



## Workshop Summary

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### Ocean Protection Council Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT)

#### ***“Exploring Ocean Health as a Scientific Concept and Management Goal”***

Hosted by the California Ocean Science Trust

June 11, 2014, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Elihu M. Harris State Building, Room 1, Oakland, CA

\* For full workshop proceedings, visit the [OPC website](#).

### Workshop Summary

Across California ocean and coastal agencies and beyond – embedded in legal mandates, management plans, and policy guidance – there is a common theme: shared goals for a healthy, resilient California ocean. The scientific community has also been developing ideas and exploring different methodologies for measuring ocean health. The workshop brought together the scientific and decision making communities to begin a dialogue about ocean health as a scientific concept and management goal. Below are four main themes that emerged, which will guide conversations going forward.

#### ***Policymakers and managers see value in building a shared vision of ocean health.***

Ocean and coastal agencies, departments, commissions, and boards may use different words, and have different approaches, but their mandates, policies and doctrines all support ocean health. A shared vision could advance stronger, more informed decisions about our ocean by helping to align management and policy mandates, leveraging limited resources, and demonstrating utility for the Governor’s Environmental Goals and Policy Report (EGPR). Decision makers and the OPC-SAT agreed that the challenge will lie in building a vision that is broad, pragmatic, and resilient across administrations.

#### ***To build a shared vision, decision makers and scientists must work together.***

Connecting science to policy is a complex and iterative process that involves decision makers and scientists working together to identify and meet science needs. The highest levels of ocean policy in the State, including the Governor’s Office and the Ocean Protection Council, expressed a need for tracking progress toward ocean health and anticipating future science needs. Decision makers expressed a specific need for scientists to help explore how MPAs can serve as living laboratories for monitoring ecosystem change, investigate efficiencies between water quality and Marine Protected Area (MPA) monitoring, and articulate tradeoffs and uncertainty. The process for developing a shared vision of ocean health must bring scientists and state entities together, spanning boundaries within and among these communities to build a common understanding.

#### ***Building a shared vision for ocean health is about strengthening institutional partnerships to span boundaries.***

Rather than a single definition, exploring ocean health is a process that involves bringing together new science with management goals to find synergies among traditionally disparate communities of managers and stakeholders. For example, the overlap between Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS)

and MPAs offer an important opportunity to bridge across water quality and MPA monitoring communities. Ocean Science Trust has teamed up with the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) to develop an approach that goes beyond the traditional bounds of water quality and natural resource monitoring by bringing together interdisciplinary scientists, strengthening ties between the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resource Agency, as well as stakeholders that do not often have the opportunity to collaborate. This is just one case study of the kind of work that can help lay the foundation to define and track ocean health.

***As the role of academic scientists in ocean policy and management expands, their perspectives continue to evolve.***

Managers and decision makers in California continue to invite scientists to have a seat at the table – they value the expertise and perspectives that scientists bring. However, what is being asked of scientists and how scientists view these processes are changing. Scientists are being asked to use their scientific way of thinking to interpret the complicated scientific landscape, understand the history of knowledge behind an issue, and to provide guidance on how to connect to the broader community. Scientists are adapting to this need: applying their valuable expertise to diverse science to policy dialogues, communicating and translating science for broader audiences, and allowing the policy landscape to inform some of their research questions.

The OPC-SAT is already involved in initiatives across the landscape of ocean health that address state priorities:

- The [West Coast Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Science Panel](#): an innovative coast-wide collaboration advancing across academic and political landscapes, the OPC-SAT scoped this effort at its November 19, 2012 meeting.
- Advancing Science in Support of Sustainable Fisheries: at the [September 4, 2013 OPC-SAT meeting](#), scientists and decision makers identified and discussed opportunities to support fisheries initiatives that are opening new pathways and strengthening collaboration.

## Looking Forward

We have the opportunity to explore an aligning process that would utilize the Ocean Protection Council as the high level policy venue that brings together state agencies, the OPC-SAT as the conduit to the scientific community, and Ocean Science Trust as convener and science integration experts. Decision makers from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the Natural Resources Agency expressed interest in participating, but outreach to additional departments, commissions, boards, and conservancies is needed.

Outcomes of the meeting include:

- Broad agreement that launching a conversation around building a shared vision of ocean health for California would be valuable, and the Ocean Protection Council is the appropriate high level policy venue;
- Momentum to move forward with designing an aligning process to advance this dialogue, balancing credibility and transparency and bringing together decision makers and scientists;
- Designing an aligning process to build a shared vision for the state fundamentally differs from developing scientific indices;
- The OPC-SAT serving as a forum for the collective wisdom of the scientific community on ocean health as a scientific concept will be critical to an aligning process;
- Considering the role of metrics in tracking our progress toward ocean health could support the Ocean Protection Council and the Governor's Environmental Goals and Policy Report.