



Staff Recommendation
June 19, 2020

Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds for Development and Implementation of a Communication Strategy for OPC

Whitney Berry, Climate Change Program Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Staff recommends that OPC authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract(s) on the Council's behalf for up to \$1,000,000 to develop and implement a Communications Strategy for the State of California's Coast and Ocean. Such funds shall be awarded to contractor(s) selected through a competitive process consistent with State contracting requirements.

LOCATION: Statewide

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): All Strategic Plan Objectives – Vision and Goals for the Next Five Years

FINDINGS AND RESOLUTION:

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

Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibit, 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 project is 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:

"OPC hereby approves the Executive Director to execute a contract(s) on the Council's behalf for up to \$1,000,000 to develop and implement a Communications Strategy for the State of California's Coast and Ocean.

Staff Recommendation – Development and Implementation of Coast and Ocean Communications Strategy

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, the contractor 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.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

OPC’s mission is to protect California’s coast and ocean by advancing innovative, science-based policy and management, making strategic investments, and catalyzing action through partnerships and collaboration. These efforts yield significant benefits to the state while providing a global model for ecosystem-based protection and conservation. A critical component of our success is to communicate the state’s progress in meeting its strategic priorities related to protecting the coast and ocean, promoting the incredible efforts of our partner state agencies in advancing this work, and providing the latest information on relevant science, management, and policy.

Impactful communications, targeted for specific audiences using appropriate channels and messages, can serve as a powerful tool to enable OPC to more efficiently achieve our goals to catalyze science, set policy, and increase the health and resilience of California’s coast and ocean. Investment in a thoughtful and comprehensive communications strategy will accelerate OPC’s effectiveness by galvanizing support, generating stewardship, and inspiring action from members of the public to local and state decisionmakers. A strong, comprehensive communications plan is essential for effective and timely implementation of the *Strategic Plan to Protect California’s Coast and Ocean*.

This project will provide centralized access to California’s extensive coastal and ocean information, it will ensure unified messaging of the State’s coastal management and scientific efforts, and it will help to engage ocean stakeholders, key legislators, decision-makers, and the general public in the process. Through updated media platforms, targeted outreach, annual State of the Ocean reports, development of an Ocean Health Dashboard and report card, and many more actions, this project will help OPC become a communications hub for the state, serving to share California’s progress towards meeting the ambitious Strategic Plan goals, objectives, and targets.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Background

Currently, there is no central source or location that provides readily available data regarding the status of California’s coast and ocean or the significant efforts by state agencies to improve ecosystem health, increase public access, and build climate resilience for coastal habitats and human communities. This communications gap has significant consequences, including but not limited to: duplicative state efforts, general lack of

Staff Recommendation – Development and Implementation of Coast and Ocean Communications Strategy

awareness, missed collaborative opportunities, lack of leveraged funds, misinformation, absence of public/legislative/administrative support, policy scarcity, and slowed progress, and results in a nearly impossible task for anyone looking for scientific reports, updates, projects, or general information regarding efforts to protect and assess the current status of California’s coast and ocean.

California is a leader in science, policy, and ocean conservation, and the state of California has steadily developed a comprehensive vision of ocean action that could serve as a model to other subnational and national governments seeking to protect the coast and ocean. Yet, the lack of a central clearinghouse and communication surrounding these groundbreaking efforts are depriving the global coastal and ocean community of information necessary for critical action and progress.

For this reason, our vision, as articulated in the [2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan to Protect California’s Coast and Ocean](#), is for OPC to become a communications hub on the latest state agency coastal management and scientific efforts, and on California’s progress towards meeting the Strategic Plan goals, objectives, and targets, so that the public, stakeholders, and decision makers will have easier access to California’s extensive coast and ocean information. By developing and serving as a Communications Hub, or a “one-stop-shop” for California’s coast and ocean, we can increase awareness, accelerate access, simplify information sharing, and extend our reach to a much larger and more diverse audience. Through better communication and increased outreach, we will not only receive more diverse applications for grant funding to help us continue our state’s work to protect our coast and ocean, but we will garner more support from the people of California, and in doing so, will help to create ripple effects of awareness and understanding, continuing to foster environmental stewards throughout the entire state. Additionally, by creating an easily navigable central communications hub comprising the latest state agency coastal management, scientific efforts, and progress on addressing California’s coastal and ocean issues, we will also better inform our state agencies, administration, and legislature.

Project Goals and Tasks

The Communications Strategy for California’s Coast and Ocean will outline a course of action to create greater awareness and adoption of California’s coastal and ocean initiatives among key audience segments, while also promoting progress towards meeting the critical goals, objectives, and targets identified in the Strategic Plan to Protect California’s Coast and Ocean. Communication is a practical, and indeed essential, tool for action. Effective communication is one of the most cost-effective ways to catalyze implementation of our recently adopted Strategic Plan. There has never been a more critical time to raise awareness, change behavior, educate, collaborate to address conflicts, pass legislation, or challenge assumptions in our crucial fight to protect California’s coast and ocean.

