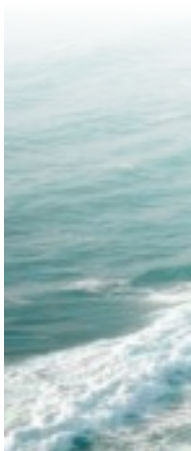




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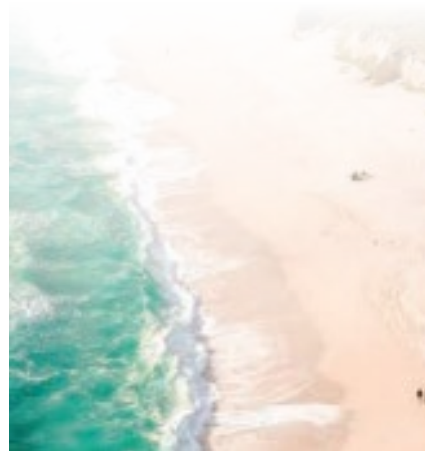
Wade Crowfoot | Secretary for Natural Resources | Council Chair  
Yana Garcia | Secretary for Environmental Protection  
Malia Cohen | State Controller  
Ben Allen | State Senator  
Dawn Addis | State Assemblymember  
Alexis Jackson | Public Member  
Megan Rocha | Public Member



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**December 13, 2023 - February 29, 2024**

*Providing an update on outcomes  
and accomplishments since the  
previous OPC Meeting.*



## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Budget  | 2  |
| Updates By Strategic Plan Goal  | 2  |
| Goal 1: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Communities in the Face of Climate Change | 2  |
| Goal 2: Advance Equity Across Ocean and Coastal Policies and Actions                          | 3  |
| Goal 3: Enhance Coastal and Marine Biodiversity   | 5  |
| Goal 4: Support Ocean Health Through Sustainable Blue Economy                                 | 7  |
| Legislation   | 7  |
| Personnel Notes   | 10 |

## Budget

The impacts of climate change on the coast and ocean include sea level rise, more extreme storm events, coastal erosion, increased water temperatures, and ocean acidification. These impacts affect public and private property and infrastructure, public access to and along the coast, ecosystem health, and California's coastal economy, including tourism and fishing. The State of California has made significant progress to advance key investments and develop resources for local communities to prepare for and respond to these changes along California's coast.

The 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts committed \$1.3 billion to advance coastal resilience over multiple years. However, this year California faces a \$37.9 billion shortfall due to the substantial decline in the stock market that drove down revenues in 2022 and the unprecedented delay in critical income tax collections. Governor Newsom's proposed FY 2024-25 Budget maintains \$660 million of the original \$1.3 billion committed over multiple years in programs and projects for coastal resilience, reduces \$452 million in General Fund investments, and shifts \$36.8 million across several coastal protection and adaptation programs.

To address the projected budget shortfall, the Budget proposes the following General Fund solutions to achieve a balanced budget in the coming years:

- **Coastal Protection, Adaptation, and Sea Level Rise:** A reduction of \$392 million General Fund appropriations for Coastal Protection, Adaptation, and Sea Level Rise activities statewide. The Budget maintains \$488.5 million previously allocated for these efforts.
- **Senate Bill 1 Implementation:** A reduction of \$25 million in General Fund appropriations to OPC and shift of \$36.8 million to the GGRF in 2024-25 for implementation of Chapter 236, Statutes of 2021 (SB 1). The Budget maintains \$77 million previously allocated for the Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Program recently launched by OPC.
- **Ocean Protection:** A reduction of \$35 million in General Fund appropriations to OPC for Ocean Protection. The Budget maintains The Budget maintains \$65 million previously allocated for this program between FY 2023-24 and 24-2025.

