



June 11, 2020

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

Sent via: COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov

RE: Item 8 - Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds for a Statewide Kelp Recovery Research Program

Dear Secretary Crowfoot and members of the Ocean Protection Council:

On behalf of California Waterkeepers, California Coastkeeper Alliance submits this letter in strong support of the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorizing disbursement of funding to California Sea Grant to support solutions-oriented research projects aimed at restoring and protecting kelp ecosystems statewide.

This disbursement is critical to the implementation of the OPC’s Strategic Plan, Objective 3.2: Restore and Protect Kelp Ecosystems. As detailed in the OPC’s Staff Report, the North Coast has recently been devastated by unprecedented declines in kelp. Aerial surveys conducted by Department of Fish and Wildlife showed a 93 percent loss of bull kelp. This is a crisis that needs timely action. While we support the disbursement of funds for recovery research, we want to stress and emphasize the critical need that this research be solutions-oriented so that California can take immediate action to begin bull kelp recovery on the North Coast.

Kelp forests are an iconic part of California’s coastline. These underwater forests are biodiversity hot spots, providing habitat and food for a myriad of ecologically and economically important fish and invertebrate species like rockfish and red abalone. But the recent widespread devastation of kelp forests has demonstrated how quickly ecosystems can collapse in the face of climate change. Californians are already feeling the economic and cultural impacts of kelp forest losses.

We applaud the OPC for investing in solutions-oriented projects to identify how to restore and protect these vital ecosystems upon which our marine life and so many livelihoods depend. California must act quickly to address this issue, and the OPC and California Sea Grant’s strategy to pursue multiple projects simultaneously through competitive funding will allow for a more efficient path forward. We look forward to the results of these projects, and in working with the OPC to push solutions forward on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Sean Bothwell
Executive Director
California Coastkeeper Alliance



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Marine Region
1933 Cliff Drive, Suite 9
Santa Barbara, CA 93109
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
Marine Region
Becky.Ota@Wildlife.ca.gov

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources
June 15, 2020
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Kirsten Ramey, Program Manager
Marine Region
Kirsten.Ramey@Wildlife.ca.gov

Sonke Mastrup, Program Manager
Marine Region
Sonke.Mastrup@Wildlife.ca.gov

Esgro, Michael@CNRA

From: CNRA COPC Public
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 3:34 PM
To: COPC Public Distro List
Subject: FW: Action item 8 - June 19 meeting

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Genevieve Rohe
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 3:34:03 PM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: CNRA COPC Public; Esgro, Michael@CNRA
Subject: Action item 8 - June 19 meeting

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to express my support for the disbursal of funds for a Statewide Kelp Recovery Research Program (action item 8).

I am a scuba diver and have witnessed the shocking decline of giant kelp and bull kelp forests in Central and Northern California.

The kelp forest is a critically important and extremely biodiverse ecosystem that needs to be protected and restored.

I urge the Council to authorize funding for this Kelp Recovery Research Program.

Sincerely,
Genevieve Rohe
(707) 592-2913

Esgro, Michael@CNRA

From: CNRA COPC Public
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 1:25 PM
To: COPC Public Distro List
Subject: FW: Action Item 8

From: Dennis Lynch
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 1:24:36 PM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: CNRA COPC Public
Subject: Action Item 8

I support the disbursement of funds for a California Kelp Recovery Research Program.

Best,
Dennis Lynch

Esgro, Michael@CNRA

From: CNRA COPC Public
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 3:40 PM
To: COPC Public Distro List
Subject: FW: Action 8

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Naomi Wooten
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 3:39:28 PM (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
To: CNRA COPC Public
Subject: Action 8

Dear Members of the Ocean Protection Council,

I am writing to ask you to support Action 8 to protect the ecosystem of Monterey Bay. I have enjoyed the underwater scenery there a couple of decades as a scuba diver. Although I have not traveled much, I know Monterey diving is very special.

Until the past few years, I was diving in Monterey in gorgeous, lush kelp where I could observe an incredible density of invertebrates, fish, and other organisms.

Today Monterey Bay is different. Purple urchins have eaten almost everything and are everywhere. We miss the rockfish, otters, and other creatures! And to add insult to injury, purple urchin can live for years before they starve to death.

We divers want to change the destiny of the ecosystem we so love and have the power to do so. Let us pay back nature for all the pleasure she has given us. Please sign the petition and let us collect purple urchins and help restore the kelp forest ecosystem.

Thank you for your time in considering this request.

Naomi Wooten

Resident of Fresno/Monterey Diver whenever possible

Esgro, Michael@CNRA

From: nancy@getinspiredinc.org
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 8:05 PM
To: Esgro, Michael@CNRA
Cc: CNRA COPC Public
Subject: Kelp money comments

Hi Mike, I am not sure we have spoken on the phone yet. I recently contacted Tova to talk about MPA's and never received a response. I saw your post today on Josh Russo's FB page. Josh and I are on the RAAC together and have worked together on the kelp restoration effort in NorCal. I wanted to share some information with you guys.

I managed the giant kelp restoration project in Orange County for 10 years from 2002-2012. I also started the effort up in Caspar Cove by starting the funding to pay Jon Holcomb to begin vacuuming up urchins in January 2018 when I was appalled that no one was DOING anything. The department shot down my proposal to involve recreational divers at that time. I continued to raise funds to contribute to that urchin effort until this year (there are plenty of people involved now). I signed a couple of letters of support for the SeaGrant kelp restoration proposals submitted last month and I am screaming from the hill tops to RESTORE the kelp as quickly as possible by ACTION not by study. You can study while the action is taking place but time is precious. We waited too long in Orange County. Our kelp was gone for over 20 years. The reefs were barren and ecosystem collapsed. Fish surveys were quick when we first started restoration, there was little to count.

