

Accelerating Kelp Restoration, Item 8B

Dear Secretary Crowfoot,

At the April 24 OPC Meeting, \$5.4 million was agreed to be disbursed to Accelerate Kelp Research and Restoration. When I first heard of this agenda item, I thought this was an initiative pointed directly at our Giant Kelp Restoration on Project in Monterey. We have been working with OPC, CDFW, MBNMS, and Reef Check California in a volunteer diving community kelp restoration on project and we have achieved success at culling 750k urchins and growing an 11 acre kelp forest. Our non-profit is funded by donations from the volunteers and we could use State funding to accelerate our successful efforts to reach our goal of 2000 acres of kelp restoration on by 2030.

I made public comment on the item to make sure that 1) Restoration would be funded, not just research, and 2) Small organizations like ours could compete with large universities and NGOs for the funds. Secretary Crowfoot, you responded to my concerns by asking Michael Esgro, and he assured the council that restoration on would be funded. that projects with restoration and research would be welcome, and that OPC staff would assist small NGOs in applying.

As the only active, successful and growing volunteer community kelp restoration on project in California we applied for \$2.3 million in Letters of Intent to Sea Grant. However, Sea Grant is built for research projects and there is not a process for restoration on work. I asked in the Sea Grant informational webinar if permits were required before applying and was told they were not required, but the lack of approved permits was cited for rejection on of our LOI. Only the smallest of our projects, aerial drone mapping of kelp canopy for \$50k, was approved for submitting a full application. We asked OPC staff to assist because the process in the Sea Grant web portal didn't align with restoration on, but we did not receive assistance. On November 30 we were notified our small project was rejected too. Applying for this grant offering was a huge waste of time for an unstaffed community group; we suspected that going in and asked for clarification, and it ended up being pointless as anticipated.

I also asked in the meeting if OPC could clarify the policy on kelp restoration on in MPAs and the response from Michael Esgro was that "kelp restoration on is policy, we are just working on the details". For over 18 months we have languished in the pre-application on phase of a Scientific Collection on Permit for kelp restoration on in 3 SMCA's with CDFW. The reason we are told it is taking so long is because our project is in MPAs. If OPC kelp restoration on policy were explicit we could be saving kelp instead of waiting 172 days since the last submittal to CDFW for written response comments.

We have been working on kelp restoration on for 6 years and have never received funding from the State to help with our successful efforts, yet the State has spent over \$7 million on kelp research projects on the north coast of California where efforts do not grow kelp. In a practical way, we are glad not to receive funding from the State, because it comes with restrictions that cause failure. For example, on the north coast the state will not allow take of red urchins which are more detrimental to kelp growth than the purple urchins, and then funded research to out-plant green gravel kelp which was quickly eaten by red urchins.

We wish you good luck with your research, but realistically speaking, by doing kelp restoration on we are learning more applied ecology than the research scientists. At our Tanker's Reef project 65% of our effort is not monitored and December 14, FGC is considering options proposed by CDFW to kill our kelp forest and stop monitoring our efforts altogether. Our concern is that the KRMP will mostly be informed by tangential science and anecdotal information. We have a working understanding of kelp/urchin dynamics, scientists just explain tangential aspects with more precision and decimal points. We are drowning while the scientists are describing the water.

Funding for Accelerating Kelp Restoration may likely be given to MBA, TNC, and universities to perform kelp research in our area of concern very badly, and by hiring our kelp restoration on divers, extinguishing our ability to recruit them as

volunteers. We are relying on some form of respect we haven't witnessed yet to stop that from occurring but fear the worst part of this grant offering may be yet to come.

The OPC slogan is "Learn by Doing" and "Swing for the fence", but from our perspective it seems the plan is to shut down kelp restoration, research methods for 3-5 years to complete the KRMP, and then use those methods to do something detrimental. As kelp practitioners we regret to inform you that the ocean environment is degrading rapidly, but only terrestrial restoration is funded by CNRA. The best made restoration plans quickly unravel when wet.

Thank you,

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Giant Kelp
Restoration Project



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December 11, 2023

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources
Chair, Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Support for funding to support advancements in kelp research and restoration (Item 8b)

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 project entitled: Consideration and Approval for Disbursement of Funds Related to Kelp Research and Restoration, Agenda Item #8b.

The Department is the primary agency responsible for managing California's kelp forest resources. Kelp forests are critically important ecosystems in California, providing a broad suite of services, including support of commercial and recreational fisheries, and hold cultural significance to California's Tribes and coastal communities. California has experienced kelp declines along its coastline, with some places exhibiting severe and persistent loss that has led to significant impacts to the coastal communities (e.g., Sonoma and Mendocino counties). Kelp loss continues to be most severe in the northern region of the state, and localized areas in central and southern California are showing signs of concerning decline.

The five projects recommended for funding will build upon previous and ongoing state investments, to address remaining knowledge gaps essential to taking a proactive approach to kelp recovery. Importantly, this suite of projects will collectively advance our understanding of individual and layered techniques for in-water kelp restoration in several impacted locations across the state, build capacity for tribal partners to implement kelp forest monitoring and restoration techniques in areas that have been severely data-limited and resource-limited, assess mechanisms of climate-resilience through an ecosystem lens (i.e., incorporates canopy-forming and understory algal communities), as well as improving and advancing models that will directly support a decision-making framework for kelp restoration across the state of California. Interim and final outcomes from each of these projects will feed directly into the development of the statewide Kelp Restoration and Management Plan. Support for this suite of projects provides an avenue for the State to take actionable steps to kelp recovery and resilience, while building a proactive, climate-ready plan for kelp across California's dynamic coastline.

Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources

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OPC support has been, and will continue to be, critical to the success of accelerating kelp research and restoration and its collective application to the development of the statewide Kelp Restoration and Management Plan which will provide a science-based framework for managing, protecting, and restoring kelp forests in the face of changing ocean conditions. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (805) 568-1246 or by email at r7regionalmgr@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Craig Shuman, D. Env.
Marine Regional Manager

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