



**California Ocean Protection Council (OPC)  
Executive Director's Report  
November 29, 2012**

Dear Ocean Community:

OPC continues to be engaged in a myriad of fascinating and cutting edge projects. We are excited to share our accomplishments with you in this report. At the meeting we will ask the Council to consider initiation of some climate change mini grants and update them on the incredible work that has been done with the California geoportal. The State Water Resource Control Board will give a presentation on their upcoming trash policy that will help reduce marine debris.

In the past months we have strengthened our ties with the Department of Fish and Game as we develop long term management plans for our Marine Protected Areas. I am especially pleased by how everyone is pulling together around this incredible opportunity. I would also like to acknowledge the amazing work and partnership with the Ocean Science Trust, and am looking forward to the results of their current work on ocean acidification.

We are grateful for the support of the ocean community and are committed to the pursuit of fresh ways to partner with you. As always, your feedback is vital, it keeps us learning and challenges us all to innovative paths.

Catherine Kuhlman  
Executive Director

**A. Science Based decision-making**

See staff report on the progress in developing the geoportal.

**B. Climate Change**

OPC coordinates the Coastal and Ocean Working Group for the Climate Action Team (CO-CAT), comprised of senior level staff from 16 California state agencies. CO-CAT is contributing to the 2012 revision of statewide Climate Adaptation Strategy by leading the coastal and ocean chapter (the public draft will be released later this year). CO-CAT will also be updating the state's Sea-Level Rise Interim Guidance Document to include the findings in the National Academy of Sciences Report on Sea-Level Rise along the West Coast (released earlier this year). The final Climate Adaptation Strategy and Sea-Level Rise Guidance Document will be completed in the spring of 2013.

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, the OPC partnered with NOAA's Coastal Services Center and the California Coastal Commission to host a *Symposium on Sea-Level Rise*. The goal of the Symposium was to communicate the findings of the National Academy of Sciences Report on Sea-Level Rise along the West Coast, to provide clarity on guidance and resources provided by state agencies and to identify needs for moving forward. The Symposium brought together scientists and resource managers from various state and federal agencies. This event is part of a series of workshops that are taking place in Washington, Oregon, and California organized by the WCGA to help communicate the findings of the National Academy of Sciences Sea-Level Rise report.

The OPC is also co-hosting another workshop on December 19<sup>th</sup> to provide information and case-studies on the use of more sophisticated modeling to understand the impacts of sea-level rise in the dynamic coastal environment. These models include information about storms and coastal erosion to provide a more complete picture of vulnerabilities from sea-level rise. This workshop will bring together teams of scientists and managers who have successfully worked on such projects to present applications of real-life applications.

### **C. Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems**

#### **The MPA Monitoring Enterprise and MPA Baseline Monitoring**

The Monitoring Enterprise team and outreach consultants visited the north coast region several times since the last OPC meeting to engage the community in regional monitoring planning and the baseline program. Presentations were made at Humboldt, Mendocino, and Del Norte County Board of Supervisors meetings, and the team met with community organizations and North Coast tribes. These conversations have shaped the scope and evaluation criteria of the baseline program, which is anticipated to launch in early 2013 with release of a request for proposals.

The Monitoring Enterprise recently launched an online community platform for fishers, policy-makers, scientists and others who want to stay informed about MPA monitoring and the health of California's oceans. This platform is called OceanSpaces and is available at oceanspaces.org. Members can easily access and share information, learn about marine ecosystems and connect with other community members. The OPC has authorized funds for baseline data collection in the four outer coast MPA regions. This data will be made available through OceanSpaces, which supported the development of through its grant to the California Ocean Science Trust for the MPA Monitoring Enterprise program.

The Monitoring Enterprise is organizing a three-day public event as an opportunity to learn about results from ecological and socioeconomic baseline MPA monitoring, share research findings, and discuss perspectives on MPA governance and enforcement with policy makers, resources managers, scientists and stakeholders. The symposium will be in Monterey on February 27 – March 1, 2013.

