

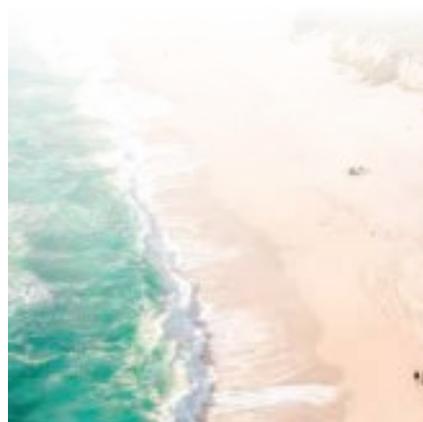


## OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

August 14 – November 13, 2019

*Providing an update on outcomes  
and accomplishments since the  
previous OPC Meeting.*



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## UPDATES BY STRATEGIC PLAN AREA

*Science-based Decision Making • Climate Change • Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems • Coastal and Ocean Impacts from Land-Based Sources • Existing and Emerging Ocean Uses*

### SCIENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

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

### CLIMATE CHANGE

#### **Risk Communication Workshop for Coastal Agency Partners**

On August 21, OPC staff organized a risk communications training for coastal agency partners working on sea level rise. The one-day training (facilitated by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management) gave participants tools to engage in meaningful, productive dialogue with a variety of audiences that will be impacted by sea level rise and other coastal hazards. Participants included staff from BCDC, CalOES, California Coastal Commission, Natural Resources Agency,

Delta Stewardship Council, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Parks, State Coastal Conservancy, and State Lands Commission.

### **UN Secretary General Climate Action Summit in New York City**

On September 25, Secretary Crowfoot spoke at the UN Secretary General Climate Action Summit Meeting of Climate and Ocean Leaders held during New York Climate Week. This summit convened national and subnational leaders following the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Ocean and Cryosphere and showcased example policy frameworks for increasing mitigation ambition, adaptation, and resiliency strategies heading towards COP25. Secretary



Secretary Crowfoot speaks at the UN Secretary General Climate Action Summit. Photo credit: Whitney Berry.

Crowfoot represented California on an international panel and discussed the critical importance of California's ambitious efforts to understand and address the impacts of climate change to our ocean.

### **Coast to Coast State Convening on Ocean Acidification (OA)**

On September 26, the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification, of which California is a founding member, held a two-day workshop bringing together numerous coastal states on the topic of regional impacts of ocean acidification and state-led efforts to respond. OPC's climate team participated and presented on California's State OA Action Plan. This workshop provided the opportunity to share lessons learned and best practices across state government, discuss the development and implementation of state OA action plans, and cultivate leadership and partnerships on ocean and coastal acidification across U.S. states.

### **California Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Science Task Force Meeting**

On October 24, Ocean Science Trust convened the California Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH) Science Task Force (AB 2139) on behalf of OPC for a two-day working session. Drawing on the [completed inventory](#), [guidance](#) developed from the West Coast OAH Panel, and an understanding of decision-making priorities and actions articulated in the [State of California OA Action Plan](#), the Task Force is working to develop prioritized recommendations to inform future OAH monitoring investments California natural resource agencies need to make related to managing and mitigating the effects of ocean acidification and hypoxia.

### **Updated Sea Level Rise Information (AB 2516) Survey Released**

OPC continues to fulfill its Assembly Bill 2516 mandate to compile and disseminate information on statewide sea level rise planning efforts. This Summer and Fall, OPC staff worked with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to revise the format of our twice-yearly AB 2516 survey of utilities, airports, ports, waterboards, and relevant agencies. The survey updates allow responses to be easily incorporated into OPR's Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) Adaptation Clearinghouse. Coordination with OPR's [Adaptation Clearinghouse](#) decreases duplicative efforts between our two agencies when tracking climate adaptation information, while also increasing public access by compiling that information in one online tool.

## **SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

### **Kelp Forest Ecosystem Resilience**

Addressing kelp loss in California remains a top priority for OPC. In response to the crisis, OPC and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are co-leading the development of a science-based statewide kelp restoration toolkit that will include state-endorsed options for active kelp restoration involving both commercial and recreational divers. This strategy will be developed in cooperation with agency, academic, and community partners. OPC and CDFW anticipate that substantial kelp restoration work will begin on California's North Coast in spring 2020.