## Updates By Strategic Plan Goal

### Goal 1: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Communities in the Face of Climate Change

#### State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Science and Policy Update

To support sea level rise preparedness in California, OPC partnered with the Ocean Science Trust (OST) and a scientific Task Force to update California's Sea Level Rise Guidance with the best

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available science and updated planning and decision-making guidance. The [draft State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance: 2024 Science and Policy Update](#) (Guidance), released January 19, features the best available science to update sea level rise (SLR) projections through 2150 and will replace the 2018 Update of the State of California Sea Level Rise Guidance once adopted by OPC. This Guidance is updated approximately every five years and includes updated projected sea level rise and guidance to help state, tribal, local, and regional jurisdictions integrate this science into coastal adaptation projects, resilience planning, and investments. The draft Guidance is now available for public review and comment until **March 4, 2024**. OPC held a [public webinar](#) on Monday, February 5, 2024. Additionally, four virtual regional workshops were held on February 13 (Central Coast), February 14 (North Coast), February 15 (South Coast), and February 16 (San Francisco Bay Area). The final Guidance is scheduled to be presented to the Council for review and adoption at the June 4, 2024 Council meeting.

### **Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program Launch**

The State of California is committed to helping tribal, regional, and local governments prepare and increase resilience to the impacts of sea level rise, such as flooding, erosion, and habitat degradation and loss. OPC launched the [Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program](#) (SB 1 Grant Program) to provide local assistance for sea level rise adaptation planning and implementation projects on December 15, 2023. An [informational webinar](#) was held on January 25, 2024.

The goal of the SB 1 Grant Program is to advance the requirements of [Senate Bill 1 \(Atkins, ch. 236, statutes of 2021\)](#) by providing funding for local, regional, and tribal governments to develop SLR adaptation plans and implementation projects to build resilience to SLR along the entire coast of California and San Francisco Bay. In alignment with this goal, the SB 1 Grant Program will support implementation of [SB 272 \(Laird, ch. 384, statues of 2023\)](#), which requires SLR adaptation plans for the outer coast and San Francisco Bay by 2034. The SB 1 Grant Program offers two tracks of funding: one for pre-planning and planning phases (Track One), and one for the project phase (Track Two). Track One projects are being accepted through a rolling, quarterly, non-competitive process, provided applicants satisfy the [SLR Adaptation Criteria](#) and [Solicitation](#) Evaluation Criteria. More detailed information can be found on the [SB 1 Funding Webpage](#).

## **Goal 2: Advance Equity Across Ocean and Coastal Policies and Actions**

### **Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Grant Program**

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions grant program](#), which includes \$1 million in OPC funds to support small grants to tribal governments and tribally-led organizations, is accepting **full proposals until February 23**. This program and associated grant

funds will assist California Native American tribes in advancing multi-benefit nature-based solutions consistent with the 2021 Nature-Based Solutions trailer bill (Ch. 258, Statutes of 2021), [Pathways to 30x30: Accelerating Conservation of California's Nature](#), and the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#). OPC staff will review proposals in collaboration with CNRA Tribal Affairs to support efforts that advance tribal priorities for the coast and ocean this Spring with final projects anticipated to awarded this Summer.

## **Strengthening Engagement with California Native American Tribes**

As part of OPC's ongoing commitment to improve communication with tribes, and in response to a commitment made in OPC's [Tribal Engagement Strategy](#), OPC staff are preparing a consultation calendar to be shared with tribes at the Tribal Nations Summit on February 26. This calendar will forecast upcoming OPC consultation requests for 2024 to streamline and coordinate consultation opportunities, reduce the burden of multiple consultation requests, and better assist tribes in their decision-making and scheduling.

OPC is working with California Natural Resources Agency tribal affairs leadership to prepare materials for early consultation on tribally-led stewardship, access, co-management, and ancestral land return. Feedback received through this early consultation will inform OPC's efforts to conserve 30% of California's coastal waters by 2030, in particular by soliciting tribal input on potential approaches for designating and co-managing Indigenous Marine Stewardship Areas (IMSAs). Requests for consultation will be sent to tribes by early March 2024.

