



**California Ocean Protection Council (OPC)
Executive Director's Report
January 31, 2018**

The Executive Director's Report provides an update on OPC outcomes and accomplishments since the previous OPC meeting. This report covers November 2017 – January 2018¹.

Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1):

At its November 2017 meeting, OPC approved updated Grant Guidelines for its Proposition 1 Grant Program. OPC staff released the Grant Solicitation and Application Instructions on December 18, 2017. Proposals are due on February 23, 2018. OPC staff held a webinar on January 8, 2018 with over 70 individuals participating. Staff are also holding five public workshops throughout the state. Workshops have already been held in Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego and San Luis Obispo. The next and last workshop takes place in Bayside (near Eureka) on February 8, 2018.

Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84):

At its August 2017 meeting, OPC authorized a disbursement of \$7,000,000 to the two Sea Grant programs in California to fund and administer a competitive grant process for scientific research projects to support OPC priorities. On January 10, 2018, the call for preliminary proposals was released for the competitive Proposition 84 grant program. An informational webinar co-hosted by OPC and the two Sea Grant programs will be held on February 20, 2018 at 10am. Preliminary proposals are due on March 15, 2018.

Staffing:

Whitney Berry, Climate Change Sea Grant fellow, started with OPC on Monday, January 29th. She earned her MA in International Environmental Policy, concentrating in Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. Most recently she has worked with the IUCN's Global Marine and Polar Program, focusing her time on the research of deep seabed mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction and its potential impacts on the overall health of the global ocean. She will work on issues and projects across sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and changing ocean conditions due to a changing climate. OPC's previous Climate Change Sea Grant Fellow, Sara Briley, will continue to work with OPC through mid-May to

¹The present ED report contains descriptions of OPC grants or contracts that have closed since the last OPC meeting. Each grant or contract is described under the header of the OPC strategic plan issue the work is intended to address.

support our work on regional ocean acidification monitoring and data management, as well as other time-sensitive projects.

On February 5, Joanna Stone will return to OPC and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) as a Staff Services Manager I. Joanna will be supporting fiscal duties and grants and contracts administration for both OPC and CNRA while supervising several other staff. We look forward to having Joanna back in the office.

On February 26, we will welcome Tinya Hoang to our staff as an Environmental Scientist in our climate change program. Tinya will help lead OPC's sea-level rise work and provide support for our other climate change priorities. Most recently, Tinya worked for the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission addressing sea level rise resilience and adaptation in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has also worked for the California Coastal Commission as a Coastal Planner in the San Diego District office. Tinya has a Master's Degree in Environmental Science and Management from the Bren School at U.C. Santa Barbara, and a Master's Degree and Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Stanford University.

Strategic Plan Issue Area 1: Science-Based Decision-making

Science-based decision-making is integrated into all of our priority program areas; please see below for more details.

Strategic Plan Issue Area 2: Climate Change

Ocean Acidification:

OPC-SAT Working Group – Exploring Aquatic Vegetation as an Ocean Acidification Management Tool in California

This OPC-SAT working group was created to advance recommendations from the West Coast Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Panel and begin implementation of Senate Bill 1363 (Monning, 2016) which calls for scientific approaches to protect and restore submerged aquatic vegetation to enhance California's ability to withstand ocean acidification (OA). The working group convened in early 2017 to synthesize emerging research and provide technical guidance on the capacity of seagrasses and kelps to provide short-term OA amelioration in field settings. On January 30, the working group released a report entitled "Emerging understanding of seagrass and kelp as an ocean acidification management tool in California" which communicates the state of emerging scientific understanding, highlights knowledge gaps, and provides guidance on next steps for the State as it considers future nature-based actions to reduce negative impacts of OA.

The working group also aims to update the California State Legislature on current progress and next steps for implementing SB 1363. On February 6, co-chairs of the working group will join scientists and government officials in an informational hearing of the Select Committee on Coastal Protection and Access to Natural Resources, chaired by Assemblymember Mark Stone, to highlight specific actions being taken locally and key next steps for California.

