

CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

Staff Recommendation
November 29, 2010

**Sea Grant Research Program 2011:
Support for Improved Management of Ocean and Coastal Resources**

File Nos.: 10-004-02 and 10-004-03
Project Manager: Pam Rittelmeyer

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Adopt the 2011 Ocean Protection Council/Sea Grant Research Priorities and authorize disbursement of up to \$1,080,000 to the University of California Sea Grant Program (UC) and University of Southern California (USC) Sea Grant Program to fund ocean research consistent with these priorities.

LOCATION: Statewide

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE: Research and Monitoring

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Ocean Protection Council [2011 Research Priority Focal Areas](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 35500 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The Ocean Protection Council hereby(1) approves the 2011 Ocean Protection Council Research Priority Issue Areas, and (2) authorizes the disbursement of up to \$1,080,000 (one million eighty thousand dollars) to the two California Sea Grant programs, consisting of \$800,000 to the Regents of the University of California, California Sea Grant College Program and \$280,000 to the University of Southern California, USC Sea Grant Program, to solicit, review, and fund research projects that fulfill the research priorities.

This authorization is subject to the condition that each Sea Grant College program shall present projects selected through a review process to the Council for final concurrence on the grant awards.”

Staff further recommends that the Council adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the Council hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the Ocean Protection Act.
2. The proposed is consistent with the current Ocean Protection Council's project funding guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) has worked with both of California's Sea Grant programs (University of Southern California and University of California) since 2005 to promote ocean and coastal research projects that inform state management needs and policy development. This new authorization will continue this important partnership by identifying research priorities for the coming year and disbursing \$800,000 to California Sea Grant and \$280,000 to USC Sea Grant for a new round of research projects to improve management decisions affecting the ocean and coastal environment. Research proposals will undergo extensive scientific and state agency management review at which point they will then be presented to the Council for concurrence prior to award of the subgrants.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The grant funds will be used to solicit, review, and fund research projects that inform and improve management decisions affecting the ocean and coastal environment. The two Sea Grant programs will issue request for proposals (RFPs) based on the OPC-adopted research priorities. Proposals will go through scientific review and their relevance to state policy will be evaluated as detailed below.

Research Priority Issue Areas

Staff recommends that the OPC approve the following proposed research issue areas for the 2011 Sea Grant Research Program funding solicitations, as discussed in Exhibit 1:

- Climate Change Adaptation to Address Sea-Level Rise and Other Climate Impacts to Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems
- Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning to Inform Decisions about Ocean Uses Off the California Coast
- Land-Based Management to Reduce Impacts on Ocean and Coastal Resources
- Preparing for Emerging Industrial Use of the Ocean
- Sustainable Fisheries Management to Ensure Healthy and Thriving Marine Ecosystems and Fishing Communities

The Ocean Protection Council Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT), coordinated by the California Ocean Science Trust, is tasked with convening working groups composed of scientists and resource managers to develop research priorities associated with each of these issue areas. These research priorities will be included in the request for proposals distributed by the two Sea Grant Programs. Proposals must address one of the priority issue areas to be awarded grant funding.

The Regents of the University of California, California Sea Grant College Program (California Sea Grant)

The California Sea Grant Program, which is administered by the Regents of the University of California at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, supports a Research and Outreach Initiative that is multidisciplinary and is directly linked to state management needs. Collaboration among researchers from diverse scientific backgrounds allows a comprehensive analysis of an issue, including how findings can be utilized in a management context. This results in the development of practical tools and products that state resource managers can apply to decision-making.

Proposed initiatives will only be considered for funding if they are comprised of a multidisciplinary research team that also includes a state resource manager or scientist. Teams will also be required to:

- Synthesize the current state of the knowledge on their research topic into a series of policy papers,
- Produce applied tools or products (such as useful indicators or predictive models), and
- Disseminate their results to policy makers and other interested communities.

The University of Southern California Sea Grant Program (USC Sea Grant)

As in years past, funding for the USC program is directed at proposals addressing urban issues as the overarching priority. More specifically, research focusing on topics such as water quality, land use planning, ecosystem health, coastal hazard planning and mitigation, and science education are encouraged. Proposals must include a strong connection to management by specifying outreach mechanisms to ensure results are integrated with state management needs.

Proposal Review Process for Both Programs

Proposals will undergo a review by the Resources Agency Sea Grant Advisory Panel (RASGAP), which will look for consistency with OPC priorities and relevance to state policy. All proposals will also be reviewed by an independent scientific peer review team to judge technical merit. OPC staff will be involved in the review process, including the technical review and final decision-making. Projects selected through this process will be presented to the Council for concurrence at a future meeting.

Each Sea Grant program will provide all post-award grant administration, including reporting and financial accounting on the grants chosen for funding.

PROJECT GRANTEE:

The two Sea Grant programs have an established, well-respected process for evaluating, prioritizing, and administering research grants related to coastal and ocean resources. Sea Grant's reliable review process and compatible mission makes it an obvious partner to review and select research projects that address the priorities of the council. These programs are part of the Sea Grant College Network, a national, university-based program funded primarily by the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and dedicated to the understanding, conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.

PROJECT HISTORY:

The shared priorities and existing relationship between Sea Grant and the Council make coordinating OPC research projects with the Sea Grant review process practical and cost-effective. Continuing this partnership provides the ability to collaborate on issues that are a priority for the OPC and Sea Grant.

