



January 16, 2012

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

Re: Ocean Protection Council Revised Draft Strategic Plan 2012-2017

Dear Secretary Laird, Dr. Mace, and OPC staff:

Oceana and Audubon California thank the Ocean Protection Council for the opportunity to participate in the OPC's process to develop a strategic plan that will guide the organization for the next five years. We appreciate the efforts of the OPC to hold an extensive public comment process and we look forward to working more closely with the OPC as it implements this strategic plan to protect, conserve, and maintain healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems and the economies they support.

With this said we are disappointed and concerned that none of the issue areas from our September 2011 joint comment letter are reflected in the background section of the issue areas nor the objectives and actions for future OPC engagement in the current revised draft strategic plan. While we understand the rationale of streamlining actions into general overarching objectives, we strongly believe that the focal areas of improved forage species management and Important Ecological Areas (IEAs) are broad and critically important enough issues that they merit their own recognition and specific actions in the plan.

Overall, we urge the OPC to take a much stronger role in developing science and advancing policy around forage species conservation, by further developing and placing a higher priority on relevant draft plan actions and core strengths. In addition, we encourage the OPC to identify Important Ecological Areas off the California coast to preserve the health, productivity, biodiversity and resilience of marine ecosystems. Collectively the focal areas of improved forage species management and identifying IEAs apply to and build upon the following sections of the revised draft strategic plan: Science-Based Decision Making; Climate Change; Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems; and Existing and Emerging Ocean Uses.

We sincerely hope the issue areas of forage and IEAs will be explicitly incorporated into the subsequent version of the plan. If these two issue areas are not reflected in the final strategic plan, we respectfully request a response letter explaining the rationale for excluding these critical issue areas.

Secretary Laird, Dr. Mace, and OPC staff

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The September 2011 joint comment letter from Oceana and Audubon California submitted in response to the original draft strategic plan is attached. We look forward to working with the OPC further to ensure California has healthy and productive ocean ecosystems and a strong coastal economy into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoff Shester".

Geoff Shester, Ph.D.
California Program Director

and

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Weinstein".

Anna Weinstein
Director, Seabird Conservation Program, Audubon California