I wanted to share some words of wisdom given to me by Wheeler North in 2003. This is not a quick fix problem. You can't just pick up some sea urchins and walk away. Nor can you outplant a few plants and walk away. This effort may take years and will need persistent funding. I got laid off 3 times during my work on kelp restoration and I persisted (like Wheeler said to do) and it finally worked. It took 5 years to see canopies after we started urchin removal and outplanting in Orange County. Humans can do a lot but the ocean has to cooperate too. It took a La Nina to boost our outplanted kelp from it's stunted 3m size (that lasted for 5 years) to flourish into canopies in 2009. I am sure you aware, that the kelp restoration has been going on since the late 90's in LA county. It's gone through many organizations and iterations but it's still going on.

On another note, I called Tova, to see what can be done about the CDFW not allowing ANY work to be done in MPA's now. I have 2 things I would like to discuss with OPC to see what can be done.

1. As you aware, we have Sargassum horneri down here. I have been monitoring our kelp through the warm water event and the El Nino as it was the ultimate test for my restoration work. Will it rebound, indicating true restoration? Well, it is challenged by the invasive Sargassum. The other thing Wheeler told me was that we need to manage our kelp forests and the Department is not doing that. It is a resource, we should be watching them and adaptively managing them to prevent the takeover of invasives and collapses. I want to do a study on timing the removal of Sargassum after warm water events to help with recovery as a management strategy. We may need to help our kelp as we progress into a changing climate. This is necessary now if we want to maintain our kelp forests and keep kelp leases open and keep our fisheries thriving. They won't let me pull it out of (4) 10x10m plots in an SMCA. I can't figure out why they are protecting a an invasive species in an MPA. There is no reasoning with unreasonable but several other people are having trouble doing simple projects as well. Like flying a small submersible through and SMCA. They were told that it would , "disturb the water column". This is irrational. I have a couple other projects I want to work on as well related to my green abalone restoration project that are not being allowed in the SMCA's.
2. My friend Keith Rootsart is trying to help the kelp up in Monterey and he is having the same problems being able to do restoration in an MPA. By the way, did you hear, someone found Sargassum horneri in Monterey last week? That's not good.

I have been told that, "The department is not interested in projects in the MPA's at this time." This was not the intention of the stakeholders, to prohibit restoration and research. Something needs to be done to challenge this thought process and I don't know if you can help with that. Can you recommend any solutions to this problem?
I would love the opportunity to speak with you on the phone. Please feel free to call me Thursday or Friday anytime.

Sincerely,

Nancy L. Caruso
Marine Biologist/Founder
Get Inspired
714-206-5147
www.GetInspiredinc.org

You can Support our Green Abalone Project here www.gofundme.com/abalone

Esgro, Michael@CNRA

From: Keith Rootsart <keith.rootsart@salasobrien.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 12:34 PM
To: Esgro, Michael@CNRA
Cc: melaniemoreno@yahoo.com; marc@lumigenic.com
Subject: OPC Meeting

Mike,

I saw on the waterman's page a link to Agenda Item #8. Our G2KR team will be asking divers to write to OPC and to speak at the meeting on June 19.

<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=180395&inline>

I have a couple comments on the proposal:

1. In the background it is expressed that *California's central and south coasts have been similarly affected by severe declines in giant kelp (Macrocystis pyrifera), but these declines have been patchier than those on the north coast. For example, certain reefs off the Monterey Peninsula have transitioned to urchin barrens, while others remain kelp forests.* That sounds like the "kelp forests" remain in Monterey. While it is true that there are patches of kelp remaining, I think "forests" is an overstatement based on older data. The remaining kelp in Monterey is probably not going to last beyond this year. I know that Dan Abbott expressed that to the WSN but that situation has evolved as we now have 40 urchins per m² at the breakwater and they are eating the remaining live kelp!
2. The boogieman is expressed as purple urchins. Red urchins are also the boogieman. This is a two species problem. I would ask you to strike the world purple from those statements and just say urchins. If you would like further explanation on that position I can elaborate. Red urchins increased their number 95 x during the same period, they are larger and more detrimental than the purples and when you remove the purples the reds take over. I think there are political reasons due to red urchin fisherman that are coming into play to the defeat of any meaningful kelp recovery, especially on the north coast.
3. In the Compliance with CEQA it says:

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

I understand this is research and we need solutions oriented research and that is great and necessary, but not one urchin is going to lose it's life over this. That lack of urgency is systemic of these large state agencies that can only react too slowly to this changing condition. We would like to see projects that DO disturb the environment. We need projects that test the efficacy of urchin removal and kelp restoration.

My take on research in general is that we are drowning here and the scientists are describing the water. This recommendation moves the ball to scientists are studying a life jacket. If the CDFW were the CDC the coronavirus would be allowed to run it's course while we all study its effects on the human population. I understand the need for science to monitor and analyze restoration efforts and that is very helpful to the permission part of this problem, but OPC needs to be a policy leader in allowing restoration efforts to move forward and be a partner in this urgent effort and not admit defeat and look to ways to reseed these areas after our failure to act. Reseeding is something we need to research but it

should be plan B. I think a project priority should be ones that monitor and inform actual kelp restoration projects in areas where kelp remains. Throw anything that you think will float before we drop below the surface.

Keith Rootsart
G2KR.com
408-206-0721