## **Environmental Justice Small Grants Program**

When OPC's [Equity Plan](#) was adopted in October 2022, the Council also approved \$1 million in funding to establish a pilot Environmental Justice (EJ) Small Grants program. The EJ small grants program, a direct action from the Equity Plan, emphasizes the importance of creating more inclusive and accessible funding mechanisms to broaden opportunities for sustainable community engagement across the State's initiatives related to ocean and coastal projects, policies, and research. By summer 2023, OPC embarked on a partnership with grantee [Justice Outside](#) to develop, design, and steward the EJ Small Grants Program through Justice Outside's [Liberated Paths Grantmaking Program](#), in partnership with the State Coastal Conservancy.

Justice Outside will host [four informational webinars](#) to give interested applicants an opportunity to meet Justice Outside staff, to learn about their relationship-driven/trust-based approach to grantmaking, and to learn about eligibility details for the grant program. Interested applicants are encouraged to attend their remaining informational webinars on: [March 4 webinar](#), and [March 15 webinar](#) (specific focus on application process). **Applications for grants along the California coast open March 11, 2024 and close April 5, 2024 by 11:59 p.m. PST.**

## Environmental Justice Advisory Board for California's Coast and Ocean

On January 8, 2024, OPC and their partners at [Better World Group](#), announced [a call for applications to join a new Environmental Justice Advisory Board for California's Coast and Ocean](#) (EJ Advisory Board), which will help advise the State to better address the ocean and coastal needs of California communities. The foundation of the EJ Advisory Board is distinctively tied to increasing active engagement with community leaders representing environmental justice communities and tribal communities into state policies, programs, and actions that impact the coast and ocean, a direct alignment with OPC's [Equity Plan](#), [Tribal Engagement Strategy](#), and equity goals in the [Strategic Plan](#). The Advisory Board's overarching purpose is to provide equity and environmental justice expertise to inform the State of California's work to advance equitable outcomes and partnerships with agency and community partners. The application deadline to join the EJ Advisory Board is **February 23, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. PST** with the EJ Advisory Board scheduled to convene its first meeting in May 2024.

### Goal 3: Enhance Coastal and Marine Biodiversity

#### Conserving 30% of California's Coastal Waters by 2030 (30x30): Progress Update

OPC has partnered with the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to convene a [Technical Advisory Panel](#) that will provide scientific guidance to inform OPC's efforts to achieve 30x30 in coastal waters. Specifically, the panel has been tasked with developing objective, science-based criteria to help evaluate which existing spatial management measures in California's coastal waters meet the definition and intent of a 30x30 conserved area. The panel will provide guidance for translating and applying policy goals such as durability, effective management, functional ecosystems, and biodiversity protection to the existing spatial management measure inventory shared in our September 2023 [newsletter](#).

The panel held a kick-off meeting in December 2024 and met again in January and February 2024 to begin drafting criteria for evaluating potential 30x30 Conserved Areas. There are two additional meetings with the panel and two small group sessions planned for March and April, and an informational update on the progress and work of the panel is anticipated to be brought to the June 4 council meeting. Draft criteria will be released for public comment in summer 2024, accompanied by a robust public workshop series.

Further, OPC continues to actively participate in the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary management plan update process through attendance at Sanctuary Advisory Council meetings in December 2023 and February 2024. Scoping of the management plan is anticipated to take place in 2024 and final public review in 2025, with publication of the final plan in early 2026.

## **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**

Late last year, as part of the MPA Decadal Management Review process, the California Fish and Game Commission [called for petitions](#) regarding proposed changes to the California MPA network. In total, twenty petitions were received which included eighty-five proposed changes. At the February 14, 2024 Fish and Game Commission meeting, the Commission voted to refer all petitions to CDFW for evaluation. The Commission further directed CDFW to provide a proposed approach for petition evaluation during the March 19, 2024 meeting of the Commission's Marine Resources Committee (MRC). The MRC will provide guidance on the proposed evaluation process, to be considered by the full Commission in April. CDFW will evaluate petitions from approximately April to July and will provide initial analysis to the Commission in July for further consideration and guidance.

