



Staff Recommendation  
February 26, 2020

## California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program

Scott Shatto, Sea Grant Fellow

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$1,000,000 to San Jose State University Research Foundation to continue operation of the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program (CCFRP) in the north, central, and south coast marine regions.

**LOCATION:** Statewide

**STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S):** 3.1.1: With partners, complete the ten-year assessment of MPA performance (required adaptive management review), including future monitoring and management recommendations by 2022, with implementation of those recommendations starting in 2023; 3.3.1: Use long-term MPA monitoring data to assess the effects of protected areas on fisheries and integrate MPA data into fisheries management consistent with the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) by 2024.

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### 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 projects are consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the Ocean Protection Act;
- 2) The proposed projects are consistent with the Budget Act of 2019 and the adopted State Water Resources Control Board’s Water Quality Control Policy on the Use of Coastal and Estuarine Waters for Power Plant Cooling; and
- 3) The proposed projects are not ‘legal projects’ that trigger 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:

“OPC hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$1,000,000 to San Jose State University Research Foundation to implement the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program statewide.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, the San Jose State University Research Foundation shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director of 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:**

CCFRP is a diverse partnership of volunteer fishermen, boat captains, scientists, non-governmental organizations, and charter companies interested in promoting sustainable fisheries. Since the establishment of California’s MPA network, CCFRP has worked to develop a long-term coordinated, collaborative, and standardized statewide monitoring program that involves recreational anglers in hook-and-line surveys inside and outside MPAs. Incorporating an interdisciplinary approach, CCFRP has worked closely with state and federal partners since the program’s creation in 2006. In the intervening 10+ years, CCFRP has produced reliable estimates of relative abundance, size frequency distributions, and fish movements across 16 MPAs and associated reference sites statewide. They have also generated highly useful long-term trends in catch and biomass for central coast fishes, published peer-reviewed papers in scientific literature, and deployed two socioeconomic surveys to assess angler perception of MPAs and compliance with MPA regulations. Their approach includes not only scientifically rigorous data collection and analysis, but also meaningful outreach and engagement with fishermen, scientists, resource managers, and the general public.

The state has supported CCFRP since its creation in 2006. At its May 23, 2019 meeting, the Council approved \$9.5 million to support long-term MPA monitoring projects<sup>1</sup>, \$1 million of which provided funding to CCFRP. The funding provided by OPC last year, combined with a \$310,000 contribution from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, fully funds the statewide operation of CCFRP through 2020. Continued funding from OPC as proposed in this staff recommendation will ensure data collection by CCFRP along the entire coast through the 2021 field season. Statewide data collection through 2021 is critically important to help inform the first decadal management review of California’s MPA network which will be taking place in December 2022. Fish-and-line monitoring is a direct way to measure the MPA network’s impact on fish inside and

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<sup>1</sup>Staff recommendation for MPA Long-Term Monitoring Projects can be found here: [http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda\\_items/20190523/Item3a\\_MPA\\_Longterm\\_Monitoring\\_Projects\\_FIN\\_AL.pdf](http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20190523/Item3a_MPA_Longterm_Monitoring_Projects_FIN_AL.pdf)

outside of MPAs. CCFRP is the only active fish-and-line monitoring program in the MPA network.

Specific objectives include:

- Continue CCFRP trips and data collection in MPA sites statewide designated as top priority Tier 1 sites in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's MPA Action Plan<sup>2</sup> through 2021, with a focus on monitoring fish abundance, size, biomass, diversity, species composition, and spillover.
- Conduct spatial and temporal analyses to evaluate MPA performance, including MPA-reference site comparisons of the following:
  - Abundance/biomass of indicator species
  - Species diversity
  - Trophic structure
  - Occurrence of special status species
- Assess spillover, connectivity, and impact of environmental stressors.
- Assess level of compliance and attitude towards/perception of MPAs in recreational fishing community.
- Continue community outreach and education with a focus on the recreational fishing community.

