



**Staff Recommendation**

April 24, 2023

Item 5

**Action Item:**

**Consideration and Approval to Disburse Funds to Expand  
the California Coastal Adaptation Planning Inventory**

Ella McDougall, Climate Change Program Manager

**Recommended Action:** Authorization to disburse up to \$310,000 to the University of California Santa Barbara to expand the California Coastal Adaptation Planning Inventory to include additional geographic regions including the San Francisco Bay Area, federal lands, tribal lands, and State Parks.

**Location:** Statewide

**Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives:** Goal 1: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Communities in the Face of Climate Change, Objective 1.1: Build Resiliency to Sea-Level Rise, Coastal Storms, Erosion, and Flooding

**Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:** Understanding planning priorities to inform future investments, SLR planning in tribal communities, incorporating an equity lens on SLR adaptation planning.

**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 California Ocean Protection Act;
2. The proposed projects are consistent with OPC’s Proposition 68 Guidelines, adopted May 2019; 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 \$310,000.00 to University of California Santa Barbara to expand the California Coastal Adaptation Planning Inventory by amending an existing grant.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, (insert grantee here) 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:**

Staff recommends OPC approve disbursement of up to \$310,000 to University of California Santa Barbara to expand the [California Coastal Adaptation Planning Inventory](#) (Inventory), funded by OPC in 2021, to include additional geographic regions including the San Francisco Bay Area, federal lands, tribal lands, and State Parks. Sea level rise (SLR) adaptation planning is a highly effective way for communities to understand and prepare for the impacts of coastal climate change, but there is no central way to track development and progress of plans. The Inventory was initially developed in 2022 to address this problem by tracking the various SLR planning documents and efforts along the outer coast of California. The outcome of this project will include a more geographically comprehensive Inventory for SLR planning and an analysis of statewide trends and processes for SLR adaptation planning to inform management decisions and investment priorities.

### **Project Summary:**

#### **Background:**

In February of 2021, [OPC approved](#) \$398,602 “Evaluating Adaptation Planning in Coastal California”, a research project selected through a competitive Proposition 68 solicitation. Since its implementation, the Inventory was created to showcase the status and trends of SLR adaptation planning along the outer coast of California. The Inventory found that while 63 of 76 coastal jurisdictions have certified Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) with the California Coastal Commission, only 9 have LCPs that are updated to include SLR considerations. Twenty-nine jurisdictions have certified standalone SLR adaptation plans, but these plans do not include consistent criteria or standards and cannot be enforced for planning or development. These numbers show that SLR adaptation planning is inadequate along the outer coast of California.

The previously funded project also includes a forthcoming assessment (June 2023) on the status and trends of SLR adaptation planning along the coast of California. This will include an analysis of the effectiveness of planning scales (local, regional, project, sector), how to address vulnerability, best practices in stakeholder participation, criteria, and adaptation pathway approaches. A range of adaptation responses, from nature-based to engineering, will be considered, as well as how decision processes can best consider the socio-economic and equity impacts of SLR. This assessment will contain recommendations for improving California’s coastal SLR adaptation planning and LCP policy update process such as strategies to implement new law and policy, changes in administrative rules and practices, and implementation reforms at the community level.

### **Project Summary:**

This project will update and expand upon the existing Inventory, which serves as a repository for SLR adaptation planning documents for the 76 local government jurisdictions along California’s outer coast (15 counties and 62 cities). The expansion will include background and relevant planning information for four new categories of coastal lands; the San Francisco Bay Area; federal lands; tribal lands; and California State Parks. The Inventory will include vulnerability assessments and studies, Local Coastal Programs (LCP) and updates, SLR adaptation planning documents, and SLR adaptation case studies. An assessment of the status and trends of SLR planning in the additional regions will be completed by June 2024.

The project expansion will support [OPC’s Strategic Plan](#) Target 1.1.5, which aims to have the entire coast of California planning for the impacts of SLR by 2023. It also supports the State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan Key Action 4.3, which intends to complete an inventory to evaluate trends, processes, and outcomes of SLR adaptation planning in local government jurisdictions by 2023.

In 2022, the Ocean Protection Council received \$37.5 million to support statewide SLR adaptation planning and implement [Senate Bill 1](#) (Atkins, 2021), the Sea Level Rise Mitigation and Adaptation Act. The findings of this research project, including the additional geographic regions, will inform the guidelines for disbursing these funds with the intention of achieving OPC’s strategic goal of completed and adopted SLR adaptation plans along the entire coastline of California.

### **Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:**

This project will provide benefits for all coastal communities, including those that are under-resourced or burdened by environmental and social injustice, by identifying strategies to make SLR adaptation planning more consistent and efficient, and by identifying areas that are vulnerable, but lack adequate adaptation planning. By increasing access to information for planning, especially for communities who bear a heavier burden of climate change impacts, community health and

safety will be prioritized. This will also lead to equitable investments by state agencies, with the goal of statewide coastal resiliency. The project will also include direct benefits to California Native American tribes with the inclusion of tribal coastal lands to the Inventory.

**About the Grantee:**

University of California Santa Barbara is an R1 research university, housing the Ocean and Coastal Policy Center (OCPC). The OCPC works at the intersection of coastal stewardship, governance, and justice, with research experience in adaptation planning, governance, and resilience for all of California’s coast. The principal investigator of this project, Dr. Charles Lester, serves as the Director of the OCPC, as well as the former director of the California Coastal Commission (2011-2016). He holds a Ph.D. and J.D. from UC Berkeley, and a B.A. in Geochemistry from Columbia University.

**Project Timeline:**

The project will extend the timeline of the existing project by an additional year, to June 2024.

**Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize encumbrance of up to \$310,000 to University of California Santa Barbara to expand the California Coastal Adaptation Planning Inventory. This funding will be used to amend the active grant approved at the February 16, 2021, OPC meeting which is administered by OPC staff.

Ocean Protection Council Proposition 68	\$310,000
TOTAL	\$310,000

The anticipated source of funds will be from the OPC’s Chapter 10 appropriation pursuant to the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 - Proposition 68 (Public Resources Code §80130). Funds may be used “for projects that plan, develop, and implement climate adaptation and resiliency projects.” Section 80133 identifies specific purposes for Chapter 10, which includes “projects that assist coastal communities, including those reliant on commercial fisheries, with adaptation to climate change, including projects that address ocean acidification, sea level rise, or habitat restoration and protection...” The proposed project is an appropriate use of Proposition 68 funds because it researches the

status of SLR planning to inform management decisions and investment priorities for the state of California.

### **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:

- Allow for increased public access to, and enjoyment of, ocean and coastal resources, consistent with sustainable, long-term protection and conservation of those resources.
- Provide funding for adaptive management, planning coordination, monitoring, research, and other necessary activities to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change on California's ocean ecosystem.

### **Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under 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.