



Staff Recommendation
May 23, 2019

**Science Advisor and OPC Science Advisory Team Secretariat:
Integrating Science into Management and Policy for California’s Oceans**
Jenn Eckerle, Deputy Director

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$650,000 to California Ocean Science Trust to continue serving as OPC Science Advisor, including serving as Secretariat of the OPC Science Advisory Team.

LOCATION: Statewide

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): Science-based decision-making

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit A: California Ocean Science Trust: A Vision for 2020
- Exhibit B: Letters of Support

FINDINGS AND RESOLUTION:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibit(s), OPC 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 projects are consistent with OPC's Proposition 84 grant program funding guidelines (Interim Standards and Protocols, August 2013);
and
- 3) The proposed project is not a ‘legal project’ that triggers the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section, section 15378.”

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

“The California Ocean Protection Council hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$650,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust to continue serving as OPC Science Advisor, including serving as Secretariat of the OPC Science Advisory Team.”

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, California Ocean Science Trust shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director of the OPC detailed work plans, schedules, staff requirements, budgets, and the names of any contractors intended to be used to complete the projects, as well as discrete deliverables that can be produced in intervals to ensure the projects are on target for successful completion. All projects will be developed under a shared understanding of process, management and delivery.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council disburse up to \$650,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to continue serving as OPC Science Advisor, delivering timely, pragmatic, and actionable scientific information and advice to inform Council decisions.

As OPC Science Advisor, OST responds to needs for scientific information and advice that will advance progress towards OPC strategic goals, highlights emerging science and ensures that OPC staff and partners are kept abreast of new scientific advancements, and serves as Secretariat of the OPC Science Advisory Team (OPC SAT), a multi-disciplinary team of researchers and scientists from across the state created by statute to support OPC in science-based actions and decisions.¹ Current funds for these roles, which were approved by the Council in December 2016², will be expended by end June 2019; additional funds are needed to continue these roles and enhance science-based decision-making for the Council for the next two years.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Project Background:

Significant academic scholarship recognizes the challenge of establishing and maintaining interactions between government decision-makers and the scientific/technical community to foster science-based resource management decisions and investments. Moreover, although natural resource regulators and managers routinely make decisions under uncertain conditions, a changing climate is multiplying this uncertainty, lending urgency to the need for practical science information and advice that can inform the development of durable adaptation strategies in ocean resource management and conservation.

¹ OPC Science Advisory Team webpage: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/science-advisory-team/>

² http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20161207/Item1_StaffRec_OST_Science_Services.pdf

The California Ocean Science Trust was established by the Secretary of Resources pursuant to the California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act of 2000.³ OST was created to encourage coordinated multi-agency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science – a purpose that is responsive to the challenges of integrating science into policy and management, and that closely corresponds with the Ocean Protection Council's statutory responsibility to 'establish policies to coordinate the collecting and sharing of scientific data related to coast and ocean resources between agencies.

As described in CORSA, OST is a non-profit 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation that combines public resources with those from the private sector and non-profit organizations to:

1. Ensure adequate coordination of ocean resource management science among government agencies and marine science institutions;
2. Ensure efficient and effective use of state resources for ocean resource management science, including leveraged resources from federal and nongovernmental sources; and
3. Advance science initiatives to meet current and future California ocean resource management needs.

In this context, the mission of the OST is to accelerate progress towards a healthy and productive ocean future for California by bridging the gap between cutting edge scientific research and sound ocean management. Since 2007, OST has served as Science Advisor to OPC, delivering pragmatic and actionable scientific advice and information to OPC that has catalyzed and supported policy and management action.⁴

Assembly Bill 1056, signed by the Governor in September 2007, required that the OPC establish a "science advisory team of distinguished scientists to assist it in meeting the purposes of the [California Ocean Protection Act]." The OPC Science Advisor was authorized to serve as co-chair of the OPC-SAT and oversee its creation. The first OPC-SAT was officially adopted by the OPC in February 2008 and since that time OST has served to convene, govern and manage this body as OPC-SAT Secretariat.

Project Details and Scope of Work:

The proposed authorization would provide funding for OST to serve as OPC Science Advisor, including OPC-SAT Secretariat, for the next 2 years. The proposed funding will allow OST to:

- Provide timely response to needs for scientific information and advice that will advance progress towards OPC strategic goals.

