



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Marine Region
1933 Cliff Drive, Suite 9
Santa Barbara, CA 93109
wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



February 26, 2025

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural
Resources Chair, California Ocean Protection
Council California Natural Resources Agency
715 P St, 20th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Support for Funding to Advance Management of California’s Marine Protected Area Network (Item 8) and Advance Climate-Ready Fisheries Management (Item 9)

Dear Secretary Crowfoot,

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has worked closely with Ocean Protection Council (OPC) staff to develop funding priorities for California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) program and climate ready fisheries management activities and supports the authorization for disbursement of funding for **Item 8: To Advance Management of California’s Marine Protected Area Network** and **Item 9: To Advance Climate-Ready Fisheries Management**.

In 2023, the Department released the first comprehensive Decadal Management Review of the MPA Network and Management Program that included 28 recommendations prioritizing adaptive management of the Network over the next decade. The proposed funding for **Item 8** will address critical Decadal Management Review recommendations to advance human dimensions monitoring, continue to build on the critical investments to the state’s MPA Monitoring Program, and support the nexus between the Department’s MPA and fisheries management priorities. The Department’s continued partnership with OPC will be integral in moving these recommendations forward.

The proposed funding for **Item 9** will support the pilot testing of electronic fisheries data solutions across several commercial and recreational fisheries. The results of the pilot will be used to modernize California’s fisheries data collection programs to streamline reporting for fishermen, better align data collection with management needs, improve accuracy of data, and reduce the time needed to record, transmit, and analyze fisheries data. This will enable the Department to expand its collection of near real-time fisheries data, a crucial element of climate-ready fisheries management.

Conserving California’s Wildlife Since 1870

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for California Natural Resources Agency

February 26, 2025

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Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support sustainable fisheries and California's network of MPAs. 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

ec: Claire Waggoner, Environmental Program Manager
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Claire.Waggoner@wildlife.ca.gov

Todd Neahr, Environmental Program Manager
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Todd.Neahr@wildlife.ca.gov

Sara Worden, Environmental Scientist
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Sara.Worden@wildlife.ca.gov



CALIFORNIA

CCACalifornia.org

Ocean Protection Council
Attn: Jenn Eckerle
2715 P St.
Sacramento, CA 95814

02/28/25

Re: Support for Funding for ROV Research and California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program (Agenda Item #8)

The Coastal Conservation Association of California (CCA California) supports efforts to advance management of California’s Marine Protected Area Network through continued research and data collection. ROV studies and CCFRP are helping scientists better understand nearshore rockfish. We believe that continued ecological monitoring is critical to understanding the habitat and species that reside there.

Both ROV surveys (agenda item 8.1) and the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program (agenda item 8.2) have proven to be invaluable in collecting biological and environmental data. This research must continue.

CCA California fully endorses the OPC staff recommendation.

For nearly 10 years, CCA California has represented the interests of California ocean anglers from all walks of life and economic strata, including anglers who fish from shore, pier, private-boat, kayak and commercial passenger fishing vessels (CPFVs), as well as spear fishermen. Our organization, along with our members, believe in obtaining reliable science, and we feel that continuing this much-needed research and monitoring is critical.

Sincerely,

Chris Arechaederra

Executive Director

Bill Shedd
Chairman of the Board

Doug Lasko
President

Dave Pfeiffer
Vice Chairman

Don Trojan, CPA
Treasurer

John Ballotti
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February 20, 2025

Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted electronically to COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov

Subject: Support for Proposed Funds to Advance Management of California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network in Agenda Item 8

Dear Chair and Members of the Ocean Protection Council,

UC Davis Center for Community and Citizen Science (CCCS) strongly supports the state's ongoing investment in the conservation and management of California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) network, exemplified by the projects under consideration in Agenda Item 8. As a research center dedicated to advancing participatory approaches to scientific research, environmental monitoring, and public engagement with science, we see all of these initiatives as important steps in strengthening California's ocean conservation efforts, and leading the way in community-engaged science.

In particular, we enthusiastically support the allocation of up to \$500,000 to the Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) to expand the MPA Watch network. For more than a decade, the MPA Watch network has built an unparalleled dataset about human activities along the coast, with direct relevance to MPA management questions. This new initiative is uncovering ways of leveraging this existing community science capacity, to improve our understanding of the human dimensions of MPAs. Understanding human activities in MPAs and the factors affecting compliance is essential for effective management and enforcement to meet conservation goals. The MPA Watch network demonstrates how community-based monitoring can generate long-term, high-quality data that would be impossible to collect through traditional means.