In addition, OPC has funded two smaller kelp-related projects through the Executive Director's delegated authority, both of which are now underway. These projects will directly inform the statewide kelp restoration toolkit. First – The Nature Conservancy is currently facilitating aerial surveys of kelp canopy cover (both surface and submerged) from Monterey to the California/Oregon border, and will also provide a comparative analysis of 2019 North Coast aerial and satellite imagery to inform long-term kelp canopy monitoring. Second – beginning this winter, scientists with Reef Check California will conduct urchin removals at two sites on California's North Coast to determine threshold urchin densities at which urchin barrens may be converted back to kelp forests.



Kelp forests are an iconic and vital California marine ecosystem. Photo credit: California Sea Grant, Camille Pagniello.

### **Protecting Whales and Sea Turtles & Ensuring Thriving Fisheries**

As mentioned in the funding section above, see [Item 6 staff recommendation](#) and [Exhibit A](#) for an investment strategy to reduce the risk of entanglement in California fishing gear, in alignment with OPC's proposed Strategic Priorities for California's coast and ocean for 2020-2025.

### **Red Abalone Management Strategy Integration**

OPC continues to partner with Tribal representatives, CDFW, the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC), The Nature Conservancy, the North Coast recreational red abalone fishing community, and other partners to integrate proposed recreational Red Abalone management strategies to inform the Red Abalone Fishery Management Plan for the North Coast recreational fishery. The next Project Team meeting will be held on November 21. More details are available on OPC's webpage [here](#), and CDFW's red abalone webpage [here](#).

### **Dungeness Crab Task Force**

The Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) – which is separate and distinct from the Working Group described above - met in October 2018 and recommendations and summary information will be available on the [DCTF webpage](#) soon. The DCTF was created in 2008 to review and evaluate Dungeness crab fishery management measures and provide recommendations to the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, CDFW, and FGC and includes seventeen commercial Dungeness crab fishermen across port complexes, seven members representing sport fishing, crab processing, commercial passenger fishing vessel, nongovernmental organization interests and non-voting members from CDFW and California Sea Grant.

### **Marine Protected Areas**

In partnership with Ocean Science Trust, two MPA-related OPC Science Advisory Team Working Groups have been established and initiated their work. One Working Group is tasked with providing scientific guidance for decadal MPA management reviews, and the other Working Group is exploring the role that California's MPA network may play in climate change resilience. Both Working Groups will coordinate closely with researchers conducting long-term MPA monitoring, with initial Working Group products expected by mid-2020.

The MPA Statewide Leadership Team has recently completed a review of applications received in response to a call for new Regional Tribal Representatives. Pending Secretary for Natural Resources approval, three new Tribal Representatives will be appointed to the Leadership Team by the end of the year.

OPC and CDFW are making progress in their effort to add California's MPA network to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas. Through a public call facilitated by OPC and CDFW, IUCN has convened an Expert Assessment Group which will evaluate California's MPA network against Green List criteria. This diverse group includes representatives from a variety of ocean stakeholder communities, and in 2018 the group completed a major adaptation of IUCN's Green List criteria to ensure relevance to the California jurisdiction. The adapted criteria have gone through separate Tribal and public comment periods and the Expert Assessment Group will meet in mid-November to begin its evaluation work. This process is expected to be completed in time for California's MPA network to be showcased at the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

OPC has an established OTC Interim Mitigation Program and receives and disburses up to \$5.4 million annually to support projects that increase marine life associated with California's marine protected areas, consistent with the State Water Resources Control Board's OTC Policy. By the end of 2019, OPC will receive \$1,011,391 of mitigation fees paid by Southern California Edison for decommissioning activities at the San Onofre Generating Station, as required by the Coastal Commission, to offset impacts from the power plant's once-through cooling (OTC) technology. Over the next year, OPC will work closely with the Coastal Commission to select a project that fits the OTC Award Guidelines as well as the mitigation expectations of the Commission.