The grantee will provide an annual report that will include a summary of trips taken, analysis of data collected, and overall program success. Additionally, the grantee will submit a development plan that outlines proposed future fundraising efforts to ensure that CCFRP can achieve financial independence from the state within five years. Both deliverables will be provided to OPC staff by December 31, 2020.

### **About the Grantee**

CCFRP, based at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories (San Jose State University), is a collaborative effort among researchers from six California universities, the captains and crew of 27 commercial passenger fishing vessels, and more than 1,200 volunteer anglers spanning the entire California coast. CCFRP Principal Investigators have extensive experience with California's MPA network and monitoring priorities, familiarity with existing data streams, rigorous theoretical grounding in quantitative approaches for MPA evaluation, and proven success in building broad, collaborative partnerships.

### **Project Timeline**

Funding will support CCFRP through the 2021 field season. The contract will expire in December 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> MPA Action Plan can be viewed here: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=161748&inline>

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council authorize encumbrance of up to \$1,000,000 to San Jose State University Research Foundation to conduct the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program statewide.

<b>Ocean Protection Council</b>	
FY 19/20 General Fund	\$653,898.00
FY 19/20 Once-Through Cooling Interim Mitigation Fees	\$130,945.25
FY 20/21 General Fund	\$215,156.75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,000,000.00</b>

**General Fund:** As directed by the MPA Statewide Leadership Team Work Plan, OPC has worked with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and other partners statewide to implement a partnership-based monitoring program to assess MPA network performance. In 2015, the California state legislature allocated a \$2.5 million annual General Fund appropriation to the Secretary for Natural Resources to support the MPA Monitoring Program. Through a collaborative process between the Leadership Team and the Secretary, the initial spending of this appropriation to support MPA monitoring was approved by the Secretary in early 2016. This initial spending focused on: maintaining required scientific tools to conduct monitoring and increasing scientific capacity within the state; continuing ongoing monitoring statewide in subtidal and intertidal habitats; and ensuring the completion of the first five-year management reviews for all regions. Since the initial spending in FY15/16, subsequent spending has focused on creating a long-term monitoring program for the state to ensure the state is well prepared for the upcoming management review of the MPA network in 2022. The project summarized above is consistent with the goals of the state’s MPA monitoring program.

**Once-Through Cooling (OTC) Interim Mitigation Fees:** These funds are deposited into the Ocean Protection Trust Fund and are derived from payments made by power plants still using OTC technology as mitigation until they come into compliance as mandated by the State Water Resources Control Board’s Water Quality Control Policy on the Use of Coastal and Estuarine Waters for Power Plant Cooling. Research to establish and quantify the expected ecological benefits of the MPA network is critical to understanding what additional mitigation projects may be required to offset for OTC impacts. The OPC Science Advisory Team Working Group’s OTC report<sup>3</sup> identifies this type of research as being critical to achieve the goals of the OTC policy. MPAs can offset some negative ecological impacts caused by OTC and understanding the quantitative proportion of that offset

<sup>3</sup> Ocean Restoration Methods: Scientific Guidance for Once-Through Cooling Mitigation Policy  
<http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/OST-Ocean-Restoration-Methods-Final-HighRes.pdf>

requires the same type of monitoring required to evaluate the performance of the MPA Network. The project summarized above is consistent with the Once-Through Cooling Interim Mitigation Program Grant Guidelines.

**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 trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2) as projects which:

- *Provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources.*

**CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This project supports Objective 3.1.1: With partners, complete the ten-year assessment of MPA performance (required adaptive management review), including future monitoring and management recommendations by 2022, with implementation of those recommendations starting in 2023; It also supports Objective 3.3.1: Use long-term MPA monitoring data to assess the effects of protected areas on fisheries and integrate MPA data into fisheries management consistent with the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) by 2024.

**COMPLIANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15306 because the project involves only data collection, research and resource evaluation activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval by the OPC.