## **Kelp Restoration and Management Plan**

To support the continued development of a statewide Kelp Restoration and Management Plan (KRMP), Strategic Earth will convene a second meeting of the KRMP Community Working Group (CWG) in March 2024. This meeting will include facilitated breakout sessions where working group members will provide their respective community's perspectives on the three focal areas of the KRMP: ecosystem-based management, harvest, and kelp restoration. Additionally, California Sea Grant will convene the KRMP Science Advisory Committee (SAC) for an in-person meeting in April 2024. This meeting will focus on developing a science needs assessment for the KRMP, with targeted conversations around ecological and socioeconomic indicators, monitoring approaches, and knowledge gaps related to climate-ready management of kelp. The meeting syntheses and input received from the SAC and the CWG will inform the early drafting of the KRMP, which is expected to begin in late 2024/early 2025.

## **Seawater Desalination: Siting and Streamlining Report to Expedite Permitting**

The [California Water Supply Strategy: Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future](#), released August 2022, directed the state to pursue actions in wastewater recycling and desalination technology to help drought-proof communities. In addition to targets to reuse wastewater and increase stormwater capture, the Strategy directed the state to consider amendments to the Desalination Policy in the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)'s Ocean Plan, consistent with Target 3.4.7 of the OPC Strategic Plan.

In December 2023, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) released the Final [Seawater Desalination Siting and Streamlining Report to Expedite Permitting](#) developed in partnership by the Seawater Desalination Interagency Group, comprised of state and federal agencies including OPC, to clarify the most efficient permitting process for seawater desalination

in California, while ensuring appropriate review of projects. The Strategy additionally commits state agencies to identify potential available mitigation sites by June 30, 2024.

## Goal 4: Support Ocean Health Through Sustainable Blue Economy

### Offshore Wind

Significant developments unfolded in the offshore wind sector this quarter. The Bureau of Energy Management (BOEM) announced a [Notice of Intention \(NOI\) of the programmatic environmental impact statement \(PEIS\)](#) for the existing five offshore wind leases in California on December 19, 2023. The PEIS aims to identify potential impacts and assess them with and without avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and monitoring measures. BOEM invites public comments until **February 20, 2024**, to aid in scoping the PEIS. Led by the California State Land Commission, state partner agencies, including the California Coastal Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Energy Commission (CEC), and OPC, collaborated to submit a joint letter, expressing the State's perspectives and feedback in response to BOEM's NOI of PEIS.

On January 19, the [Draft Assembly Bill 525 \(SB 525\) Offshore Wind Strategic Plan](#) was released by the California Energy Commission in coordination with state agencies including OPC, as required by AB 525 (Chui, ch. 231, statutes of 2021) to guide offshore wind development in California. A [public workshop](#) is scheduled to take place March 3, 2024 with a written comment deadline on the Draft Strategy of **March 22, 2024**.

The Tribal Offshore Wind Summit, hosted by the Yurok Tribe on January 30 and 31, brought together tribal leaders, representatives from state and federal governments, and industry experts. The Summit provided a platform to discuss both concerns and opportunities associated with offshore wind development in California.

At OPC, the project to [develop comprehensive environmental monitoring guidance for offshore wind in California](#) secured an additional \$150,000 in funding at the December 12 Council meeting. The official launch of the project took place in February.

### Legislation

The following is an update on coastal and ocean-related legislative proposals tracked by OPC staff this legislative session:

[AB 80 \(Addis\)](#): This bill would require OPC to establish and oversee, in coordination with other unspecified state and federal agencies, a West Coast Offshore Wind Science Entity. This is a two-year bill.



