



## MEMORANDUM

TO: California Ocean Protection Council

FROM: Amber Mace, Executive Director, Ocean Protection Council

DATE: August 11, 2011

RE: Ocean Protection Council Support for the Principles of the Marine Debris Act Reauthorization Amendments of 2011 (HR 1171)

ATTACHMENT: [Letter from the Council Chair](#)

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## REQUESTED ACTION

Staff recommends that the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) approve sending to the U.S. House of Representatives leadership the attached letter from the council chair in support of the principles of the Marine Debris Act Reauthorization Amendments of 2011 (HR 1171). HR 1171 seeks to address the adverse impacts of marine debris to the marine environment, navigation safety and the economy through research, source identification, assessment, reduction, removal, and prevention.

## SUMMARY:

The OPC has actively engaged in efforts to reduce marine debris. Supporting the principles of HR 1171 is consistent with the OPC's February 2007 resolution on reducing and preventing marine debris and subsequent November 2008 implementation strategy.

Over 14 billion pounds of trash end up in the ocean and soil our beaches every year. This trash hampers tourism, harms commercial fisheries, and is taking a toll on the marine environment. Marine debris includes everything from single-use plastic shopping bags, to derelict fishing gear, bottle caps, cigarette butts, plastic bottles, lighters, and more. In addition to affecting 267 marine species through ingestion or entanglement, this trash has devastating impacts on the U.S. economy. Municipalities pay millions of dollars a year to clean beaches and keep trash out of waterways.

Enacted in 2006, the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (the Act) established NOAA's Marine Debris Program, which has successfully focused on preventing, identifying, and reducing marine debris in our coastal and marine resources and waterways. A bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Act has been introduced as the Marine Debris Act Reauthorization Amendments of 2011 (HR 1171). HR 1171 currently has 24 cosponsors, including Farr and Rohrabacher from California. Because NOAA's Marine Debris Program has

OPC SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLES OF THE  
MARINE DEBRIS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AMENDMENTS OF 2011 (HR1171)

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matured and has established strong partnerships including federal and state agencies, NGO's, tribes, and industry, HR1171 enjoys strong support.

The reauthorization will maintain current funding levels. It will also codify the following minor amendments to the original legislation, which strengthen the engagement of NOAA and the Coast Guard:

- Allow NOAA to more comprehensively address the issue of marine debris: The reauthorization specifies that NOAA will address the adverse impacts of marine debris to the marine environment, navigation safety and the economy through research, source identification, assessment, reduction, removal and prevention.
- Prioritize research on and assessment of derelict fishing gear and plastics pertaining to the health of the marine environment, navigation safety, and economy.
- Include a new section on development of products and tools to improve the effectiveness of addressing marine debris. These tools will be available to researchers, stakeholders, and public.
- Highlight NOAA's role as national and regional coordinator in order to strengthen partnerships between NOAA and federal, state, local, regional, and tribal efforts to address marine debris.
- Include a new section on international cooperation and leadership: This includes coordinating an International Marine Debris Conference not less than every four years.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:**

The proposed letter of support for the funding proposals discussed therein is consistent with the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA), Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code because it suggests changes in federal law and policy that support the goals of COPA and seek to improve protection, conservation and restoration of ocean ecosystems in federal and state waters off the state's coast. (Pub. Res. Code § 35615(b)(1)).

**CONSISTENCY WITH OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Support of federal funding proposals will help implement specific provisions of the OPC's current Five-year Strategic Plan. Specifically, **Goal C – Ocean and Coastal Water Quality, Objective 5 – Marine Debris** calls for the OPC to reduce ocean and coastal debris and its impacts to ocean ecosystems.