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January 13, 2012

The Honorable John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
Via electronic mail: opc.comments@scc.ca.gov

Re: Comments on Draft California Ocean Protection Council Five-Year Strategic Plan (2012-2017)

Dear Chair Laird and Ocean Protection Council Members:

On behalf of Heal the Bay, a nonprofit organization with over 13,000 members dedicated to making southern California's coastal waters and watersheds, safe, healthy and clean, we submit the following comments on the Ocean Protection Council's Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan (2012-2017) (Draft Plan 2). Heal the Bay has actively participated in the development, establishment, and implementation of Ocean Protection Council (OPC) plans and policies since its inception. We submitted comments on the original draft strategic plan (Draft Plan 1) in September 2011, and appreciate the opportunity to provide comments related to OPC strategic planning for the next five years.

We value the OPC's leadership and mission of ensuring that California maintains healthy, resilient, and productive ocean and coastal ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations, and believe that its role to facilitate collaboration across agencies and the legislature to solve critical coastal and ocean issues is imperative to maintaining ocean health in California. We appreciate the OPC's careful attention to development of a strategic plan that focuses on key coastal and ocean issues, while providing flexibility to address new issues as they may arise over the next five years. We recognize that the simplification of the Draft Plan 2 may help the OPC with implementation due to its less prescriptive nature than the Draft Plan 1. However, we strongly urge the OPC to incorporate timelines and milestones for objectives and actions within the Plan to be achieved. The incorporation of clear goals for attainment of the various elements of the Plan will help OPC to remain on task and focused on execution of the Plan, and will help the public track the OPC's efforts.

We appreciate the consideration given to several of our previous comments, including those related to sustainable seafood and marine debris. The inclusion of toxicity as an element to consider in the sustainable seafood policy will help make that program a more comprehensive effort that inform consumers about the ecosystem and human health impacts associated with



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their seafood choices. We further appreciate the attention given to implementation of the OPC's plan to reduce and prevent marine litter.

As raised in our previous comments, we strongly recommend that the leveraging investments for MPAs section should build in a mechanism to support MPA monitoring activities beyond those conducted within the MPA Monitoring Enterprise. Heal the Bay supports effective implementation and management of marine protected areas consistent with the MLPA through strategic partnerships, and specifically supporting continued funding of the MPAs Monitoring Enterprise (MME). We encourage the OPC to include an additional provision under this objective to support MPA research activities beyond those conducted within the MME. Although monitoring activities conducted by the MME are important for understanding MPA effectiveness, their monitoring activities are not comprehensive. For example, monitoring trends in human use and compliance do not currently fall under the MME's priorities or their funded projects. However, human use and compliance monitoring activities are essential to facilitate an understanding of socioeconomic impacts related MPAs, human use trend changes related to MPA establishment, and for interpretation of biological data (trends in compliance will be particularly important for biological data interpretation). We urge the OPC to include an action that incorporates monitoring activities that do not fall within the MME activities.

We applaud the OPC for recommending policy direction on important issues over the past five years, including marine debris prevention and reduction, sustainable seafood policy development, marine protected area research, and minimizing environmental impacts of once-through cooling at coastal power plants, and look forward to continued focus on these important issues. We are supportive of the OPC's development of a five year strategic plan, as it provides a framework for focus on critical ocean and coastal protection issues in the near future. The strategic plan has been and will continue to be a vital tool to guide the OPC in its efforts to protect and manage our ocean resources by effectively prioritizing use of resources, even as the state grapples with significant financial challenges. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and we look forward to working with you on these important issues. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Sarah Abramson Sikich, MESM
Coastal Resources Director

Dana Roeber Murray, MESM
Staff Scientist