



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Marine Region
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www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



June 15, 2020

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources
Chair, Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 9th Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Department of Fish and Wildlife Support for Project Funding

Dear Chair Crowfoot and Members of the Ocean Protection Council:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has worked closely with Ocean Protection Council (OPC) staff and supports authorization of funding for the following projects:

- Marine Protected Areas (MPA) monitoring and outreach
- Projects to reduce the risk of whale and sea turtle entanglement in fishing gear
- Statewide Kelp Recovery Research Program

The Department is the primary agency responsible for managing California's marine protected areas (MPAs), is an integral partner in the MPA Management Program, and a member of the MPA Statewide Leadership Team. California's MPAs comprise the largest network of MPAs in North America and one of the largest in the world. The communications strategy would help provide clear communication to the public, stakeholders, and decision makers about what to expect during California's first MPA network decadal management review. Set to occur in 2022, the decadal management review will encompass all areas of MPA network management including but not limited to, ecological, socioeconomic, and enforcement data. The proposed communications strategy will help unify messaging, establish expectations, and raise awareness of what this review will entail. The project will also help fill a critical need to meaningfully engage with the public leading up to the formal review.

The tribal marine stewards network pilot program will engage California Tribes in MPA and monitoring and management. Information gained from this pilot project will help identify shared priorities between Tribes and the state and enhance the capacity of California coastal Tribes to inform the adaptive management of California's MPA network.

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

Since 2015, the Department has been closely coordinating with OPC and the National Marine Fisheries Service on a multi-faceted effort to reduce marine life entanglement risk, including convening a broad cross-section of stakeholders through the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group).

The proposed projects address priority informational needs and address data gaps identified by the Department during development of the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP) and draft Conservation Plan. Enhancing available data and quality will help the Department and Working Group to assess marine life entanglement risk and determine the appropriate management response during periods of elevated entanglement risk.

The Department also supports authorization of funding by to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to coordinate testing of fishing gear innovations which may reduce the frequency and severity of marine life entanglements. This project will address key questions regarding reliability of multiple gear types and their compatibility with current fishing practices. Expanded testing will provide the Department and fishery participants with information needed to evaluate broad-scale authorization and use of gear innovations within state-managed trap fisheries such as Dungeness crab.

Kelp forests are critically important ecosystems in coastal California. Recent severe declines in kelp have caused the ecosystem to collapse resulting in impacts to recreational and commercial fisheries and non-consumptive uses. The Statewide Kelp and Recovery Research Program (Program) is a partnership among California Sea Grant, OPC, and the Department. This Program is designed to fill essential knowledge gaps in our understanding of kelp ecosystem processes, including improved scientific understanding of the drivers of kelp decline and evaluation of the efficacy of different restoration approaches. Improved understanding of these issues will enable the Department and partners to develop appropriate restoration strategies and a long-term management plan for kelp ecosystems throughout the state.

OPC support has been, and will continue to be, critical to the success of the above projects. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at 805-568-1246 or by email at Craig.Shuman@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Craig Shuman, D. Env.
Marine Regional Manager

ec: Becky Ota, Program Manager
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Wednesday 17, 2020

California Ocean Protection Council

Delivered electronically to COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov

Re: General Comments on Ocean Protection Council's Agenda Items

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on several agenda items for the Ocean Protection Council's (OPC) public meeting Friday June 19th, 2020. Ocean Conservancy appreciates OPC'S continued commitment to addressing its goals within the [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) especially during these tumultuous times. Though our comments are brief we wanted to have the opportunity to engage as Friday June 19th is celebrated as Juneteenth, which commemorates the ending of slavery, and therefore some of our colleagues will not be able to attend the meeting.

Firstly, Ocean Conservancy would like to lend its support for the disbursement of funds for agenda items 4b and 5 – 10. Items 4 and 5 will provide important scientific baseline information on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH) through modelling and inventory on coastal wetlands, beaches, and watersheds. As a science-based organization, Ocean Conservancy strongly supports developing this kind of information that can provide a basis for effective decision-making.. Items 7 and 8 focus on protecting marine biodiversity, in particular of whales, turtles and kelp. Item 9 aims better to understand microplastics and to tackle the problem of microplastics before they enter the marine environment. Addressing ocean plastics is all the more important right now, when the coronavirus pandemic is leading some to argue for increased use of plastics without understanding the broader effects on the environment; it is important to consider the most recent science on these issues.

