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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December 10, 2024 - March 3, 2025

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

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2026 – 2030 OPC Strategic Plan

The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) has initiated a public process to solicit early public feedback to inform OPC's forthcoming 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. Building from the current [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) centered on the four goals of Climate Change, Equity, Biodiversity, and the Sustainable Blue Economy, the new Strategic Plan will guide OPC's work to protect California's coast and ocean over the next five years.

OPC staff held six in-person public listening sessions and offered separate tribal roundtables throughout the state in January and February 2025, seeking public and tribal priorities to inform the development of the forthcoming draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. A virtual public listening session and separate virtual tribal roundtable were held in November 2024; a recording of the public listening session is [available online](#). An [online form](#) additionally collected written comment and priorities shared by the public, particularly for those unable to attend a listening session. A draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is anticipated to be released prior to the June 10, 2025 Council Meeting for written public comment and Council discussion. Members of the public are invited to visit the [2026-2030 Strategic Plan webpage](#) and subscribe to the OPC listserv to stay informed.

Wildfire Response and Recovery

The [tragic wildfires](#) in Southern California have left a profound and lasting impact on our state. Given the unprecedented nature of these fires and the proximity of burned areas to the coastline, OPC is closely tracking potential impacts on local communities and coastal ecosystems. This includes both direct threats to environmental health and safety – such as toxicity, pollution, and habitat loss – as well as broader threats to economic and cultural well-being.

Moving forward, monitoring the impacts of these wildfires will be essential to supporting recovery and resilience in Southern California. In February, OPC provided \$200,000 to the [Southern California Coastal Water Research Project](#), in partnership with the [Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board](#), to develop a region-wide network to monitor wildfire impacts on aquatic habitats. This effort will provide much-needed coordination for over 50 agencies, academic institutions, and conservation organizations, bringing together on-the-ground partners to identify key sites and indicators to be monitored, develop recommended methods, and align sampling of water quality, sediment, and wildlife health. OPC is grateful for the opportunity to support this work and is committed to continued collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies to address ongoing post-fire issues such as beach closures, debris removal, ecosystem recovery and restoration, and water quality.

Updates By Strategic Plan Goal

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

San Francisco Bay Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP)

On December 5, 2024, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) adopted the [Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan](#) (RSAP), a first-of-its-kind regional strategy to help the Bay Area prepare for rising sea levels. Supported by funding by OPC, the RSAP provides local governments – and the entire Bay Area region – with a flexible framework to protect communities, balance local priorities with regional goals, and guide decision-making on tradeoffs that best serve local communities. By establishing a unified vision and supporting the development of Subregional Shoreline Adaptation Plans in alignment with [Senate Bill \(SB\) 272](#) (Laird, 2023), this Plan ensures a socially, economically, and environmentally resilient future for the Bay Area. OPC's [Senate Bill 1 Adaptation Planning Grant Program](#) is strategically poised to support Bay Area local and regional governments in the development of these planning efforts, consistent with RSAP and in compliance of SB 272.

Tribal Cultural Resources Solicitation

OPC staff continues to scope an anticipated Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Solicitation designed to help California Native American tribes approach and engage in sea level rise (SLR) adaptation planning in a way that is aligned with and flexible for tribes' needs. Through the SB 1 Grant Program, but with a separate allocation of funds, the Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Solicitation is anticipated to provide funding and support for tribes to lead SLR assessments and planning efforts on their ancestral lands that identify and assess vulnerability of culturally significant sites, such as sacred lands, burial grounds, and other heritage areas. The solicitation may fund pre-planning activities such as community visioning, data collection, and vulnerability assessments; and planning activities such as setting adaptation priorities and develop culturally appropriate strategies, without requiring a land use plan. OPC will initiate tribal consultation prior to bringing this solicitation to the Council for approval.