For more information on the working group and to access the report, please visit:

<http://www.oceansciencetrust.org/projects/sav/>

For information on the legislative hearing please visit:

<http://coastalprotection.assembly.ca.gov/hearings>

See Agenda [item 5](#) and [item 6](#) for an in-depth update on OPC's Ocean Acidification program.

Sea-level Rise:

OPC staff received approximately 25 public comment letters on the initial draft of the Update to the State of California Sea-Level Rise Document (Guidance). Staff is working now to incorporate those comments and vet them, as needed, with political and policy leaders, key coastal state and federal management agencies, and subject matter experts. OPC staff will bring the final version of the Guidance for review and approval to a special March 14 OPC meeting focused solely on sea-level rise. Prior to that meeting, on February 5 from 11am -12pm, OPC staff will host a [webinar](#) through the California Coastal Resilience Network outlining the comments received and providing a summary of revisions incorporated in the final document. During the webinar, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide additional feedback on the Guidance for consideration by OPC staff. OPC staff is also working closely with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to host sea-level rise planning and funding resources on the [State's Climate Adaptation Clearinghouse](#).

Fourth California Climate Change Assessment:

Currently underway, the California Fourth Climate Change Assessment (4th Assessment) is the first inter-agency effort to implement a substantial portion of California's Climate Change Research Plan. The research projects of the 4th Assessment were made possible through two funding sources, one managed by the California Energy Commission (CEC) and another by the California Natural Resources Agency. In addition to the research projects, with the support of the Ocean Science Trust and the OPC-Science Advisory Team, OPC is leading the topical assessment focused on ocean and coasts that will be paired with the other regional assessments of the 4th Assessment. The ocean and coastal assessment will support, bolster, and synthesize funded research projects most relevant to climate change impacts to the ocean and coast. It was discussed and advanced at a recent meeting of the lead and coordinating authors of this report. More details can be found here:

<http://www.oceansciencetrust.org/projects/assessing-climate-impacts-on-californias-coast/>. In

addition, OPC staff is also leading the ocean and coastal component of the statewide summary of the 4th Assessment. The 4th Assessment – reflecting all these different components – will be released in late Summer/early Fall of this year.

Closed Grants within Sea Level Rise:

County of Marin, C-SMART: Collaborating on Sea-level Marin: Adaptation Response Team (CNRA Agreement # C0300100, \$200,000): The C-SMART (Collaborating on Sea-level Marin: Adaptation Response Team) project developed a sound scientific and technical basis for assessing the potential

changes, vulnerabilities, and impacts that sea-level rise may bring to people, natural resources, access, and the built environment of Marin's ocean and Tomales Bay coast. Specifically, the project worked to identify appropriate response and resilience strategies to address these effects, coordinated with other agencies, and planned for the implementation of such measures, including integrating them into Marin's Local Coastal Program.

Strategic Plan Issue Area 3: Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems

Sustainable Fisheries:

California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group

The Working Group continues to support thriving whale populations and a profitable Dungeness crab fishery along the West Coast. The Working Group is currently piloting a draft Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP) during the 2017-2018 Dungeness crab fishing season in California. All aspects of the draft RAMP are voluntary during this pilot phase, and the program is designed to be flexible and responsive to considering new information, technologies, and approaches to reducing the risk of whale entanglements. The Working Group convened twice during the pre-season on October 26 and November 6, 2017, and reconvened on November 30, 2017 and January 8, 2018. The group continues to evaluate the relative risk of whale entanglements as part of the RAMP Pilot based on four priority factors – season delay, forage/ocean conditions, whale concentrations and rate of entanglements. For more information on the RAMP Pilot, please visit this [webpage](#). The Working Group will continue to support and be involved in collaborative research projects designed to inform the RAMP and share information about their progress, including the RAMP and associated pilot, with commercial/recreational fishermen, decision-makers, and the broader public. For more information, visit the Working Group's [webpage](#).