As our CEO, Janis Searles Jones noted in a letter to Governor Newsom, the state, in an abundance of caution, decided temporarily to suspend California's state ban on single-use plastic bags via Executive Order N-54-20. As we learn more about the risk of viral spread, we believe the state should not extend the 60-day rollback of the ban on single-use plastic bags and instead should provide greater clarity and robust guidance

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to California's grocery stores and retail outlets based on recently released Cal-OSHA guidelines on how to safely use reusable grocery bags, in order best to protect both human health and the marine environment.

Secondly, while we support all the above action items and recognize that this agenda does not include all OPC's strategic priorities, we look forward to OPC's progress around the priorities connected to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. As the current resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and the fight for racial justice has highlighted, there are deep-rooted, systemic injustices towards the BIPOC¹ community not only within the law enforcement sector, but also within the environmental and conservation sector.

With this in mind we would to specifically highlight agenda **#6a, Tribal Marine Stewards Network Pilot Program**, which makes a targeted effort to include tribal communities from development to monitoring of the project and provides opportunities to increase capacity within the tribal community in the areas of monitoring via workshops, allowing for future agency. Furthermore, the program aims to integrate indigenous traditional knowledge (ITK) while setting provisions for sensitive information to be protected. This is a positive step in the right direction.

We look forward to similar principles being integrated in your future programmatic work externally and internally. We are especially looking forward to seeing the progress of goal 2 of the strategic plan to **Advance Equity Across Ocean and Coastal Policies and Actions**.

Our CEO Janis Searles Jones in a recent [blog post](#) states that "A just and equitable future requires far more from us, and we commit to learning and doing more. Does an ocean conservation organization have a role to play in dismantling racist systems? I know we do. Will the ocean be better off in a more just and equitable world? I know it will". We know that the Ocean Protection Council shares this belief and we look forward to working with you to fulfill your commitments to equity and justice.

¹ BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Color

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Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Ocean Conservancy reiterates its pledge to continue partnership with OPC in support of you and your staff in reaching OPC's goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kalina Browne". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "K" and a cursive "Browne".

Kalina Browne
RAY Conservation Fellow
Ocean Conservancy



June 17, 2020

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources
Chair, Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 9th Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Public Comment on Action Item 7 of the Ocean Protection Council's June 19, 2020 meeting:

Support for Authorization to Disburse Funds to Reduce the Risk of Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear

Dear Chair Crowfoot and Council Members:

We would like to thank the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) for your continued dedication to reducing the risk of marine mammal and sea turtle entanglements in California fishing gear. Specifically, we would like to commend the OPC for adopting *The Strategy for Protecting Whales and Sea Turtles & Ensuring Thriving Fisheries: Reducing the Risk of Entanglement in California Fishing Gear* at your November 2019 meeting, which outlines investment priorities to reduce the risk of entanglement in California fishing gear.

The most effective way to reduce marine life entanglements is through the reduction of rope in the water column, and on-demand pop-up gear is the only gear innovation currently available that ensures that rope is eliminated from the water and does not threaten marine species. For on-demand pop-up gear to be most effective, we need to get pop-up systems in the hands of fishers and out on California's waters. This will ensure that pop-up gear can be integrated into fishing operations, reduce costs, and ensure enforcement.

We support the four projects referenced in action item 7 of the June 19, 2020 meeting that will help ensure that the necessary research and gear testing is done to effectively reduce entanglements off the California coast.

We have some general comments and suggestions regarding particular proposals and future disbursement of funds:

- **7a. \$2,000,000 to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC)**

We support the proposal to award funds to PSMFC for the purpose of implementing research projects and partnerships aimed at reducing entanglement risks. We urge OPC to explicitly award funds to PSMFC to support additional field trials, data management, research, and development of on-demand pop-up fishing gear. Training of fishers to use on-demand pop-up fishing gear should also be a top priority. Funds may be used to supplement ongoing whale and sea turtle research (see, e.g., 7c and 7d) intended to inform entanglement risk reduction. Further, it is important that competitive bidding be available to NGOs, and that NGOs and the public are given opportunities to comment on the projects that OPC and PSMFC identify as grantees.