Coastal Habitat Mapping Expert Panel

OPC, in partnership with San Francisco Estuary Institute and Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, has convened a series of expert advisory panels to characterize and evaluate the different approaches for mapping and tracking acreages of coastal habitats (coastal wetlands, eelgrass, rocky intertidal, and beaches/dunes) on a regular basis. The four expert panels, each of which focused on one coastal habitat type, held their first meetings in December 2024 and discussed priority objectives, potential cost-effective approaches, and other key technical needs to improve California's ability to do routine, consistent, sustainable mapping of the four coastal

habitats. The maps – which document key habitat features, including boundaries, topography, and relationships to adjacent habitats – are foundational in building California's capacity to monitor the long-term resiliency of coastal habitats to SLR and climate change. The panelists are expected to develop their recommendations in Spring 2025.

Ocean Acidification & Hypoxia: Independent Review Panel

Since 2013, OPC has invested in the development of a coupled physical-biogeochemical model to investigate and address the question of whether local discharges of enhanced nutrient inputs, or land-based nutrients, could have an environmental effect on OAH in California. In 2023, stakeholders funded and convened an Independent Review Panel (IRP) to review the scientific integrity of the coupled physical-biogeochemical OAH model, developed and funded by OPC with leveraged funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In February, the IRP released its [final report](#), finding that the model can be used to address basic management questions about whether nutrient loads from treated wastewater discharges in the region have impacted the marine environment and ecosystem in the Southern California Bight and understand large-scale and first-order impacts.

OPC and other stakeholders are currently assessing these recommendations for potential future investments, recognizing that models require ongoing refinement and advancements over time. Through the IRP process, resource managers gained another layer of confidence in using the modeling tools' predictions as a basis for decision-making and taking action, as well as providing an important venue for collaboration across stakeholder groups.

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

Environmental Justice Advisory Board for California's Coast and Ocean

The [Environmental Justice Advisory Board for California's Coast and Ocean](#) (EJ Advisory Board, or Board) convened for its first quarterly meeting of 2025 on January 29 at the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. Comprised of seven members with expertise in equity, tribal engagement, environmental justice, and community outreach, the Board provides insights and guidance to help the state address the ocean and coastal needs of California communities, including tribes. This session served as a platform for collaboration between Board members, OPC leadership, and community representatives, fostering discussions on ocean and coastal policies, OPC's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, and the upcoming Biennial Assessment of OPC's [Equity Plan](#). Board members also delivered flash talks highlighting their organizations' priorities, sparking dialogue on partnership opportunities and alignment with OPC's initiatives.

A key feature of the meeting was the Equitable Grantmaking and Partnerships Roundtable, where San Diego-based partners—including Dr. Donna Auguste ([Auguste Research Group](#)), Nic Brisebois ([Queer Surf](#)), Coach Jackson ([Coastal Defenders](#)), and Meagan Openshaw ([City of Imperial Beach](#))—shared experiences and proposed strategies for improving access to state funding, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring inclusive engagement in ocean conservation and coastal access. The discussion emphasized best practices and recommendations for making state resources more accessible to underrepresented and under-resourced groups and communities.

The meeting concluded with a guided tour of the Tijuana River Estuary led by California State Parks staff, providing firsthand insight into the region's cross-border ecological challenges, restoration efforts, and conservation opportunities. With ongoing facilitation support from Better World Group, the Board remains committed to ensuring that California's coastal and ocean policies are informed by the knowledge, needs, and priorities of the state's diverse communities. OPC and Better World Group will continue engagement with Board members through small group meetings in the spring, with a full Board session planned in the fall.

Goal 3: Enhance Coastal and Marine Biodiversity

Conserving 30% of California's Coastal Waters by 2030 (30x30)

At the end of last year, OPC staff concluded an extensive public comment and tribal consultation period on the [Draft Decision-Making Framework for 30x30 in Coastal Waters](#) and presented a [brief update](#) on the Framework, and progress toward 30x30 more broadly, at OPC's December council meeting. As OPC staff have worked to meaningfully integrate feedback into a final Decision-Making Framework, a need for additional time to further engage and consult with tribes and coastal stakeholders has emerged. Staff now anticipate bringing the final Decision-Making Framework to OPC for consideration and possible adoption at the June 2025 Council meeting. This extension will allow additional time for continued tribal engagement, small group meetings with key stakeholders (e.g. fishermen, conservation organizations), interagency coordination, and scientific input. Staff also anticipate releasing a \$10 million request for proposals to advance 30x30 in coastal waters, [approved by OPC at the December 2024 council meeting](#), following adoption of the final framework in June.