Information Gathering Projects & the Marine Life Management Act Master Plan for Fisheries

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and partners are in the process of amending the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) Master Plan for Fisheries, which is a planning document that guides management efforts on highest priority species as well as describes the specific tools and approaches to be applied in achieving the goals of the MLMA. OPC supported four projects, two of which are complete and two of which are ongoing, that develop tools and recommendations to be considered during the Master Plan Amendment Phase. One ongoing project will utilize guidance and recommendations developed for CDFW peer review processes to conduct peer reviews of the Pacific herring and red abalone Fishery Management Plans in 2018. The second ongoing project is developing socioeconomic guidance for fisheries management. Elements of these projects have been incorporated into an Initial Draft of the Master Plan Amendment. CDFW is working to submit the revised draft amended Master Plan to the Fish and Game Commission in early 2018. More information may be found on this [webpage](#).

Agenda [item 6](#) recommends Council authorization to support the collection and synthesis of information on 30 state-managed marine species, as well as scoping a California Fisheries Portal. Agenda [item 7](#) recommends reauthorization of OPC's contribution to the California Fisheries Fund and transfer of administration of this contribution to a new entity.

Closed grants within Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems:

Ecological Risk Assessment and Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis – (CNRA Agreement # C0300900, \$135,000): This grant with the California Ocean Science Trust resulted in the development of a [Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis \(PSA\)](#) and an [Ecological Risk Assessment \(ERA\)](#) as potential prioritization tools to support California fisheries management. A PSA is a method for assessing the potential vulnerability of a fished species. The grant also supported the pilot testing of the ERA tool for five species representing nine fisheries. This project was specifically developed for consideration by CDFW to help inform the state’s process to amend the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) Master Plan. Products from this project have been submitted to CDFW for review and may be integrated, in full or in part, into a draft Master Plan Amendment. Additional information about the Master Plan amendment process is available at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Master-Plan>.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): The MPA Management Program continues to implement successful projects in the four focal areas of outreach and education; enforcement and compliance; policy and permitting; and research and monitoring. Recently, CDFW released a [video](#)² highlighting the importance of California’s MPA Network, which was produced by award winning director David Sheerer.

At the October 2016 meeting, OPC approved funding to support a small grants program for the MPA Collaboratives to advance outreach and education activities across the state. At the January 31, 2018 meeting, we will provide an update on the fourteen MPA Collaborative projects underway that will result in locally-focused MPA education products to improve awareness and stewardship of California’s MPA Network, see [Agenda item 8](#) for more information on OPC’s partnership with the MPA Collaborative Network and the small grants program.

OPC staff is currently working closely with CDFW’s Law Enforcement Division to create a three-year work plan to use a variety of tools, including improvements in the use of technology, to demonstrably improve enforcement across the MPA Network. This work plan will be funded by Once-Through Cooling Interim Mitigation Fee Program dollars and the project is on track to begin by the end of this fiscal year.

The MPA Statewide Leadership Team (Leadership Team) continues to be an important venue to collaborate on policy and permitting and has convened frequently in the past few months to successfully coordinate management efforts. On January 17, OPC staff representing the Leadership Team participated in a panel discussion at the MPA Federal Advisory Committee meeting in San Francisco and gave a presentation on California’s MPA Management Program. The presentation and panel discussion was well received, with the Federal Advisory Committee indicating interest in increased coordination with California to highlight our unique approach to MPA management in future products.

² https://youtu.be/xB_yqcfN7DE

On January 12, a workshop was held in Santa Cruz to bring together leading scientists from UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, Oregon State University and four OPC funded post-doctoral researchers that have been working on projects to use existing data, including baseline monitoring information, to develop quantitative approaches to site and indicator selection for long-term MPA monitoring. The final results of this work will be outlined in the upcoming MPA Action Plan due in early fall 2018. This work coupled with previous stakeholder and scientific input will ensure long-term monitoring will be focused and provide robust scientific information to evaluate the performance of the MPA Network for the 2022 ten-year management review.