- **7b. \$500,000 to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation for Gear Innovations Testing**

This disbursement is an effective step toward funding a large-scale field trial of on-demand pop-up gear, which has been supported by the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group and that we have advocated for in previous letters to the OPC. We urge OPC and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to work with the Working Group, outside experts, NGOs, and other stakeholders to develop a robust at-sea testing regime and ensure participation by a cross-section of vessel types in the fleet. We hope to see pop-up gear testing and development be the top priority for gear innovation funding. Getting more on-demand pop-up gear systems out on the water will enable continued fishing in areas of high marine life concentrations.

- **7c. \$300,000 to Cascadia Research Collective to Conduct Vessel Surveys; 7d. \$100,000 to Point Blue for Whale Abundance Data Assessment**

We support both of these grants, as additional data on these topics will help evaluate entanglement risks, inform CDFW's Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program, and guide informed management decisions.

We support all four proposals under action item 7, consistent with the OPC's Strategic Plan and CDFW's Draft Conservation Plan for California's Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery. We look forward to seeing a reduction of marine life entanglements off California's coast with the continued work from the OPC, and we urge you to fund future proposals that support the testing of on-demand pop-up gear.

Thank you for reviewing our comment on this action item, and we look forward to working with the OPC in the future.

Sincerely,

Dillon Hanson-Ahumada
RAY Fellow, Pacific Ocean Initiative
Natural Resources Defense Council

Andrea A. Treece
Staff Attorney, Oceans Program
Earthjustice

Andrew Johnson
California Representative
Defenders of Wildlife

Catherine Kilduff
Senior Attorney, Oceans Program
Center for Biological Diversity

Geoff Shester, Ph.D.
California Campaign Director and Senior Scientist
Oceana



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
99 Pacific Street, Bldg 455a
Monterey, CA 93940

SENT VIA EMAIL
ONLY

June 17, 2020

Wade Crowfoot
Council Chair
Ocean Protection Council

RE: Support for Staff Recommendation Item 7 – Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds to Reduce the Risk of Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear

Dear Chair Crowfoot:

I am writing to express support for the staff recommendation: Item 7 - for Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds to Reduce the Risk of Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear; as well as specifically for the following two items: Up to \$500K to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) to support gear innovations testing within the Dungeness crab fishery; and up to \$100K to Point Blue Conservation Science (PBCS) to analyze California whale abundance datasets to assess the spatial and temporal correlations among them.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) is one our nation's most spectacular federal marine protected areas, sometimes referred to as the "Serengeti of the Sea" and is an important feeding ground for whales, sea turtles and other marine wildlife.

MBNMS works closely with the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, the NMSF and others on the Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear working group on gear innovation pilot projects, and in September of 2019 the team hosted a gear innovation demonstration day working with gear manufacturers and fishermen, in particular to solicit fishermen's perspectives on the gear designs. This work is important to continue in order for alternative gear to move forward within the criteria of enforceable, economical, fishable, reliable and safe in a way that minimizes adverse impacts on wildlife.

MBNMS also works with PBCS through the working group context to provide real-time whale distribution data, and we understand the importance of analyzing the spatial extent for local whale abundance data for how it may or may not apply to regional spatial scales. PBCS is well equipped to handle this project as they have been conducting vessel surveys to collect whale data and thus compiling and analyzing whale distribution data since 2004.

In summary, I am writing to support the OPC staff recommendation as written.

Sincerely,

Paul Michel

Paul Michel
Sanctuary Superintendent





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
Long Beach, California 90802-4213

June 16, 2020

Paige Berube
California Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Letter of support for a proposal to inform risk assessments for large whale entanglements off California and improve reporting and mitigation

Dear Ms. Berube:

I am writing to you to express the support of NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) West Coast Region (WCR) Protected Resources Division (PRD) for a proposal submitted by Cascadia Research Collective (CRC) in collaboration with other partners to inform risk assessments for large whale entanglements off California and improve reporting and mitigation. I understand the proposal is being considered for funding by the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC).

My understanding is that expected project outcomes include collection of information on whale distribution, abundance, and feeding choices during the upcoming 2020-2021 Dungeness crab fishery season. Data collected could inform the 2020-2021 Dungeness crab fishery Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program (RAMP). In addition, this work can help inform studies of long-term whale abundance and population structure; as well as facilitate the reporting of and response to entangled whales that may be detected, including disentanglement efforts, if an entangled whale is encountered.

