



MEMORANDUM

TO: California Ocean Protection Council
FROM: Amber Mace, Executive Director, Ocean Protection Council
DATE: February 17, 2012
RE: Ocean Protection Council five-year Strategic Plan
ATTACHMENT: [Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan](#)
[Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan Tracked Changes](#)

REQUESTED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the California Ocean Protection Council (“Council”) adopt the following resolution:

“The California Ocean Protection Council hereby adopts the *California Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan*, attached, and authorizes the Secretary to the Council to finalize, and publish the document in a manner generally available to the Council and the public.”

The Ocean Protection Council staff are pleased to present the draft final strategic plan for fiscal years 2012/13 through 2016/17 to improve management and protection of California’s ocean and coastal ecosystems. This plan has been revised after a second public comment period from December 15, 2011 to January 16, 2012 based on input from OPC members, the OPC Steering Committee, OPC Science Advisory Team, federal, industry, and NGO partners, and the public. This plan identifies the complex challenges to our ocean that can be addressed by OPC’s leadership as a science-informed policy and coordinating body. The plan provides vision, context, and objectives that offer useful guidance for the OPC to address these mounting challenges. It recognizes the economic value of our ocean and coastal resources to the state of California and honors the OPC mission to protect and preserve the health of marine ecosystems. This plan identifies both opportunities and responsibility; it is intended to be a roadmap for the Council to apply its leadership, expertise, and resources.

Background

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) was created in 2004 to help ensure that state and local actions are conducted in a manner that is consistent with the protection, conservation, and maintenance of healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems and the economy they support. The OPC’s overarching role is to coordinate and lead ocean management and protection in California in three primary ways: 1) by addressing cross-cutting ocean issues that do not fall neatly under the

purview of one agency; 2) by developing forward looking policy recommendations to advance new or refine existing laws and regulations; and 3) by coordinating across state institutions whose decisions affect coastal waters and the ocean environment.

Approach

After five years of undertaking large, cross-cutting projects and creating a foundation for comprehensive ocean resource management, the OPC has now developed a more focused plan that identifies targeted areas where the OPC can maximize effectiveness and efficiency in this current challenging economic and fiscal climate. The OPC's second strategic plan recognizes that the OPC will not be able to address every ocean issue facing the state of California. The OPC will continue to provide leadership on key issues and steward high priority initiatives begun during its first five years, but in a way consistent with this new strategic approach moving forward.

Summary of Changes to the December Draft

Based on the 22 comments received during the second (December-January) public comment period, only minor modifications were necessary in the text of the strategic plan. These included corrections and additions to clarify the intent and purpose of the Ocean Protection Council. The draft is available with tracked changes to help quickly identify where changes have been made. Many of the comments were supportive of the more streamlined draft presented in December. However, there were some requests for inclusion of more specific actions as well as timelines and milestones. With respect to most of the requests for more specific actions, the existing text was determined to be consistent with the request. In some cases the request for changes related to policy positions or issues for which the OPC has not publicly deliberated. It is important that this strategic plan be used as a tool to guide the OPC and allow the OPC to take up new issues that are consistent with the plan through open public meetings. With respect to the timelines and milestones, these will be developed for all actions OPC pursues. This level of detail is project specific and is more appropriate for staff recommendations and work plans.

The draft strategic plan includes five focal areas with an associated goal statement for each:

- A. Science-based decision-making
- B. Climate change
- C. Sustainable fisheries and marine ecosystems
- D. Coastal and ocean impacts from land
- E. Existing and emerging ocean uses

The introductory text for each focal area provides background on the issues and past OPC engagement and the rationale for proposed future engagement. The objectives and actions are identified at a high level to help the OPC retain its agility, so that it is responsive to emerging issues and innovative ideas and can make specific policy recommendations based on the best available science and public input.

Plan Development and Public Engagement

The OPC staff have developed this draft plan in cooperation and consultation with OPC members, the OPC Steering Committee, the OPC Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT), and many partners and stakeholders through an extensive stakeholder process. The plan has also been informed by an external evaluation of the OPC's first five years.

The OPC staff solicited feedback from the public on this draft action plan at public workshops in August in Southern California, the Bay Area, and Northern California. The plan was available on the OPC website and open for public comment August-September 2011. A revised draft was made available for an additional 30-day public comment period December-January. The OPC staff really appreciate the extensive and thoughtful input provided by our many partners and stakeholders.