



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
Marine Region  
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*EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor*  
*CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director*



January 22, 2018

John Laird  
Secretary for Natural Resources  
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: Support for Funding to Collect & Synthesize Information on 30 State-Managed Marine Species and Public Scoping for an Online California Fisheries Portal**

Dear Secretary Laird:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) supports the authorization of funding by the Ocean Protection Council (Council) to support projects to collect and synthesize information on 30 state-managed marine species in coordination with the Department and to convene a series of stakeholder focus group discussions to inform the design and development of an online California Fisheries Portal.

The Department and partners are in the process of amending the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) Master Plan for Fisheries, which guides fishery management efforts and describes tools and approaches to be applied in achieving the goals of the MLMA. The Department will submit the draft amended Master Plan to the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) in February, initiating a three meeting public review process. The Department has identified these two projects as priorities to advance concurrent with the Commission's review of the draft amended MLMA Master Plan.

The synthesis project will provide scientific information on 30 state-managed species to inform the Department's development of Enhanced Status Reports to help focus research and management efforts into the future. The California Fisheries Portal project will engage stakeholders to solicit feedback to inform the development of a fisheries web portal. The portal will provide access to fisheries information and data on the sustainable use of marine resources. Financial support for these projects will inform the Department's development of the first set of Enhanced Status Reports and design the online portal, which will improve the Department's ability to implement the MLMA.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (916) 445-6459 or [Craig.Shuman@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Craig.Shuman@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Craig Shuman, D. Env.  
Marine Regional Manager



Heal the Bay



Ocean Conservancy



John Laird, California Secretary for Natural Resources  
California Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311, Sacramento, CA 95814  
*Sent via email:* COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov

January 29, 2018

**RE: Support for the Collection and Synthesis of Information on 30 State-Managed Marine Species and Scoping California Fisheries Portal**

Dear Secretary Laird and Ocean Protection Council Members,

We appreciate the opportunity to share our support for the Council's continued work to ensure that California's ocean and coastal ecosystems are healthy, resilient, and productive for the benefit of current and future generations. We thank the Council for your commitment to using the best available science in the ecosystem-based management of California's ocean resources, and for your dedication to ensuring transparency and public accessibility to the decision-making process.

Specifically, we wish to express our support for the disbursement of Proposition 84 funds to support the process California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is taking to update the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) Master Plan, specifically the development of Enhanced Status Reports (ESRs) and stakeholder discussions that will inform the development of the online California Fisheries Data Portal. Our organizations have been involved in the process to update the MLMA Master Plan, and we view this updated plan and the outlined management actions, including the development of ESRs and the online Fisheries Portal, as beneficial to the sustainable management of California's fisheries.

**Enhanced Status Reports**

The MLMA states that Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) shall be the primary means of managing the state's marine fisheries (FGC §7072). CDFW has thoughtfully given due diligence to the process of developing several FMPs for California fisheries, however, this lengthy process requires more time and resources than are available given CDFW's current capacity. Only four FMPs (white seabass, market squid, spiny lobster, and nearshore finfish) have been adopted since the implementation of the MLMA, leaving approximately 64 of 68 commercially or recreationally important California fisheries without stock assessments, which enable managers to measure if these fisheries are meeting the sustainability objectives of the MLMA.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Partnerships in Fisheries Management: An Exploration of Ideas for Enhancing Capacity and Resources in California Fisheries.* 2017. The Nature Conservancy.

In 2010, the OPC commissioned a study which found that the lack of FMPs is preventing California from realizing the benefits of the MLMA, which is an otherwise progressive and promising fisheries management law.<sup>2</sup> In order to streamline CDFW's approach to fisheries management, we support the development of ESRs for those fisheries which are determined—by a prioritization process informed by stakeholder input—not to require a comprehensive and complex FMP. Funding from the OPC to synthesize information about 30 state-managed marine species will expand CDFW's capacity to develop these ESRs, thus moving California toward realizing the benefits of the MLMA.

The list included with this staff report (Exhibit C: List of 36 State-Managed Marine Species) includes 6 more marine species than the 30 species outlined in the recommended action. We request further information about which 6 species will be excluded from the process to collect and synthesize data that will inform the development of ESRs.

### **Online Fisheries Data Portal**

We support the development of the web-based Fisheries Data Portal, and anticipate that this will be an effective tool for ensuring transparency and public accessibility to California's fisheries management process. Including stakeholders in the development of the Fisheries Data Portal will ensure that the final product is as user-friendly and informative as possible. We look forward to continuing our involvement in the development of this tool.

### **Leveraging Fisheries Partnerships**

With the disbursement of these funds, we recommend that the OPC encourage CDFW to leverage fisheries partnerships<sup>3</sup> to support the Department in key management tasks, given the limited resources available to CDFW for fisheries management. Our goal in this recommendation is to make more effective use of available tools, knowledge, and resources to implement the MLMA across a wider range of California's fisheries.

As stated in The Nature Conservancy's 2017 report on fisheries partnerships, "Well-conceived fisheries partnerships can enhance CDFW's ability to fulfill its mission, rather than simply burden it with additional responsibilities. Realization of a partnership-based approach will require trust, experimentation and strong leadership. Institutionalizing a partnerships-based approach within the MLMA Master Plan will allow the CDFW to meet the challenges of fisheries management in a changing ocean for years to come."<sup>1</sup>

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Thank you again for the opportunity to share our support for the disbursement of Proposition 84 funds to projects that will assist in the development of ESRs and the online fisheries portal. We look forward to working with the OPC in the future, and thank you for your time and consideration of these comments. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

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<sup>2</sup> *Lessons Learned from California's Marine Life Management Act*. 2010. Harty, J. M., et al.

<sup>3</sup> As defined in *Partnerships in Fisheries Management: An Exploration of Ideas for Enhancing Capacity and Resources in California Fisheries*. 2017. The Nature Conservancy.

Sincerely,



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Heal the Bay



Seth Atkinson, Staff Attorney Oceans Program  
Natural Resources Defense Council



Greg Helms, Fish Conservation Program Manager  
Ocean Conservancy



Michael Bell, Oceans Program Director  
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