I believe this project can help serve the aims of the proposal as described to help the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) execute the RAMP in 2020-2021, while also adding to the base of scientific knowledge that could help the State of California avoid or reduce the entanglement of whales in the fishery, and successfully develop a Conservation Plan for the California Dungeness crab fishery. In particular, I would like to stress the importance of the entanglement monitoring and response component of this proposal. Currently, NMFS and CDFW rely upon opportunistic sightings to detect and report entanglements to the NMFS Marine Mammal Stranding Program, which coordinates response activities and gathers the data obtained from reporting and response for further evaluation and dissemination. The presence of standardized, on-water, research activities provides a dedicated and organized platform from which monitoring for the detection of entangled whales can be enhanced. I note this monitoring also includes capabilities to gather photo-identification of whales that may be ultimately matched with photos of previously entangled whales, advancing our knowledge of the outcomes and ultimate impacts of entanglements. The enhanced monitoring capability should also expedite the



detection of entangled whales which should improve the chances for ultimate success of any intervention that may occur, if warranted.

The potential benefits of this proposal also include the involvement of highly trained and experienced whale entanglement responders as part of the research team. Having them on the water in a ready-response mode during key periods of time will assist the timeliness and effectiveness of mounting responses to entanglements. In addition to potentially removing gear, having expert response capabilities on hand will help ensure that the documentation of entanglement events will be well-organized and thorough, which facilitates a comprehensive forensic analysis of each entanglement by NMFS and other parties to better understand the underlying causes and patterns of entanglements. This also helps to promote timely reporting back to CDFW, the CA Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group, and others, for incorporation into the development of measures to reduce risk over the short-and-long term. Learning as much as we can from each entanglement is vital to the long term success of trying to avoid or mitigate entanglements in the future.

A dedicated effort in the upcoming Dungeness crab season by Cascadia and their partners as described in the project proposal should significantly advance the capabilities of the State of California to monitor entanglement risk and better respond to entanglement events over the course of the next year. This should also help CDFW evaluate how to proceed with Conservation Planning in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Penny Ruvelas".

Penny Ruvelas
Long Beach Branch Chief
Protected Resources Division

cc: Administrative File: 10012WCR2020PR00136



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Fisheries Science Center
110 McAlister Way, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
7544 Sandholdt Rd, Moss Landing, CA 95039

June 15, 2020

Dear Ocean Protection Council,

We are writing this letter to express our strong support for the research proposal submitted to the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) by John Calambokidis on behalf of Cascadia Research Collective (CRC) and entitled “*Proposal to inform risk assessments for large whale entanglements off California and improve reporting and mitigation*”.

As scientific advisors to the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group and California Department of Fish and Wildlife, we have participated in numerous discussions since 2018 regarding information gaps and data needs to improve our ability to mitigate whale entanglement risks. Critical needs that have been identified include 1) data on whale distributions and a greater understanding of the factors that drive their movements, 2) data on whale prey (e.g. krill and anchovy) and whale foraging behavior, and 3) whale behavior near and during interactions with fishing gear.

A copy of CRC’s proposal has been shared with us, and after reviewing their proposed approach, we confirm that their research would directly addresses all of the critical data needs identified above. Further, CRC’s highly-skilled disentanglement team members would allow the rapid mitigation of impacts to any entangled whales encountered during their focused research. We highlight that CRC has decades of experiences partnering with federal and state partners and a proven record of excellence supporting the needs of Federal and State agencies along the U.S. West Coast. As NOAA scientists, we have no doubt that the proposed research will provide significant value-added benefits to our own ongoing studies to understand the dynamic distribution of whales and their prey species, in support of CDFW efforts to reduce entanglement risks while facilitating healthy fisheries.

In summary, we strongly believe that the proposed project will fill critical data gaps in support of California State efforts to reduce whale entanglement risk in the Dungeness crab fishery, and we enthusiastically recommend this proposal for support by OPC.

Sincerely,

Karin A. Forney, Ph.D.
Marine Mammal and Turtle Division
Phone: (831) 771-4155
E-mail: Karin.Forney@noaa.gov

Jarrod Santora, Ph.D.
Fishery Ecology Division
Phone: (831) 420-3991
E-mail: Jarrod.Santora@noaa.gov





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Environmental Research Division
99 Pacific St. Suite 255A
Monterey, CA 93940

Dear Ocean Protection Council,

I am writing this letter to express my support for the research proposal submitted to the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) by John Calambokidis on behalf of Cascadia Research Collective (CRC) and entitled "*Proposal to inform risk assessments for large whale entanglements off California and improve reporting and mitigation*". I have reviewed a copy of CRC's proposal and confirm that their research would directly addresses the critical data needs identified below.