The proposed project also benefits from an existing relationship between the Resources Agency and Sea Grant. RASGAP was formed through legislation to give the state a role in reviewing scientific proposals submitted to Sea Grant to determine their benefit to the management of the state's ocean and coastal resources. RASGAP is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Policy and consists of representatives from state government, the state legislature, state universities, and industries related to the ocean and coastal environment.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Ocean Protection Council to California Sea Grant College Program	\$800,000
Ocean Protection Council to USC Sea Grant Program	<u>\$280,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$1,080,000

The anticipated source of funds is the fiscal year FY 09/10 appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of these funds for the protection of beaches, bays coastal waters and watersheds consistent with Section 35650 of the Public Resources Code, establishing the California Ocean Protection Trust Fund (Pub. Res. Code § 75060(g)). Under Section 35650(b), Ocean Protection Trust Fund monies may be expended for projects authorized by the OPC that are identified as appropriate Trust Fund purposes. The project is consistent with the Trust Fund purposes as discussed in the following section.

This project is also appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 75060(g), which identifies as a priority for Proposition 84 funding projects which develop scientific data needed to adaptively manage the marine resources and reserves of the state.

Traditionally, OPC has funded \$800,000 to California Sea Grant and \$200,000 to USC Sea Grant. However, due to the unusual circumstances caused by the bond freeze, the 2010 Sea Grant Research Projects were acquired from the previous year's review process. Since the project chosen by USC only required \$120,000, the Council approved the staff recommendation to withhold the remaining \$80,000 for the next round of funding for USC Sea Grant (Exhibit 2).

OPC research proposals funded through this partnership require a 50 percent match. In addition, the agreements with the Sea Grant program will place a cap of 25 percent on university overhead for proposed projects.

CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:

This project is consistent the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, in the following respects:

The Ocean Protection Act identifies trust fund allowable projects in PRC Section 35650 (b)(2)(F), as including projects that “improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems,” and Section 35650 (b)(2)(G), as including projects that “provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources.”

Research funded through the Sea Grant programs will meet these directives because the projects chosen will directly focus on collecting and disseminating information that will inform current data gaps for managers.

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

Goal B, Research and Monitoring, Objective 1b: “Work with the California Sea Grant Programs to review and award grants that meet the OPC guidelines and priorities. Support or collaborate with the research activities by agencies, universities, and programs that seek to provide a better scientific understanding of impacts to ocean and coastal ecosystems.”

Furthering scientific understanding of the ocean and coastal ecosystems has the potential to improve management of the ocean and coastal resources. The proposed project has been designed explicitly to meet this objective by creating research priorities that address the needs of the state and that are a priority to the OPC.

CONSISTENCY WITH OPC'S PROJECT FUNDING GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the OPC Project Funding Guidelines adopted November 20, 2008, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Directly relate to the ocean and coast:** The research issue areas and, consequently the research projects will improve the State’s understanding of ocean and coastal resources and may lead to improved ocean and coastal resource management.
2. **Support of the Public:** Public support of the Sea Grant Research Program can be determined by the broad representation in the resources agency review panel. RASGAP consists of representatives from the Department of Boating and Waterways, the Department of Conservation, the Department of Fish and Game, the fishing industry, the aquaculture industry, the ocean engineering industry, the University of California system, the California State University system, a private California institution of higher education that is participating in the National Sea Grant Program, the State Lands Commission, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, the State Water Resources Control Board, the

Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response in the Department of Fish and Game, and the Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission.

3. **Greater-than-local interest:** The research issue areas and the projects to be funded address statewide issues and the findings will likely have statewide implications.

Additional Criteria

5. **Leverage:** The chosen researchers will be required to provide 50 percent matching funds to support these projects. See the "Project Financing" section above.
7. **Innovation:** Addressing research and management challenges will require coordinated, long-term, interdisciplinary research efforts across the state. By design, OPC research projects are innovative because they require researchers to directly link their work to management issues. In particular, building on the successful changes implemented for 2008, California Sea Grant again will fund a coordinated initiative team that requires scientists to organize themselves, include a resource manager/scientist in the project, and synthesize existing and new data into reports that policy-makers can understand.
8. **Coordination:** The Sea Grant program is a unique collaboration between the University of California, University of Southern California, the national Sea Grant College Network, the State Resources Agency, the OPC and other state resource managers. The Sea Grant program allows the OPC to play a critical role in building bridges between scientific research, responsive policy development, and public education. Links are necessary between university natural and social scientists, state resource managers and policy-makers to ensure research informs long-term policies that support the recovery and sustainability of the state's coastal resources. The Sea Grant programs work closely with the grantees throughout the project. This allows the selected researchers access to Sea Grant outreach mechanisms as well as the Sea Grant Advisor network throughout the state.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

The selection of research criteria for the 2011 OPC/Sea Grant Research Priorities is not a project as defined by the guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not involve an action that can cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. (14 Cal. Code Regs § 15378). The authorization for funding the research projects is categorically exempt from review under the CEQA because the authorization proposes to fund projects that involve only data collection, research and resource evaluation activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15306). The OPC will have additional opportunity to review the proposals once they are presented to the Council for concurrence. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval by the council.