We were proud to be involved with the development and implementation of the first phase of this pilot project, a practical success that uncovered multiple unanticipated benefits for the organizations involved. We look forward to building on this success by iterating and scaling this new data collection protocol.

Engaging community members in scientific monitoring and research, both produces valuable data, and opportunities for education and stewardship.. This investment will strengthen California's leadership in both marine conservation and participatory approaches to environmental science and management.

Sincerely,



Dr. Ryan Meyer
Executive Director
Center for Community and Citizen Science
UC Davis School of Education



Jadda M. Miller
PhD Student
Center for Community and Citizen Science
University of California, Davis



Lily G. Schneekluth
MPA Watch Intercept Survey Project Intern
Center for Community and Citizen Science
University of California, Davis



MV Eitzel
Associate Professional Researcher
Center for Community and Citizen Science
University of California, Davis



February 28, 2025

Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted electronically to COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov

Subject: Consideration and Approval of Disbursement of Funds to Advance Management of California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network in Agenda Item 8

Dear Chair and Members of the Ocean Protection Council,

My name is Lily Schneekluth, and I am a Junior at the University of California Davis pursuing a degree in Environmental Science and Management. As the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch intercept survey project intern for UC Davis Center for Community and Citizen Science, (CCCS) I am a strong advocate for continued state funding to protect and conserve MPAs across California, presented in Action Item 8.

Before my role at UC Davis CCCS, I interned at Orange County Coastkeeper. In this role, conducted MPA Watch intercept pilot surveys, developed by the MPA Watch network to collect data regarding beachgoers opinions, knowledge, and trends of use in MPAs. This experience proved to be invaluable, as I connected with many people about their love for the ocean and support for MPAs.

The allocation of \$500,000 to Resources Legacy Fund, mentioned in Agenda Item 8, is particularly important to me and my organization. This investment will allow the MPA Watch network to continue the development of this pilot survey and to accumulate more information regarding human dimensions and opinions of MPAs. Information from these surveys is critical in understanding the necessary steps for continued conservation policies.

Additionally, by allocating money to support the expansion of this pilot and similar research projects, more community members will be able to have a meaningful volunteer experience like I had. This survey will further the education of MPAs and ocean



conservation in a manner that facilitates deeper connections between community members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Schneekluth".

Lily G. Schneekluth
MPA Watch Intercept Survey Project Intern
Center for Community and Citizen Science
University of California Davis



February 20, 2025

Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted electronically to COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov

Subject: Support for Proposed Funds to Advance Management of California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network in Agenda Item 8

Dear Chair and Members of the Ocean Protection Council,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we express our strong support for the five proposed projects that will further the conservation and management of California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) network. The undersigned organizations—representing the public interest, as well as marine science and environmental justice advocates, and recreational and subsistence fishing interests, are working to ensure California's MPA network is resilient to increasing stressors and that their management is strengthened by science and community engagement. The proposed projects align with the state's commitment to ocean health, climate resilience, and equitable access to marine resources. We request the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) approve the proposed funding allocations for these critical initiatives.

1. **Continued Ecological Monitoring of Deep Rocky Reef Habitats** – We support the allocation of up to \$1,660,000 to the Marine Applied Research and Exploration (MARE) Group and the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) for continued ecological monitoring of deep rocky reef habitats in the MPA network in 2025 and 2026. This work is crucial for understanding the long-term health of these habitats and ensuring data-driven management decisions.
2. **California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program (CCFRP) Monitoring** – We support up to \$1,380,000 in funding for San Jose State University to continue ecological monitoring in the MPA network in 2026. The CCFRP provides valuable scientific insights through collaboration with local fishing communities, enhancing our ability to assess MPA effectiveness.
3. **Equitable Access and Benefits from MPAs in a Changing Climate** – We support up to \$750,000 for the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation (CMSF) to continue research on identifying pathways for equitable access to and benefits from MPAs. Ensuring that MPAs serve all communities, particularly those historically underrepresented, is essential for the long-term success and inclusivity of California's ocean conservation efforts.
4. **Expansion of the MPA Watch Program** – We strongly endorse the allocation of up to \$500,000 to Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) to expand the MPA Watch program. A better understanding of human use in MPAs and the factors affecting compliance is essential for effective management and enforcement, ultimately ensuring MPAs meet their conservation goals.
5. **Community Engagement and Empowerment in MPA Management** – We support up to \$250,000 for the MPA Collaborative Network (MPA CN) to engage and empower underrepresented communities in MPA management policies and processes. Inclusive participation fosters a sense of stewardship and ensures diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making.