As a scientific advisor to the RAMP process, I have participated in numerous discussions since 2018 regarding information gaps and data needs to improve our ability to mitigate whale entanglement risks. Critical needs that have been identified include 1) data on whale distributions and a greater understanding of the factors that drive their movements, 2) data on whale prey (e.g. krill and anchovy) and whale foraging behavior, and 3) whale behavior near and during interactions with fishing gear.

Further, the CRC's highly-skilled disentanglement team members would allow the rapid mitigation of impacts to any entangled whales encountered during their focused research. We highlight that CRC has decades of experiences partnering with federal and state partners and a proven record of excellence supporting the needs of Federal and State agencies along the U.S. West Coast. As a NOAA scientist and member of OPC-SAT, I have no doubt that the proposed research will provide significant value-added benefits to ongoing studies to understand the dynamic distribution of whales and their prey species, in support of CDFW efforts to reduce entanglement risks while facilitating healthy fisheries.

In summary, I strongly believe that the proposed project will fill critical data gaps in support of California State efforts to reduce whale entanglement risk in the Dungeness crab fishery and enthusiastically recommend this proposal for support by OPC.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elliott L Hazen, Research Ecologist
Southwest Fisheries Science Center - Environmental Research Division
OPC-SAT member
E-mail: elliott.hazen@noaa.gov
Phone: 831-658-3202



June 16, 2020

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

RE: Support for Funding to Conduct Vessel Surveys (7c)

Dear Secretary Crowfoot:

The Marine Mammal Center (Center) supports the authorization of funding by the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to Cascadia Research Collective to conduct vessel surveys.

This project provides critical data (that is often missing) about whale population densities and spatial and temporal distributions to the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group (Working Group), co-convened by OPC with other resource agencies, to assess and mitigate risk of whale entanglement. Additionally, the data and analysis inform longer-term whale abundance, trends, and population structure, and can support management decisions that mitigate and prevent whale entanglements. Lastly, the vessel surveys allow for proactive and rapid entanglement response should an entangled whale be seen or reported in the survey areas.

This project with Cascadia Research Collective, the Center, and SR3 merges research and response by providing opportunities to increase the Center's knowledge, skills, and abilities with scientific documentation, photo identification, and entanglement response. This benefits future entanglement response and provides essential data to the Dungeness crab fishery and Working Group. Additionally, this work strengthens collaboration among organizations that actively participate in NOAA's large whale entanglement response network.

I am proud to support the work of Cascadia Research Collective and look forward to a future of continued cooperation between our organizations and SR3.

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Lastly, the Center supports all projects in item 7 to reduce the risk of whale and sea turtle entanglement in fishing gear. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at 415-289-7370 or georgek@tmmc.org.

Sincerely,

Kathi George

Whale Entanglement Response and Prevention, Manager
California Dungeness Fishing Gear Working Group, Member

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2020/06/15

Paige Berube
Program Manager
California Ocean Protection Council
California Resources Agency
COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov



SR3 Sealife Response Rehab & Research
2255 Harbor Ave SW (Suite 101)
Seattle, WA
98126

RE: Support for Cascadia Research Collective's proposal to inform risk assessments for large whale entanglements off California and improve reporting and mitigation

Cascadia Research Collective's proposal outlines a project that directly integrates large whale research and large whale entanglement response. This is a successful and well proven model. I fully support Cascadia Research Collective's proposal, I am excited for the opportunity to contribute to this project and confirm SR3's willingness to partner with CRC and TMMC on this project.

Until recently, along the West Coast entanglement response has been largely reactive - relying on the public, fishermen, USCG and other mariners to report entangled whales. Often mariners report these entanglements after the fact and are unable to stay with the whale until responders arrive. Some mariners, when trained responders aren't able to arrive immediately, have taken matters into their own hands, which is extremely dangerous for the would-be rescuers and almost always leaves life-threatening entangling gear on the whale. The gear ad-hoc responders do remove is the gear trained responders would have grabbed to provide the opportunity for a full disentanglement.

