of our work, Chilean Ambassador Torres described why Chile had joined the OA Alliance, remarking, *"For us the process of acidification is a high concern, taking in consideration the economic, environmental and social consequences for a country that has more than 4000 kilometres of coastlines, home to many species and ecosystems that need to be protected. The ocean is also home to key economic activities. Chile is one of the 10 main ocean economies of the world, employing more than 100,000 people in direct jobs in the fisheries sector both industrial and artisanal."*

Bill Dewey, from Taylor Shellfish, discussed how the oyster industry had been impacted on the Pacific Coast of the United States, and steps the industry took to adapt by increasing their monitoring and research, treating hatchery waters for increased pH levels, breeding OA-resistant oysters and experimenting with different plants like seaweed and seagrass to help absorb carbon dioxide in the water column.

Jenn Phillips presented the [OA Action Plan Toolkit](#), which contains a listing of suggested actions, both regulatory and non-regulatory, that members might consider when crafting their own OA Action Plan. Jenn encouraged the gathered governments, businesses, and organizations to take actions now to protect vulnerable resources and communities, providing as a tangible and replicable model [California's work on the West Coast Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Science Panel](#) and its efforts to implement the Panel's recommended actions. The content in the Toolkit has been collected and adapted from several sources, and new creative ideas and unique solutions will emerge and be added to the Toolkit as members work to build a locally-relevant OA Action Plan.

At a second event with partners from [The Ocean and Climate Platform](#), Ken Alex, Senior Policy Advisor to California Governor Jerry Brown, spoke about the need to elevate ocean acidification and other climate-related changes to higher political levels across national and subnational governments, underscoring the importance of moving from research to immediate actions on the ground to adapt and build resiliency.

In addition to the highlights above, the traveling team was able to secure several meetings with potential new members (including Sweden, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Seychelles, Palau, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Indian Ocean Commission, New Caledonia, and the European Commission), in addition to other critical partners in this work.

The work over the past 10 months of the OA Alliance culminated in members and partners at the Ocean Conference calling on UN member nations to act on ocean acidification by making deeper commitments to reduce carbon emissions and protect the economic and cultural resources at risk in coastal communities around the world. You can read more about the experience in New York from Secretary Laird [here](#).

The OA Alliance is currently comprised of 45 government and affiliate members. The Alliance will continue to focus heavily on recruitment to ensure robust participation and impact at the 2017 Our Ocean conference in Malta and COP 23 in Germany later this year and beyond.

We are pleased to welcome new members to the OA Alliance including:

- Tuvalu
- United Arab Emirates
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Université Côté d'Azur
- New Zealand Ocean Acidification Community (NZOAC)
- J. Hunter Pearls

A key tool to accomplish the goals of the OA Alliance as described in the [Call to Action](#) is the development of OA Action Plans. The Alliance team has hosted a series of webinars between February and August that help members better understand the content and format that is encouraged within an individual plan. The webinars also assist members by sharing sample legislation or policies that have successfully created OA task forces, commissioned reports, or established monitoring networks. A webinar was hosted on July 20<sup>th</sup> to finalize the letter of commitment that all current members of the OA Alliance will provide by late August 2017 endorsing the Call to Action and confirming membership. As subsequent members join, they will be asked to submit the letter of commitment and complete member profiles.

As mentioned at the April 26, 2017 OPC meeting, ongoing work that California has funded, facilitated, and is leading will be added to California's Action Plan, as well as longer-term goals and activities, and will serve as a model for other countries, states, cities, and tribes looking for similar solutions to protecting their vulnerable resources. OPC staff is working with partners now on the scope, scale, content, release and roll-out of the Action Plan so that it is widely received, comprehensive, and held up as a model for other global governments.