³ Public Resources Code Sections 36990-36885: <https://law.justia.com/codes/california/2012/prc/division-27/chapter-8>

⁴ February 8, 2008 staff recommendation designating OST as OPC's science advisor: http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20070208/0702COPC13_CalOST.pdf

- Develop, review and support implementation of research priorities that strategically grow knowledge over time and inform scientific research investments.
- Collaboratively design and pilot new approaches to foster diversity and inclusion in ocean and coastal science, with a focus on undergraduate education and in consideration of opportunities at both the California State University and University of California campuses.
- Serve on OPC proposal review panels (and engage with the academic community e.g., via ad-hoc advisory committees where appropriate and requested by OPC's Executive Director) to strengthen the alignment of research projects and programs with policy and management priorities in California.
- Respond rapidly to produce science communication plans, talking points and products (e.g., 2-pagers), on issues such as current events and ocean conditions, new research findings, or OPC-SAT initiatives, with heightened political, public or management engagement.
- Strengthen the role and functioning of the SAT as a conduit to the broader academic community. Design processes in collaboration with Sea Grant to assess needs and opportunities for OPC investments to fill gaps and amplify usability and impact.
- Horizon scan to alert OPC to salient scientific advancements and develop scientific recommendations to address emerging issues and challenges.
 - Convene learning workshops on new topics or produce scientific syntheses and reviews (including literature reviews and white papers) that address policy and management priorities.
- Foster interdisciplinary scientific partnerships to encourage innovative solutions to complex ocean challenges.
 - Convene funded researchers to leverage resources and maximize alignment with policy and management needs.
 - Identify and pursue external research funding opportunities to leverage state investments and increase the scientific capacity being applied to state priorities.

- Design and pilot new processes to align graduate research projects with management and policy science needs on topics including marine protected areas, fisheries and climate adaptation.
- Design and pilot new approaches to increase the social science capacity being directly applied in support of state priorities.
- Seek new funding sources to support OPC's efforts to advance applied coastal and ocean-related science that informs policy and management decisions, as mandated in Section 36990(b)(1) of CORSA.
- Serve as OPC-SAT Secretariat
 - Serve as co-Chair of the Science Advisory Team to provide effective governance and leadership of the SAT and Executive Committee.
 - Convene the Science Advisory Team using a variety of approaches to best utilize the diverse expertise and experience of SAT members, including full SAT meetings and webinars, and smaller ad-hoc advisory and discussion groups.

Additional funding requests will be brought to the Council as needed to convene OPC SAT Working Groups on specific topics or issues.

About the Grantee:

California Ocean Science Trust is a nonprofit public-benefit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and was established pursuant to the California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act of 2000 to encourage coordinated, multi-agency, multi-institution approaches to translating ocean science to management and policy applications. OST bridges the gap between cutting edge scientific research and sound ocean management, accelerating progress towards a healthy and productive ocean future for California. As a nonprofit partner to OPC, OST's strength lies in nimble response to state priorities: leveraging resources and creating partnerships to foster innovative yet pragmatic approaches to difficult problems.

Project Timeline:

June 2019 – June 2021

PROJECT FINANCING:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize encumbrance of up to \$650,000 to California Ocean Science Trust to continue serving as OPC Science Advisor, including serving as Secretariat of the OPC Science Advisory Team.

Ocean Protection Council	\$650,000
TOTAL	\$650,000

The anticipated source of funds will be from the Ocean Protection Council's Fiscal Year 2018/2019 appropriation of California Environmental License Plate Funds (ELPF). Using these funds to support this project is consistent with the California Ocean Protection Act, Section 35650(b), as well as OPC's Strategic Plan and Grant Program Funding Guidelines as discussed in more detail in the following section.

CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, because it is consistent with the purposes of the OPC including the transmission of the results of research and investigations to state agencies to provide information for policy decisions. (§65615(a)(5)). The proposed project is also consistent with trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2)(f) as projects which improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project implements Focal Area A: Science-based Decision-Making. Specifically, the Strategic Plan calls out Objective 3.1: "Promote and encourage the institutional support, capacity, and leadership role of the OPC SAT and harness the substantial scientific expertise within California and beyond to inform policy and management decisions."

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the OPC's Grant Program Funding Guidelines for Environmental License Plate Funds, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. Directly relate to the ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds: *The Science Advisor and SAT Secretariat roles will ensure science is informing California policy and management to maintain a healthy, resilient, and productive ocean and coast for the benefit of current and future generations.*
2. Support of the public: *See Exhibit A.*
3. Greater-than-local interest: *This project is statewide in scope as Science Advisor and SAT Secretariat roles provide advice on various issues across the state.*

Additional Criteria

4. Improvements to management approaches or techniques: *The provision of science and science communication services continue as a fairly novel approach by promoting coordination between scientists and state agencies and integrating science into decision-making.*
5. Resolution of more than one issue: *The Science Advisor and SAT Secretariat roles will identify science priorities and needs, provide relevant information to address management questions and integrate science into decision-making.*

6. Timeliness or Urgency: Current funding, approved by the Council in 2016, will be expended by June 2019. *To ensure that OPC continues to benefit from OST's science advise and administration of the SAT, a new authorization is needed from the Council.*

7. Coordination: *This work will involve and improve coordination among scientists, policy makers, and resource managers.*

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

The proposed project is not 'legal project' that triggers the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21068 and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, section 15378.