



Staff Recommendation

February 29, 2024

Item 8

Consent Item:

**Consideration and Approval of Disbursement of Funds for the
2024-2026 California Sea Grant Fellowship Program**

Kaitlyn Kalua, Deputy Director

Recommended Action: Authorization to disburse up to \$540,000 to California Sea Grant for the 2024-2026 California Sea Grant Fellowship program.

Location: Statewide

Findings and Resolution:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report, OPC hereby finds that:

1. The proposed projects are consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the California Ocean Protection Act;
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the environmental license plate funding guidelines (Interim Standards and Protocols, August 2013; and
3. The proposed projects are not ‘legal projects’ that trigger the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section, section 15378.”

Staff further recommends that OPC adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 35500 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“OPC hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$540,000 to California Sea Grant for the California Sea Grant Fellowship program 2024-2026.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, California Sea Grant shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director of the OPC detailed work plans, schedules, staff requirements, budgets, and the names of any contractors intended to be

used to complete the projects, as well as discrete deliverables that can be produced in intervals to ensure the projects are on target for successful completion. All deliverables will be developed under a shared understanding of process, management, and delivery.”

Contract Summary:

Staff recommends that OPC authorize the disbursement of up to \$540,000 to California Sea Grant to continue services provided by the California Sea Grant Fellowship program. This recommendation will support a multi-year contract with California Sea Grant to sponsor two Sea Grant Fellows annually with OPC over three years.

The California Sea Grant State Fellowship is a 12-month paid educational fellowship for graduate students who are interested in marine, coastal and watershed resources and the decisions affecting those resources in California. Modeled after the federal Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program, the State Fellows Program offers participants experience planning, implementing and managing relevant policies and programs in the state of California. For over a decade, OPC has partnered with California Sea Grant to host early career marine science and policy professionals as integral members of the OPC staff to advance ocean and coastal health programs, grants, and priorities statewide.

California Sea Grant fellows provide leadership and support to implement actions identified in the OPC Strategic Plan related to climate change, sustainable fisheries and ecosystems, land-sea interactions, ocean uses, and science-based decision-making.

This consent item seeks OPC authorization for a multi-year contract that exceeds the delegated authority of the OPC Executive Director. This multi-year contract will continue critical services provided by the California Sea Grant Fellowship program and reduce the administrative burden of entering into contracts of shorter duration.

About the Contractor:

The National Sea Grant College Program network consists of 34 university-based programs funded primarily by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and dedicated to providing integrated research, communication, education, extension and legal programs to coastal communities to inform the responsible use and management of ocean and coastal resources. The California Sea Grant Program is the largest of the 34 Sea Grant programs and works along the entire state’s coastline and coastal watersheds. It is administered by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego. California Sea Grant is a unique partnership that leverages resources across stakeholder groups.

Contract Timeline:

July 2024 – June 2027

Contract Financing:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize encumbrance and disbursement of up to \$540,000 to California Sea Grant for the 2024-2026 California Sea Grant Fellowship program.

Ocean Protection Council	\$540,000
TOTAL	\$540,000

The anticipated source of funds will be from the Ocean Protection Council appropriation of California Environmental License Plate Funds (ELPF). The use of these funds will provide services needed to advance projects and activities consistent with the California Ocean Protection Act, Section 35650(b).

Consistency with California Ocean Protection Act:

The proposed activities under this contract are consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, because it is consistent with trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2) as projects which:

- Improve the management of fisheries and/or foster sustainable fisheries.
- Improve coastal water quality.
- Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.
- Protect, conserve, and restore coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):

The proposed contract is not a ‘legal project’ that triggers the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21068 and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, section 15378.