[AB 953 \(Connolly\)](#): This bill would require OPC, in coordination and in consultation with various entities, to implement a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program for the California coast in order to reduce air pollution, the risk of fatal vessel strikes on whales, and harmful underwater acoustic impacts by January 1, 2026. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1284 \(Ramos\)](#): This bill would encourage the Secretary of Natural Resource or the Secretary's delegate to enter into co-governance and co-management agreements with federally recognized tribes for the purpose of shared responsibility, decision-making, and partnership in resource management and conservation within a tribe's ancestral lands and waters. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1407 \(Addis\)](#): This bill would require OPC, on or before December 1, 2024, to establish acreage-based targets and Kelp Forest and Estuary Restoration and Recovery Framework to restore kelp forests, eelgrass meadows, and native oyster beds with the goal of achieving restoration by 2050. The bill would establish in the State Treasury the Ocean Restoration and Recovery Fund to be administered by OPC to develop and carry out large-scale restoration and enhancement projects. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1533 \(Utilities and Energy Committee\)](#): This bill would specify that energy generated by the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant could not be counted toward the state's "zero carbon" energy goals after August 26, 2025. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1567 \(Garcia\)](#): This bill would enact the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparation, Flood Protection, Extreme Heat Mitigation, Clean Energy, and Workforce Development Bond Act of 2024, which if approved by voters, would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$15.995 billion. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1797 \(Wood\)](#): This bill would establish the Dungeness crab (*Metacarcinus magister*) as the official state crustacean.

[AB 1798 \(Papan\)](#): This bill would require the development a programmatic environmental review process by the Department of Transportation, in consultation with CDFW, the State Water Resources Control Board, and Department of Toxic Substances Control, to prevent 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone from entering salmon and steelhead trout bearing surface waters of the state.

[AB 1881 \(Davies\)](#): This bill would amend the Coastal Act to allow the Governor's appointment to the Commission who is currently required to reside in and work with environmental justice communities to, alternatively, have a professional background in geology, environmental engineering, carpentry, or building and construction trades.



[AB 1992 \(Boerner\)](#): This bill would amend the Coastal Act to explicitly authorize the Coastal Commission to authorize blue carbon demonstration projects, defined as the creation or restoration of coastal wetland, intertidal, or marine habitats or ecosystems, including, but not limited to, seagrasses and wetlands that capture carbon. State grant programs may be used to contribute toward the project.

[AB 2162 \(Papan\)](#): This bill states the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation to consider innovative new approaches to permitting efficiency and thereby encourage sustainable shellfish and seaweed operations and marine restoration projects.

[AB 2208 \(Zbur\)](#): This bill states the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to submit to the voters an act authorizing the issuance of general obligation bonds in the amount of \$1 billion for seaport infrastructure improvements to facilitate offshore wind energy projects off the California coast.

[AB 2220 \(Bennett\)](#): This bill would prohibit CDFW from renewing an existing, valid gill net or trammel net permit for anyone other than the person whose name appears on the permit. The bill would additionally prohibit the incidental take of white sharks by commercial fishing operations using set gill nets, drift gill nets, or roundhaul nets.

[SB 638 \(Eggman\)](#): This bill would enact the Climate Resiliency and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2024 which, if approved by the voters, would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount \$6 billion for flood protection and climate resiliency projects.

[SB 951 \(Weiner\)](#): This bill would amend the Coastal Act to relocate the coastal zone boundary in San Francisco seaward and amend the types of coastal development permits that can be appealed to the Coastal Commission statewide. The bill would additionally apply specified rezoning standards for any necessary local coastal program updates for jurisdictions located within the coastal zone.

## Personnel Notes



**Christine Sur**, *Water Quality Program Manager*

Christine (she/her) joined OPC in January 2024 to lead OPC's work to protect and improve coastal and marine water quality. Previously, she spent five years working on federal environmental policy and legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives as a policy advisor to Congressman Jared Huffman and as a Knauss fellow at the House Committee on Natural Resources. She has also worked internationally, including as a Fulbright researcher studying coastal ecosystems in Indonesia and as the oceans and fisheries policy lead with the non-profit Rare. Christine earned her M.S. in Ecology from the University of California, Davis, and her B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Southern California.



**Conner Smith**, *California Sea Grant State Fellow*

Conner comes to OPC from the UCSB Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, where his research focused on fisheries, MPAs, and environmental justice, with a focus on indigenous community engagement and tribal co-management. Most recently, Conner has been working on exploring the nexus between MPAs and climate change in California. As a Sea Grant Fellow with OPC's Biodiversity Program, Conner will support priorities related to MPA management, tribal engagement, and kelp restoration.