Strategic Plan Issue Area 4: Coastal and Ocean Impacts from Land-Based Sources

Marine Pollution Program:

California Ocean Litter Strategy

The OPC and NOAA released the [Revised Draft California Ocean Litter Strategy](#), including OPC Priorities to address ocean litter for public comment from January 23 through February 23, 2018. After the comment period closes, the core planning team will consider the comments made and will finalize the California Ocean Litter Strategy in early- to mid-April 2018. OPC staff anticipates bringing a resolution adopting the OPC Priorities to Address Ocean Litter at the April 2018 meeting.

Strategic Plan Issue Area 5: Existing and Emerging Ocean Uses

Marine Renewable Energy

At the request of Governor Brown, the Director of the federal Bureau Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) established a BOEM California Task Force to facilitate education, coordination and consultation on leasing and permitting for, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of, renewable energy projects on the California outer continental shelf. OPC staff assisted the Governor's office and BOEM staff in organizing the kick-off meeting for the Task Force which was held in Sacramento the fall of 2016. Following this meeting and over the last several months, OPC staff have been assisting BOEM and the California Energy Commission (CEC) with outreach efforts on the Central Coast. Individuals and organization that we have met local elected officials, fishermen, scientists, tribes, environmental groups, and the maritime industry. In addition, OPC staff have been assisting the CEC in locating relevant data sets for the offshore wind planning process that is being conducted at the request of the Task Force. A second Task Force meeting will be announced after this planning process has been completed, most likely sometime during the spring of this year. Recently, a number of offshore wind energy developers and the Redwood Coast Energy Authority have expressed interest in developing wind resources off the North Coast. In response to this interest, the CEC, BOEM, and the OPC are beginning to plan outreach for the North Coast region. Last, the OPC-led Marine Renewable Energy Work Group will be co-hosting a regulatory workshop on marine renewable energy on March 13th in Sacramento. The workshop will be open to the public but it is limited to 70 participants due to space limitations.

Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Development

As requested by the Governor's office, the OPC has been coordinating the State's response to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) "Notice of Availability of the 2019–2024 Draft Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (DPP) and Notice of Intent to Prepare a

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement” issued in the federal register on January 8th. The DPP proposes six BOEM lease sales on the California OCS starting in 2020, and the January 8th federal register notice initiates a formal scoping process for a programmatic EIS for the DPP. Public comments on the DPP are due on March 9th and OPC is coordinating the efforts of state agency partners to ensure that comments are consistent and reflect of overall state priorities. BOEM will be holding a meeting in Sacramento on February 8th to allow for public input on the DPP. The OPC Executive Director will speak and submit written comments at the meeting on behalf of the OPC. [Agenda item 4](#) recommends adoption of a resolution opposing offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling and directs Secretary Laird to draft comments to the Secretary of the Department of Interior expressing that opposition on behalf of the Council.

Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup

The OPC/CNRA-led Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup continues to meet on a bimonthly basis to complete and begin implementing a California Sediment Master Plan. Of note is a collaboration with the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary to complete a Coastal Regional Sediment Management Plan for the Sonoma-Marin Coast. In summary, California Regional Sediment Management Plans discuss strategies and identify projects that will beneficially re-use sediment for beach and habitat restoration, enhancing recreational opportunities, increasing natural shore protection, and maintaining coastal resilience. [Agenda item 6](#) builds on this work and requests authorization for funding to support the development of a Sediment Management Action Plan that builds on the soon-to-be completed Regional Sediment Management Plans for the Sonoma-Marin Coast and the San Francisco Open Coast, as well as the completed plan for Santa Cruz.