

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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TO: California Ocean Protection Council
FROM: Peter Douglas, Executive Director
RE: Project for Permanent Funding of Coast and Ocean Conservation

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The single most important thing California can do to ensure effective, long-term conservation of its coast and ocean resources is to identify, establish and activate a permanent, reliable, and adequate funding program to support implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act, Marine Life Management Act, the California Coastal Act, and the McAteer-Petris and Suisun Marsh Preservation Acts. Legislation introduced this year by Senator Joe Simitian (SB 956), is intended to create such a program by imposition of a per night, per room tax on overnight visitor serving accommodations in the 20 coastal counties of the State. The bill was recently heard and held in the Senate Natural Resources Committee on the understanding the author would do more work to develop a funding approach that has broader support, that can be effectively and efficiently implemented, and that includes a public-private partnership with the California hospitality industry (if the room tax is the ultimate source of funding).

PROPOSAL

Our request is that the Council direct staff to develop a specific project proposal to retain an experienced consultant to design a specific funding program that would result in a permanent source of adequate funding to carry out the coastal and ocean resource protection provisions set forth in the MLPA, MLMA, the California Coastal Act, and the McAteer-Petris and Suisun Marsh Preservation Acts. An RFP for such a project should include the following elements:

1. Description of experience and a demonstrated record of successful innovation in identifying and promoting long-term funding for public interest programs.
2. Require inclusion of a design for a public-private partnership for the funding program that relies on incentives as well as requirements for participation. For example, if a hotel room tax is utilized, design a program that includes incentives for voluntary participation such as tax incentives, promotional benefits for the participating partners, marketing elements, etc., as well as mandatory provisions to ensure equitable participation.

3. Provide background on similar funding programs, if any, in other states or countries that could be looked to as examples of what works.
4. Design the mechanism for the administration of the program such as revenue collection and distribution.
5. Identify a public education initiative that can be used to provide information to the public and those who would be making contributions into the coastal and ocean resource protection fund about the uses to which the fund will be put and the coast and ocean conservation benefits that will accrue to current and future generations as a result of the fund.
6. Identify incentives to stakeholder groups that could result in their support or neutrality relative to the establishment of the funding program.

The work product of this project would be submitted to the Council for consideration and possible recommendation to the Administration and the Legislature. Project suggestions and recommendations could be used in considering enactment of legislation to establish the permanent funding program. The audience for the work product promulgated by the consultant would include the Council, the Administration, the Legislature, state agencies, stakeholders, the general public, and the media.

CONCLUSION

The anticipated results of this undertaking would be the preparation of a specific, realistic and politically viable program proposal, in the form of a project report, for a permanent funding source to support the previously identified coastal and ocean programs. The report would serve as a frame of reference for implementation by the Legislature and the Administration.