## **COASTAL AND OCEAN IMPACTS FROM LAND-BASED SOURCES**

### **Plastic Pollution Steering Committee**

OPC has convened an interagency plastic pollution steering committee (Steering Committee) periodically throughout its history, most recently in 2014. Since that time, additional attention and momentum has been building to address plastic pollution, with initiatives underway at several different agencies. Plastic pollution does not fall under any one agency's jurisdiction, which makes coordination a crucial component to effective policy and regulation implementation. OPC staff reconvened the Steering Committee on October 21, 2019 to allow for information sharing between state agencies, and opportunities for greater coordination. The Steering Committee will continue to meet quarterly in 2020.

### **Comments Provided on Federal Plastics Legislation**

On August 21, OPC staff provided feedback and comments on a Federal plastics legislation outline that was circulated by Representative Lowenthal and Senator Udall. OPC coordinated with CalRecycle to develop our comments. The discussion draft of the legislation was provided for

stakeholder review and comment on October 3, 2019 and OPC staff intend to submit additional comments on this version.

### **Microplastics Strategy Update**

OPC staff are working with Ocean Science Trust to develop an OPC-SAT Working Group (Working Group) on Microplastics. Specifically, the Working Group would be charged with developing a risk assessment framework for exposure of microplastics to organisms, including humans, through pathways that impact the marine environment. OPC staff anticipate the Working Group starting in early 2020. The Working Group's risk assessment framework will be an essential part of the Microplastics Strategy developed by OPC, in accordance with [SB 1263](#). OPC staff have also reached out to the State Water Resources Control Board and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment to coordinate on the development of the Microplastics Strategy.

## **EXISTING and EMERGING OCEAN USES**

### **Marine Renewable Energy**

Over the last three months, OPC staff have been participating in a Central Coast Offshore Wind Working Group convened at the behest of Congressman Salud Carbajal. Other participants include Energy Commissioner Karen Douglas and staff from: the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Navy, California Energy Commission, National Marine Sanctuary, and district staff from State Senator Bill Monning's office. The objective of the working group is to achieve consensus on an area in federal ocean waters off the coast of Morro Bay that could be brought to the State-Federal Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force (Task Force) for further consideration.

On October 4, OPC Executive Director and staff participated in and presented at a day-long Energy Commission workshop that explored the global offshore wind market with a focus on current activities in California, including research activities.

OPC staff is also working with UC Santa Cruz and three North Coast Fishermen's organizations in scoping a research project that will address information gaps on fishing activities in the North Coast region. This is in response to concerns raised by Department of Fish and Wildlife staff and fishermen on using existing departmental data for offshore wind siting analyses on the North Coast.

### **Oil and Gas Platform Decommissioning**

On January 13 and 14, 2020, OPC will be co-sponsoring with the Aquarium of the Pacific and the State Lands Commission et al. a two-day public forum on oil and gas platform decommissioning. A steering committee consisting of state and federal agencies has been guiding the aquarium in the development of the summit program which can be found here:

[http://www.aquariumofpacific.org/events/info/decommissioning\\_forum/](http://www.aquariumofpacific.org/events/info/decommissioning_forum/). OPC staff, as well as staff from other state agencies, will be presenting at the forum.

## PROJECTS APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DELEGATED AUTHORITY

This section provides a summary of projects approved between August and November 2019 through the OPC Executive Director's delegated authority.

Grantee	Project	Amount	Description
California Marine Sanctuary Foundation	Sea Level Rise Communications Strategy	\$199,853	This grant will devise a strategy to disseminate messaging for clear and consistent statewide sea-level rise (SLR) communications. This work is essential to increase awareness of SLR and promote proactive adaptation planning and implementation in the face of immediate and long-term threats to coastal resources, as well as the safety, economic security, and general well-being of coastal communities and all Californians.
The Nature Conservancy	Kelp Mapping: 2019 Aerial Surveys & Planet Imagery	\$155,103	This grant will support aerial kelp canopy surveys from Monterey to the California/Oregon border in 2019, and the requisite data processing to produce maps of kelp coverage – both surface and submerged – at 38cm and 2m resolution. Additionally, this grant will support kelp mapping along California's north coast using high resolution Planet imagery. A final summary report will provide a comparison analysis between aerial and satellite products and costs.
Reef Check Foundation	Kelp Forest Restoration & Monitoring	\$199,957.94	This grant will provide funding to conduct experimental manipulations of purple urchin densities on the north and central California coast, with the goals of 1) determining threshold urchin densities for potential kelp forest reestablishment and 2) engaging citizen scientists and stakeholder communities in kelp restoration efforts.
Conservation Biology Institute	Identify Offshore Wind Energy Least Conflict Areas	\$195,000	This grant will produce Environmental Evaluation Modeling System logic models in partnership with stakeholders to better identify offshore wind least-conflict areas and incorporate the marine environment into the existing California Energy Infrastructure Planning Analyst ( <a href="http://ceipa.databasin.org/">http://ceipa.databasin.org/</a> ).