In parallel, OPC continues to advance 30x30 in coastal waters through continued partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and California Fish and Game Commission to adaptively manage marine protected areas (MPAs), coordination with Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary on the Sanctuary's management plan update process, and consultations with tribes to further explore the concept of Indigenous Marine Stewardship Areas.

Marine Protected Area (MPA) Petition Process

In September 2024, the Council approved an investment in SeaSketch, an open-source, collaborative mapping platform for designing MPAs around the world, to support evaluation of petitions submitted by the public proposing changes to the MPA network. This platform has been tailored to California coastal waters (hereafter referred to as “SeaSketch California”) to visualize California’s MPA network and the 2023 Fish and Game Commission (FGC) MPA petitions that propose spatial or classification changes, as they relate to the current network, habitat areas, and science design guidelines. SeaSketch California has sketching capabilities and can run evaluation reports on sketches to quickly calculate amount of habitat within individual MPAs or a network of MPAs. Public release of SeaSketch California is expected on March 13.

Goal 4: Support Ocean Health Through A Sustainable Blue Economy

Protecting Whales and Sea Turtles and Ensuring Thriving Fisheries

This month, OPC staff will solicit nominations for the following non-commercial representatives to the [Dungeness Crab Task Force](#): 1 voting and 1 non-voting member representing sport fishing interests, 1 voting member representing crab processing interests, and 1 voting member representing nongovernmental organization interests. Concurrently, OPC staff will partner with CDFW staff to conduct elections for commercial fishing representatives based in Crescent City, Fort Bragg, San Francisco, and South of Half Moon Bay. OPC staff anticipate selecting and seating new representatives on the Task Force by the end of August 2025.

CDFW continues to manage the Dungeness crab fishery and assess marine life entanglement risk through the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program. This season, CDFW opened the commercial Dungeness crab fishery statewide on January 5 from the Sonoma/Mendocino county line to the Mexico border with a 50 percent gear reduction. The season opener was further delayed from the Oregon border to the Sonoma/Mendocino county due to the inability to conduct meat quality testing, and opened on January 15 with a 25 percent trap reduction. These gear reductions were upheld by CDFW’s risk assessments on January 22 and February 13. The presence of whales in fishing areas and entanglements in fishing gear have delayed the season opening in the last several years. This year in particular, a delayed season opening has been compounded with low crab catches. However, CDFW has reported that the Dungeness crab stock is healthy and fishing practices are sustainable; crab populations are expected to undergo natural fluctuations, mostly due to changes in ocean conditions. OPC will continue to support testing and implementation of ropeless gear to provide fishing opportunity while minimizing impacts to marine megafauna, such as sea turtles and whales.

Informing Responsible Offshore Wind Development

On November 14, 2024 BOEM released a [Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement](#) (DPEIS) for a 90 day public comment period. This document describes potential environmental and social impacts resulting from offshore wind development, and identifies potential mitigation measures for a representative project design that provides estimates of the scale and number of components in a floating offshore wind facility when there is a need to describe impacts, but there is not yet a project design to evaluate. OPC coordinated with interagency partners to submit a joint comment letter to request additional clarity and highlight the work underway by the state in to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on fishing and fisheries (including tribal fisheries) and the OPC-funded Offshore Wind Environmental Monitoring Guidance project to inform federal agency review of future construction and operations OSW plans. The comment period closed February 12, 2025.

