



ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND

finding the ways that work

California Current Threats Analysis Project: Using Science to Build A Common Understanding of Ocean Threats

Goal:

- Identify and address the top threats to California Current ecosystems using a new approach based on the Global Ocean Ecosystem Impact model and a joint fact-finding and policy development process.

Objectives:

- Provide state agencies,¹ academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a science-based planning framework to assess and prioritize key threats to California Current ecosystems.
- Work with participating institutions to define priority threats and collaboratively develop and implement strategies to address them.
- Support Ocean Protection Council (OPC) and state agencies' efforts to address agreed-upon priority threats through funding, programs, legal instruments, and/or management strategies.
- Provide foundations and NGOs with a science-based planning framework and ranked threats to aid in their decision-making processes.

Key Elements of Success:

- Science-based threats/impacts model provides a transparent and objective basis for ranking threats and prioritizing them.
- Science-based model and joint fact-finding and policy development process provides an organizational structure for previously disparate and unfocussed activities.
- Interactive planning and organizing effort engages policymakers, conservation groups, and academics, and builds common understanding and capacity.

¹ Ocean Protection Council, Department of Fish and Game, Resources Agency, Environmental Protection Agency, Coastal Conservancy, State Land Commission, and Coastal Commission.

Activities:

Short-term (next six months)

- Develop project plan, timeline, and budget.
- Identify critical policymakers and NGO partners and solicit feedback.

Long-term (next three years)

- State agencies, conservation organizations, and academic institutions in California, Oregon, and Washington work together to assess and refine existing ocean threats model, and use results to identify priority threats.
- Task force and working groups develop and implement strategies to reduce priority threats.

Beyond (next five plus years)

- Repeat process in five-year cycles of review, prioritization, strategy, and implementation, to reduce key threats (possibly initiated by the OPC).

Opportunities (why this, why now?):

- **Insufficient scientific information regarding ocean threats, and consequent lack of consensus:** Managers, NGOs, and industry all have different perceptions of what the major threats to the California Current ocean ecosystems are. Some are grounded in science; some are not.
- **Challenge identifying conservation priorities:** State agencies and conservation organizations have had difficulty identifying priorities. Specifically, the OPC has focused on issues brought before them by stakeholders and staff without a comprehensive analysis of threats and impacts.
- **New model offers promise for science-based understanding of ocean threats:** Researchers at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) and collaborators have developed a rigorous and quantitative method for evaluating how different human activities impact marine ecosystems. This is the most comprehensive global threats model to date, accounting for varying degrees of sensitivity to threats depending on the ecosystem type and threat intensity. They have spent the past year applying this model to the California Current.
- **Model can provide scientific basis for policy change:** The NCEAS model has the potential for meeting the need for a rational, data-based ranking of threats to drive an appropriate policy response, which may include ocean zoning or some other type of rational use planning and governance. If applied thoughtfully, with the input of conservation practitioners, academics, resource managers, and policymakers, this model could be a valuable planning tool. It could also be valuable in adaptive management, as the cycle of analysis and policy adjustment is designed to accommodate change and learning. NCEAS' team is eager to begin working with Environmental Defense Fund and other organizations to ensure that positive policy changes occur as a result of their scientific work.
- **Timing is critical:** At present, state agencies are committed to the West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health, ongoing implementation of the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative, and regional governance efforts such as federal/state fisheries management. This project could provide the scientific basis for effectively determining priorities and allocating funding. The model's ecosystem-based

approach is also in alignment with the OPC’s objective to implement ecosystem-based management, as outlined in its five-year strategic plan (2006).

Plan/Schedule

Phase	Period	Activities
1. Project planning	April 2008 – Sept 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop project plan, budget, timeline • Identify critical government policy makers and NGOs • Solicit feedback from funders, NGOs, state agencies • Secure funding
2. Joint Fact-Finding - California	Oct 2008 – Sept 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form steering committee and hold planning meetings • Conduct assessment to test perceptions of threats and model • Through quarterly workshops and meetings, present model and results, vet process and methods, identify gaps in addressing major threats/policy response, refine datasets, and identify top priority threats and agreed-upon goals • Identify lessons learned
3. Strategy and Implementation - California	Oct 2009 – Sept 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form task force and working groups • Develop and implement strategies to address goals and address key threats • Identify lessons learned
4. Joint-Fact Finding - Oregon and Washington	Oct 2009 – Sept 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat Joint Fact-Finding Phase in Oregon and Washington
5. Strategy and Implementation - Oregon and Washington	Oct 2010 – Sept 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat Strategy and Implementation Phase in Oregon and Washington
6. Five-year cycle of Joint Fact-Finding, Strategy, and Implementation	Beyond 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat process in five-year cycles to review model, prioritize threats, and develop and implement strategies to reduce key threats (possibly initiated by OPC).

Management/Staffing/Budget

Position/Responsibility	Person	% Time
Regional Director	Michael DeLapa	5%
Ocean Innovations Director	Rod Fujita	15%
Project Manager	TBD	50%
Scientific Advisor	Ben Halpern	20%
Professional Facilitators	CONCUR Inc.	TBD
~ 6 Steering Committee Members	TBD	10%
~ 6 Implementing Partners	TBD	5%

~ 10 Task Force Members	TBD	5%
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