By integrating large whale research with entanglement response, we will be taking proactive measures to:

- Detect entangled whales earlier before their injuries become severe
- Collect documentation of entanglements and remove gear from whales that will provide insight into how whales become entangled – key to mitigating and preventing entanglements
- Be on the water in areas of whale concentrations with a full team and prepared to respond to public reports of entangled whales

It is worth noting, that when I worked at the Center for Coastal Studies' Marine Animal Entanglement Response Program in Provincetown, MA, our full-time entanglement response team of 6 was integrated with the humpback and right whale research programs and spent 60 to 90 days at sea. During the last year I worked at CCS we encountered 9 entangled whales during the course of our research efforts and were able to disentangle and document each of these whales; and the humpback studies program almost always knew the whale as an individual.

The population data collected during this project will benefit not only the RAMP process but will also provide information on individual whales and whale populations that the larger scientific community relies on for their research projects. Cascadia Research Collective is one of the most collaborative and sharing organizations I have encountered. Their success provides collaborative opportunities for untold other projects whose results will provide insight into the biology and ecology of these whales providing many additional conservation benefits.

Sincerely,

Doug Sandilands
Level 4 Responder
SR3 Sealife Response Rehab and Research
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206-919-0835



MARINE LIFE STUDIES



RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND WHALE RESCUE

Inspiring the Public to Protect our Ocean, Whales and Dolphins

California Ocean Protection Council
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06/17/2020

Action Item: Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds to Reduce the Risk of Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear

Dear Ocean Protection Council:

I attended the OPC meeting in Sacramento in February for the public comment along with our Board Chair, and Operations Manager. I also wrote a letter of support for the staff recommendation action to disburse funds to help the whale and sea turtle entanglement response network and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to fund emergency responder trainings.

Marine Life Studies' Whale Entanglement Team writes this letter to voice our support for the staff's strategy to reduce the risk of entanglement in fishing gear. We have been conducting whale and dolphin research in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) since 2006, we are the rapid response vessel for disentangling whales in the MBNMS, and I am a level 3 responder for whale disentanglement and cofounder of the Whale Entanglement Team (WET)®. Our vessel is outfitted not only for conducting research boat surveys, but also has all of the tools and equipment for a complete whale disentanglement response. Check out our vessel at WhaleEntanglementTeam.org

We also have a derelict fishing gear removal project that we want to continue, so we need to continually apply for funding. The project encompasses finding fishing gear that is lost and retrieving them from the MBNMS. There are lines in the water column and/or pot gear on the seafloor with no buoys at the surface, as they have been damaged or cut. We used a side sonar scanner to find the gear, then hired commercial crab fisherman to pull up the pots/gear from the sea floor. The project's objective is to help mitigate entanglements not only of whales, but turtles, dolphins, sharks, large fish, etc. We received a grant in 2019 for \$60,000 from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and raised \$30,000 for the matching portion of the grant.

The reason why I'm reaching out to the Ocean Protection Council is to understand how the process works where we, Marine Life Studies, can apply for funding for projects in line with the "Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds to Reduce the Risk of Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear."

Action Item: Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds to Reduce the Risk of Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement in Fishing Gear

- 7a. Fund and Administer Projects Identified through a Competitive Process in alignment with OPC's Strategy to Reduce the Risk of Entanglement in Fishing Gear
- 7b. Gear Innovations Testing

7c. Vessel Surveys to Provide Whale Distribution and Abundance Information
7d. Whale Abundance Data Assessment

Paige Berube and Holly Wyer recommended that I join the list serve to get emails when opportunities arise and to keep checking back to the website, so that's exactly what I did. I'm assuming that the list serve will notify individuals for competitive grant opportunities when they come available. Recently, I've learned that Projects 7b-7d were collaboratively identified as priority projects to be recommended to the Council through a discretionary process as they address immediate needs in OPC guiding documents and address shared priorities among state agencies.

It would be great if you could please enlighten me about the actual process to apply for funding through the discretionary process. The staff recommendations for the June 19th meeting had already been put on the agenda to be funded. How were their projects presented to the OPC staff since there has not been anything posted on the website calling for proposals? How does Marine Life Studies present its projects to be considered as a staff recommendation to OPC?

I would really appreciate your guidance to help me understand how to navigate through the process of applying for funding for our nonprofit based in Moss Landing, CA.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peggy Stap". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peggy" and the last name "Stap" clearly distinguishable.

Peggy Stap
Executive Director of Marine Life Studies
Cofounder of the Whale Entanglement Team (WET)®