



CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

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MEMORANDUM

TO: California Ocean Protection Council

FROM: Drew Bohan, Executive Policy Officer, Ocean Protection Council

DATE: June 14, 2007

RE: Resolution on climate change

REQUESTED ACTION

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the attached resolution on climate change.

SUMMARY

Governor Schwarzenegger and the Legislature have made California a leader in addressing global climate change by implementing the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), which sets ambitious reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions and requires that "all state agencies shall consider and implement strategies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions."

Climate change is likely to have dramatic ocean impacts, including rising sea levels, ocean warming and acidification, and ocean regime changes. The attached OPC resolution identifies high-priority steps OPC can take to begin addressing this problem in California.

Sea level rise is among the most significant changes likely to impact California. According to the California Climate Change Center, "if heat-trapping emissions continue unabated and temperatures rise into the higher warming range, sea level is expected to rise an additional 22 to 35 inches by the end of the century." California has become a world leader in attempting to reduce the impacts of climate change by reducing our generation of greenhouse gases. At the same time, we need to begin to assess the consequences of likely changes to our coast and ocean and, where appropriate, begin planning to adapt to these changes.

ROLE OF THE OPC

The California Ocean Protection Council has already begun to take actions that will inform climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies statewide, such as installing ocean observing systems and supporting climate change research. The attached resolution proposes additional actions:

1. Promote climate change mitigation or adaptation measures in OPC-funded projects – This provision of the resolution directs that amendments be made to the OPC funding guidelines to require that project applicants describe their efforts to consider the potential for their project to generate greenhouse gas emissions and what steps, if any, they have taken to reduce those emissions.
2. Work with the California Climate Action Team’s Subcommittee on Scenario Analysis – Under this proposal, OPC would work with the various departments that have ocean-related responsibilities but are not currently working with the Climate Action Team and help coordinate their climate change efforts with those of the Team.
3. Encourage LCP amendments – Under this proposal, the OPC would encourage coastal communities to amend their local coastal plans (LCPs) to include an element that focuses on the likely impacts of sea level rise.
4. Pursue methods for assessing climate change impacts – Sea level rise is likely to have dramatic impacts on some sections of California’s 1,100 mile coast. Little is known about this issue at this time. This section directs OPC staff to commission a study to examine potential impacts so as to help the state, local communities, and other entities better plan for sea level rise. For example, based on the data from the California Climate Change Center report, the San Francisco Airport could be flooded by the latter part of this century if measures aren’t taken to armor it properly. Major planning decisions made today should be informed by the best predictions of the sea level several decades from now.
5. Examine the environmental impacts of ocean energy projects – Energy generated by ocean waves and tides is attracting a lot of attention. There is great potential for this type of renewable energy production off California’s coast. This proposal would direct OPC staff to conduct informational forums in California to inform the public about ocean energy and to receive public input. The forums would not be formal scoping sessions, but would be designed to obtain a better understanding of what issues are likely to arise as ocean energy projects move forward. This proposal would also direct staff to provide partial funding for a study that looks at the environmental impacts of ocean energy in California.
6. Fund climate change impact research – The OPC is already funding climate change research; this proposal directs staff to continue to fund appropriate projects.

CONCLUSION

Climate change is a significant and growing problem. Because California is a large coastal state dependent on its 1,100 miles of coastline that supports an ocean-dependent economy valued at \$46 billion, climate change ocean impacts must be examined. This resolution directs staff to take steps to help California prepare for this problem.