Each of these projects represents a critical investment in the future of California's ocean and coastal resources. The continuation of scientific monitoring, research on equity, human use studies, and community engagement will significantly enhance the effectiveness and resilience of our MPA network.

We urge OPC to approve the funding for these five projects and appreciate your ongoing commitment to protecting and sustainably managing California's ocean ecosystems.

Sincerely,

Katie O'Donnell
US Ocean Conservation Manager
WILDCOAST

Jennifer Savage
California Policy Associate Director
Surfrider Foundation

Zoe Collins
Marine Protected Area Program Coordinator
Heal the Bay

Rikki Eriksen, PhD
Marine Scientist
California Marine Sanctuary Foundation

Anupa Asokan
Founder and Executive Director
Fish On

Marce Gutiérrez-Graudins
Founder, Executive Director
Azul

Ella Merkle
Marine Conservation Scientist
California Marine Sanctuary Foundation

Azsha Hudson
Marine Conservation Analyst & Program
Manager
Environmental Defense Center

Ray Hiemstra
Associate Director
Orange County Coastkeeper

Ashley Eagle-Gibbs, Esq.
Executive Director
Environmental Action Committee of West
Marin

Tomas Valadez
CA Policy Manager
Azul

Penny Owens
Education & Outreach Director
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Natalie Johnston
Volunteer & Community Science
Coordinator
Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History

Laura Deehan
State Director
Environment California Research and Policy
Center

Monika Krach
Executive Director
Greater Farallones Association



RESOURCES LEGACY FUND
CREATIVE SOLUTIONS. LASTING RESULTS.

February 28, 2025

VIA Electronic Transmission

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources
Chair, Ocean Protection Council
California Natural Resources Agency
715 P St., 20th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Ocean Protection Council March 3, 2025 Meeting – Support for Items 8 and Item 9

Dear Chair Crowfoot and Members of the Ocean Protection Council:

Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) is pleased to submit this letter of support for Item 8 related to marine protected area (MPA) investments and Item 9 related to climate-ready fisheries management on your March 3, 2025 agenda. Both items build upon past state and philanthropic investments and demonstrate the Ocean Protection Council's (OPC) commitment to a healthier and more resilient ocean for all.

Item 8: RLF has served as a long-term partner to OPC and the California Natural Resources Agency to advance MPA implementation. The proposed project "Expansion of the MPA Watch Program" will support the MPA Watch program, which engages more than 200 volunteers per year and has cataloged more than 54,000 surveys of human uses inside and outside of MPAs since 2010. RLF serves as a philanthropic funder and thought partner to the MPA Watch program, and will leverage the proposed OPC funds to support a subset of MPA Watch programs to implement intercept surveys. This data will provide novel insights into MPA visitation and perceptions of MPAs among the public. RLF also supports approval of the other four projects proposed under item 8, which will address critical components of the state's MPA Management Program.

Item 9: RLF has partnered with OPC and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to advance the state's fisheries technologies and management frameworks for more than a decade. Through the proposed project, RLF will work with OPC, CDFW, and California fishing fleets to modernize data collection to advance climate-ready fisheries management. This project builds on RLF's philanthropic investments in projects such as climate vulnerability analyses, engagement with fishing communities, enhancing CDFW technical capacity, and supporting fishery stakeholder processes. This represents an important opportunity to advance our Memorandum of Understanding with CDFW and OPC, and we look forward to working in close partnership to ensure California's fisheries can meet the climate challenges ahead.



RESOURCES LEGACY FUND
CREATIVE SOLUTIONS. LASTING RESULTS.

We applaud OPC's forward-thinking approach to ensuring that our ocean and coasts are managed and protected for future generations. Thank you for your consideration of these comments in support of the important investments in Item 8 and Item 9.

Sincerely,

Liz Parissenti

Liz Parissenti
Program Officer
Resources Legacy Fund