Grantee	Project	Amount	Description
Point Blue Conservation Science	Use Available Data and Information to Identify Offshore Wind Energy Areas off the California Coast	\$125,000	This grant will assess and analyze the existing body of information on the marine environment, use key data sets to examine offshore wind “Call Areas” identified by the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and recommend additional candidate areas for offshore wind energy development in federal waters off the coast of Northern and Central California.

## PERSONNEL NOTES

### **OPC is hiring a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) to lead its MPA Program**

The Senior Environmental Scientist will serve as the team lead for OPC’s MPA program and will be responsible for: coordinating the efforts of OPC’s MPA program manager and Sea Grant Fellow; leading implementation of the state’s MPA Management Program in collaboration with OPC’s other MPA program staff and external partners, which includes investments and actions related to outreach and education, research and monitoring, compliance and enforcement, and policy and permitting; grant and contract management including developing work scopes, tracking deliverables, processing invoices, and grantee coordination; and additional organizational support and capacity, as needed.

Applicants should have a minimum of four years of relevant post-graduate work experience, a strong scientific background, working knowledge of coastal and ocean issues and stakeholders in California, experience working on projects and/or research related to MPAs in California or elsewhere, and excellent written and verbal communication skills. The ability to work in a fast-paced environment and prioritize tasks is a must. A PhD, ecological modeling experience, and two years of field work are preferred but not required. **The position is located in Sacramento, California.**

The application deadline is November 22, 2019. For more details and to apply, please visit: <https://jobs.ca.gov/CalHrPublic/Jobs/JobPosting.aspx?JobControlId=179933>

## FUNDING

All funding opportunities are designed to address the priority issue areas identified in OPC's Strategic Plan.

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

The third round of OPC Proposition 1 grant applications concluded with a final Review Committee meeting in August 2019 to finalize application scores and evaluations. OPC staff and external reviewers made site visits this August and September and OPC staff are recommending three Proposition 1 projects for funding in [Item 7](#). Other projects from this round may be brought to OPC for consideration at the next OPC meeting in February 2020.

### **California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68)**

In 2018, OPC received a \$10 million appropriation from Chapter 9 of Proposition 68 and a \$10 million appropriation from Chapter 10 of Proposition 68. OPC staff anticipate advancing this funding through both competitive and discretionary processes in early 2020.

### **General Fund to Address Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear**

The Budget Act of 2018 included a \$7.5 million General Fund appropriation to OPC to address whale and sea turtle entanglement. [Item 6](#) includes consideration and approval of an investment strategy to reduce the risk of entanglement in fishing gear. If the Council approves this strategy, OPC staff anticipate releasing a competitive request for proposals in 2020 for projects that improve scientific information critical to informing ongoing risk evaluation and management responses. Discretionary funding will also be available to support the other components of the strategy related to collaborative partnerships, gear innovation, and response and outreach.

### **Environmental License Plate Funds**

The Budget Act of 2018 included a \$15 million appropriation of Environmental License Plate Funds to OPC to support projects that advance coastal ecosystem and human community resilience in the face of climate change. OPC has approximately \$13 million remaining and will advance competitive and discretionary processes in 2020 to support cross-cutting climate change resiliency projects.



Revenue from the sale of "whale tail" license plates provides funds for coastal ecosystem and community resilience projects. Image credit: CA Coastal Commission.

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