#### **Dungeness Crab Fishery**

The OPC is designated as the body responsible for establishing and administering a Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) pursuant to Senate Bills 1690 (Wiggins, 2008) and 369 (Evans, 2011).

The DCTF and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) are continuing to work cooperatively to implement a trap limit program for the commercial Dungeness crab fishery. In the past, this fishery has been managed by regulating the season, size and sex of crabs caught. Because the crab fishery south of Cape Mendocino typically opens before Oregon and Washington, large boats from the north have come down and caught a significant portion of the crabs in California during the early weeks of its season. The purpose of the proposed trap limit program is to limit the total number of crab traps allowed in the water which should prolong the crab fishing season in California and protect California fishing jobs along the coast. The DCTF is a successful example of the California crab fisherman working together to develop proactive solutions to protect small, family fishing vessels and the crab fishery for the future.

In April, the DCTF submitted recommendations for implementing the trap limit program to DFG Director Bonham. In response to this report, DFG drafted a suite of Title 14 regulations to implement these recommendations. The regulations are currently proceeding through the regulatory process to become law. The new trap limit program should be fully implemented by the 2013-2014 fishing season. The 2012/2013 crab season opens south of Point Arena on November 15.

AB 2363 was signed by Governor Brown in October 2012. Among other things, the bill establishes emergency permit transfer procedures for the Dungeness crab fishery and provides a secure funding source for crab quality testing in California. Under this law, crab caught as part of the crab quality testing program may be sold and the funds generated will be managed by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) to pay for the cost of administering the program. On October 10, 2012, DFG and PSMFC consulted the DCTF Executive Committee (a subcommittee of the DCTF) to develop a suite of temporary funding guidelines for the program that will be in place until the whole DCTF is convened to finalize them.

### **Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan**

The OPC funded a project to develop a Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to be submitted to the Fish and Game Commission for approval. The goals of the FMP are to develop a cost effective, innovative approach to sustainable fisheries management. The project has now been underway for over a year and technical review of the draft stock assessment is complete. Several chapters of the FMP are currently under development including; a fishery overview chapter, a fishery management and conservation chapter, and protocols for research. An economic profile of the lobster fishery is also being prepared, along with a Management Strategy Evaluation model. Since the FMP began, there have been two public meetings and the Lobster Advisory Committee has met three times. Public outreach and involvement with the lobster community is critical to the success of this project. The project is on schedule and will provide a recommendation to the Fish and Game Commission as planned by 2015.

### **California Sustainable Fisheries Initiative (CSSI)**

OPC staff will begin work with the DFG and Ocean Science Trust (OST) to complete a rapid assessment of several California fisheries using existing data to identify fishery improvement projects, highlight strengths and weakness in fisheries data, provide information for fisheries to be considered for a voluntary certification program and potentially provide data for a prioritization process for future fishery management plans. For OPC purposes this report will

provide critical information for fisheries who wish to voluntarily enter into a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) fisheries assessment. The report will also provide fisheries information for the annual status review of fisheries for DFG.

### **Aquaculture Programmatic Environmental Impact Report**

The *Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) of Coastal Marine Aquaculture* is being revised into a final document. The revision will incorporate responses to comments received from external reviewers and DFG staff. The process to finalize the PEIR will include review by DFG staff, members of the Aquaculture Development Committee, a NOAA representative, and outside industry interests. The final document is scheduled to be completed in June 2013 and presented to the Fish and Game Commission at their following meeting.

The Final PEIR will analyze the potentially significant adverse environmental impacts from existing and reasonably foreseeable future coastal marine aquaculture projects. The purpose of the PEIR is to determine appropriate monitoring, thresholds of significance, and best management practices to address these impacts

## **D. Coastal and Ocean Impacts from Land-Based Sources**

### **Marine Debris and Japanese Tsunami Debris**

In response to comments at the last OPC meeting, the OPC is developing an informational web page through Thank You Ocean Campaign on Japan Tsunami Marine Debris. The page will bring together existing and relevant information targeted toward California audiences. Staff will work with members of the Marine Debris Steering Committee, a group with state agency representatives, to ensure that appropriate information is featured on the website. In addition, Thank You Ocean Campaign will use social media networking and conduct outreach through the Ocean Communicators Alliance (a network of ocean-oriented State, Federal, NGO, Aquaria and industry partners) to increase communication with the public on Tsunami Marine Debris. Thank You Ocean Campaign is a nonprofit partnership supported by the State of California, the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