Initial Scoping for a West Coast Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind

OPC, in collaboration with state agency partners, is leading initial scoping and discussions to inform the development of a West Coast Science Collaborative (WCSC) for Offshore Wind. This effort recognizes that responsible offshore wind development on the West Coast will require comprehensive, innovative, and coordinated environmental research and monitoring to understand and minimize impacts to wildlife and marine ecosystems. Initial discussions have identified a need for a WCSC, similar to the [Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind](#) established on the East Coast, to provide independent and objective scientific expertise that can inform coordinated environmental research, monitoring and analysis, and support regulatory decision making and ongoing adaptive management. OPC held early consultation with California Native American tribes in December 2024 to discuss the potential structure of the WCSC. A public process is anticipated to take place in summer 2025 to inform the final structure of the WCSC.

Personnel

Abby Mohan: Senior ES, OSW

Abby has transitioned to a new role as OPC's Senior Offshore Wind Program Manager, after serving as OPC's 30x30 Program Manager since June 2023. Her work involves leading the offshore wind, wave and tidal energy program and is focused on developing a science collaborative and monitoring program for offshore wind. Prior to joining OPC, Abby worked as a charter boat Captain for 12 years in San Francisco Bay and holds a 100-ton license. Abby also spent 6 years at a climate change research firm working on blue carbon and technical investigations of sea



level rise impacts. Abby is active in the maritime community and has served as the Chair of the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council as a maritime recreation representative. Abby holds a B.A. in Geography and a M.S. in Marine Science from San Francisco State University, where her work focused on blue carbon and international mangrove conservation and restoration projects. When not working, you can find her swimming at Aquatic Park in San Francisco or out on the water on her sailboat.



Kyla Kelly, Water Quality Program Manager

Kyla joined OPC in February 2025 to lead OPC's work to protect and improve coastal and marine water quality. Her portfolio includes ocean acidification and hypoxia, harmful algal blooms (HABs), plastics, and other emerging contaminants. Prior to joining OPC, she spent a year in Washington, DC as a Knauss Fellow with NOAA's Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Program developing an Ocean Carbon Observing Science Plan. Kyla earned her Ph.D. from the University of Southern California studying the impacts of climate change on HABs in the California Current System. She also holds a B.S. in Marine Biology from the University of New Haven. In her free time, she enjoys being outside hiking, cycling, scuba diving or having a cozy day inside knitting and crocheting.

Olivia Won, California Sea Grant Fellow

Olivia (she/her/hers) joined OPC as the 2025 Climate Change California Sea Grant Fellow, where she supports the agency's sea-level rise adaptation and coastal resilience planning efforts across the state. In 2023, she earned her M.S. from the Coastal Science and Policy Program at UC Santa Cruz, where her research focused on advancing equitable nature-based climate adaptation in California to conserve coastal habitats, safeguard public access to the coasts, and promote place-based, socio-ecological stewardship grounded in principles of social and environmental justice. Most recently, Olivia was a 2022-2024 NOAA Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Research fellow with the San Francisco National Estuarine Research Reserve and NOAA Office of Coastal Management and served on the San Francisco Estuary Partnership's Social Science Advisory Team.



Hallie Brown, California Sea Grant Fellow

Hallie joined OPC as the 2025 Biodiversity Program California Sea Grant State Fellow. Hallie earned her M.S. in Coastal Science and Policy at UC Santa Cruz in 2024, where her research focused on advancing Indigenous-led coastal stewardship in California with a focus on biocultural restoration, food sovereignty, and state policy. Most recently, she has been working in partnership with the Tribal Marine Stewards Network (TMSN) as the Tribal Coastal Stories Project Associate for the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation to create outreach and education materials that highlight the TMSN partner Tribes' stewardship and relationships with their coastal and ocean territories.

Departures: In January, Anh Diep joined the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), Tribal Affairs program after serving as OPC 30x30 Program Manager since June 2023. In this new role, Anh will oversee the Tribal Nature Based Solutions grant program, as well as support interagency coordination and equitable distribution of resources related to Proposition 4. During their time at OPC, Anh was instrumental in supporting public outreach and engagement for 30x30 and in building relationships with California Native American tribes. It is bittersweet to see Anh go, and we are delighted Anh will continue to be a close partner with CNRA Tribal Affairs!