Staff Recommendation – Development and Implementation of Coast and Ocean Communications Strategy

Communications Goals:

Primary Goal: To create a reliable communications hub that aggregates science, policy, and implementation efforts related to California’s coast and ocean and serves as an information clearinghouse and tool to track progress on meeting the goals in the Strategic Plan.

Secondary Goal: To elevate and magnify the great work of California’s state agencies to protect our coast and ocean in order to further catalyze successful coast and ocean biodiversity conservation, public access, climate resilience and blue economy efforts

Target Audiences:

1. General Public
 - a. Beach goers – not limited to coastal residents, target inland communities as well.
2. Decision Makers
 - a. Administration, legislature, tribes, commissioners, council members, leaders from local, state and federal government.
3. Coast & Ocean Stakeholders
 - a. Coastal local government, marinas and ports, coastal businesses, coastal residents, NGOs, academics, recreational ocean users (fishing, surfing diving, kayaking, etc.,)

Objectives/Deliverables:

- An integrated and creative communications strategy that will inform outreach on all platforms: traditional public relations, earned media, social media, campaigns, shareable videos, paid advertising, state-controlled communications avenues, face-to-face events, briefings, and more.
- Identification of media partners to cost-effectively amplify California coast and ocean messaging including NGOs, influencers, media outlets, and media that targets coast and ocean users.
- Plans to identify, differentiate, and develop appropriate objectives, strategies, and actions for each of the identified target audiences.
- Updated website with target audience segmentation, coast and ocean communications hub function, and substantially increased content.
- Ocean Health Dashboard and Report Card with indicators
- State of the Ocean Annual Report
- Social Media update and buildout with content development
- Benchmarks and metrics for success for Communications Plan implementation

Consistent with our strategic plan, we will have metrics for success in order to measure our progress in meeting the communications goals and objectives described above. The communications plan will have milestones and assessments that will be pegged to each

Staff Recommendation – Development and Implementation of Coast and Ocean Communications Strategy

target audience and media type to ensure continued progress and best strategic course of action.

Project Timeline

- Funding Approval at June 2020 Council Meeting
- Summer 2020 – Request for Bid release
- Fall 2020 – Review of Proposals from Bid Process
- Winter 2020 – Contractor Selected & Contract Development
- Spring 2021 – Communications Strategy Completed
- Summer 2021 – Begin Implementation of Communications Strategy
- Fall 2021 – Website/Web Function Update, Dashboard, Coast and Ocean Report
- Winter 2023 – Conclusion of contract

PROJECT FINANCING:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize encumbrance of up to \$1,000,000 to go out to bid to hire a contractor to conduct a Communications Strategy for the State of California’s Coast and Ocean.

Ocean Protection Council	\$1,000,000
TOTAL	\$1,000,000

The anticipated source of funds will come from the Ocean Protection Council’s Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) appropriation. ELPF supports various resources and environmental protection programs. The fund is primarily supported from the sale and renewal of personalized motor vehicle license plates, as well as a portion of fees on the sale and renewal of certain specialty license plates. The Department of Motor Vehicles recently began offering “legacy license plates,” which has increased revenues in recent years. Most of this funding is provided on a one-time or limited-term basis. CNRA received \$15 million for the Ocean Resiliency Program to address threats of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems from the 2018-19 budget.

CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code.

“The OPC goals of Pub. Res. Code 35615 include coordinating activities of state agencies, establishing policies to coordinate the collection of scientific data related to the ocean, or recommending to the legislature changes in law or identify changes in federal law”

This Communications Strategy is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act and meets the criteria of the Public Resources Code because this Plan seeks to disseminate and communicate our existing body of work more effectively and efficiently. By creating a central communications hub comprising the latest state agency coastal management,

Staff Recommendation – Development and Implementation of Coast and Ocean Communications Strategy

scientific efforts, and progress on addressing California’s coastal and ocean issues, OPC will create greater awareness and adoption of California’s existing coastal and ocean initiatives among key audience segments, while also promoting progress towards meeting the critical goals, objectives, and targets identified in the Strategic Plan to Protect California’s Coast and Ocean.

Through directly engaging with other state agencies, OPC’s Communications Strategy will promote the coordination of state programs and activities that protect ocean resources, while helping to avoid redundancy and ensuring that the state’s programs and activities are complimentary. By communicating our work more effectively and by sharing the incredible work of other state agencies, we are ensuring a more coordinated and efficient approach to coastal and ocean protection.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project helps to implement all Strategic Plan goals and objectives through outreach and communication. Specifically, as stated in the Vision and Goals for the Next Five Years section of the Strategic Plan on page 4, “OPC will become a communications hub on the latest state agency coastal management and scientific efforts and California’s progress towards meeting Strategic Plan goals, objectives, and targets, so that the public and decision makers will have easier access to California’s extensive coast and ocean information.”