### **Sediment Management**

The California Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup (CSMW), co-chaired by the Natural Resources Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is currently working with local/regional governments, NGOs and hired consultants to develop coastal regional sediment management plans (CRSMPs) for Los Angeles County, Orange County, Eureka/Humboldt Bay region, San Francisco Open Coast, and Northern Monterey Bay. To date, the CSMW has completed CRSMPs and associated environmental documents for San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, and Southern Monterey Bay. A public meeting is tentatively planned for December 5<sup>th</sup> in Morro Bay to gauge local interest in developing a CRSMP for the Morro Bay region and San Luis Obispo County.

The CSMW has contracted with the Ocean Science Trust to provide peer review services for CSMW-commissioned documents prepared to assess and recommend appropriate mitigation

measures for impacts associated with typical sediment management activities that might be recommended in CRSMPs.

Coastal regional sediment management plans formulate locally relevant, consensus-driven sediment management policy to restore, preserve and maintain coastal beaches and other critical areas of sediment deficit to sustain recreation and tourism, enhance public safety and access, and restore coastal sandy habitats.

## **E. Emerging Issues**

### **Desalination Reconnaissance and Coordination**

OPC staff is developing a background paper on coastal desalination issues.

### **Marine Renewable Energy:**

At this time, there is only one hydrokinetic (wave or tidal energy) project has a preliminary permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The applicant, Golden Gate Energy, is evaluating approaches for testing tidal turbines in San Francisco Bay and will need to apply for, and obtain, a license from FERC as well as requisite state permits or leases before deploying their devices.

In March 2012, the Department of Energy announced \$180 million for advanced demonstration wind energy projects and sought applications for projects across the U.S. A proposal for a California-based offshore wind energy testing facility to be located adjacent to Platform Irene was submitted and is under consideration for funding. Funding awards will be announced this winter.

## **F. West Coast Governor's Alliance on Ocean Health (WCGA) and the National Ocean Policy**

In August, the principals and staff of the WCGA met with West Coast local government and tribal representatives of the National Ocean Council's Governance Coordinating Committee and other key partners to plan for future strategic projects. The WCGA principals decided to prioritize three existing workgroups known as Action Coordination Teams: 1) Climate change adaptation, 2) Marine debris, and 3) Regional data framework, supported by a recently received grant of \$850,000 from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The WCGA has been an effective mechanism for addressing issues of importance to all three West Coast states. For example the NRC report on climate change released this summer was supported and rolled out to decision-makers by WCGA staff.

The benefits of the WCGA are three-fold: 1) The three states and federal partners can leverage funding and accomplish more at less cost to taxpayers; 2) The three states can be more effective on national policy issues by speaking with one voice; and 3) The three states and federal partners can learn from each other's experience, thus being more effective at accomplishing their goals.

The WCGA has been identified as one of several regional ocean partnerships across the country in the draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan, thus allowing this organization to receive funding from NOAA. To date, the WCGA has received \$1.6 million in federal funds.

### **National Ocean Policy**

A final version of the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan is expected very soon; the second draft plan was released to the public in January 2012. National Ocean Council (NOC) co-chairs Nancy Sutley and John Holdren formally invited the three West Coast governors and all federally-recognized West Coast tribes to participate in the West Coast Regional Planning Body (RPB). On behalf of Governor Brown, Secretary Laird responded to the letter and designated Janelle Beland, Undersecretary, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA); and Cat Kuhlman, Deputy Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Matters, CNRA as the two state of California representatives. According to NOC staff, the federal government is conducting government-to-government consultations with the federally-recognized tribes interested in participating on the RPB. Once tribal participation on the RPB is determined, the RPB will convene for the first time.

The forthcoming National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan is significant because it will determine allocation of resources within the federal government.