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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March 4, 2025 – June 10, 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 feedback on 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.

After hosting public listening sessions and tribal roundtables throughout the state in January and February 2025, OPC released the [Draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan](#) for discussion at the June 10 Council meeting, initiating public review and feedback. OPC will host a public webinar on June 18 from 2:30 to 3:30pm to provide an overview of the goals, objectives and targets in the Draft Plan. [Register for the Strategic Plan Webinar](#). Members of the public are invited to provide written comment through August 1; OPC has also formally requested consultation on Draft Plan with California Native American tribes; we respectfully request that consultations be completed by August 1. [Subscribe to OPC emails](#) to stay informed.

Budget

On May 14, Governor Newsom released the May Revision to the FY25/26 State Budget. The May Revision proposes to eliminate the \$37.5 million FY26/27 appropriation of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds for OPC's Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Grant Program, reducing the total amount of funding available to support local, regional, and tribal governments in developing sea level rise adaptation plans and projects. The Climate Bond (Proposition 4) includes \$75 million for this purpose.

Updates By Strategic Plan Goal

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

Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program

OPC is launching a new funding opportunity within OPC's broader [Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program](#) that is specifically designed to support California Native American tribes in assessing and planning for sea level rise (SLR) impacts on cultural resources, ancestral lands, and lifeways, as described in [Item 6](#). This program will provide direct funding to tribes for pre-planning activities (community visioning, data collection, and vulnerability assessments) and planning activities (setting adaptation priorities and developing culturally appropriate strategies to preserve and protect tribal cultural resources threatened by existing coastal hazards or future SLR impacts). Ultimately, this program seeks to promote equity, sovereignty, and cultural preservation while building tribal capacity to address SLR challenges. All California Native American tribes are eligible for this funding opportunity, regardless of recognition status or land ownership.

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

OPC Engagement and Partnerships Survey

OPC launched a public [Engagement and Partnerships Survey](#) to better understand how communities and partners engage with OPC's work. The survey aims to strengthen accessibility, transparency, and equity across OPC's funding, outreach, and policy efforts. Feedback will help shape more inclusive, community-informed programs and contribute insights that may be integrated into the Equity Plan Biennial Assessment. **The survey is open through June 17, 2025.**

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) did not convene as a full group this quarter, instead, members engaged in smaller, one-on-one meetings with OPC staff and the partner Better World Group (BWG). These conversations focused on providing input for the Equity Plan Biennial Assessment, particularly on identifying meaningful metrics to evaluate progress and offering recommendations to strengthen implementation of the Plan.

Equity Plan Biennial Assessment

OPC is actively developing its first Equity Plan Biennial Assessment in partnership with BWG. This report will evaluate progress in advancing equity across OPC's programs and identify areas for improvement. The team is currently refining performance metrics, with input from EJ Advisory

Board and the public Engagement and Partnerships Survey. The report is expected to be presented at the December Council meeting.

Goal 3: Enhance Coastal and Marine Biodiversity

Wildfire Monitoring and Response

The [tragic wildfires](#) in Southern California earlier this year 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 has included state investments to monitor the impacts of these wildfires and support recovery and resilience in Southern California through the development of a regionwide network to monitor wildfire impacts on aquatic habitats.

In April, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health launched a [post-fire assessment dashboard](#) as part of a broader monitoring coordination effort funded by OPC. The dashboard provides a map of monitoring locations as well as data related to air, soil, and water quality. Also in April, partners at the Ocean Science Trust hosted an [expert briefing](#) on the impacts of wildfires on coastal and ocean health, sponsored by State Senator Ben Allen and Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin. The briefing explored how wildfire smoke, ash, and debris impact coastal and marine ecosystems, as well as current methods for monitoring these impacts.

30x30 Partnership 2025 Summit

The 30x30 Partnership 2025 Summit will be held in San Diego, California on August 14. This year, the Summit will celebrate the halfway point of the 30x30 initiative. Through presentations, discussion, and connection with colleagues, 30x30 champions from across the state will explore the themes of sustain, strengthen, and succeed. Registration will open in early June; help create a more inclusive and impactful event by [exploring sponsorship opportunities](#) or reaching out to 30x30Sponsors@stewardshipnetwork.org.

On August 15, join CNRA for field trips that highlight 30x30 in action. Summit organizers are inviting partners to host field trips in the San Diego area that showcase projects that advance 30x30 by protecting and restoring biodiversity, expanding access to nature, and mitigating and building resilience to climate change. Field trip proposals are due by June 15 and sign-ups will begin July 1. Sign up to host a field trip using this [proposal form](#).

Southern California Harmful Algal Bloom

Starting in December 2024 and peaking in March and April 2025, the Central and Southern California coast has been experiencing [several harmful algal bloom \(HAB\) events](#). These blooms

consist of *Pseudo-nitzschia*, which produces the mammalian and avian neurotoxin domoic acid, and *Alexandrium*, which produces saxitoxin – a paralytic neurotoxin. Additionally, blooms of two additional HAB species, *Akashiwo* and *Margalefidinium*, occurred during this time, yet the ecological effects are unknown.

Domoic acid and saxitoxin can be harmful to humans and marine animals alike. To prevent humans from ingesting contaminated seafood and becoming ill, [shellfish advisories and commercial and recreational sardine fishery restrictions](#) were implemented in Southern California due to both toxins. This is the first known prolonged saxitoxin advisory for shellfish in Southern California. Although these fishery closures are important to protect human health, they can be harmful to the fisheries economy.

Domoic acid has caused 1,670 animal strandings (sea lions, dolphins, and seabirds) as of mid-May 2025. This domoic acid event has been worse, in terms of ecological impact, than the blooms that have occurred annually for the last four years, overwhelming the capacity of marine mammal rescue centers. OPC supports these rescue efforts by providing ongoing funding for the Marine Mammal Stranding Network through a \$2 million appropriation by the Legislature in the 2024 Budget Act. [OPC also supported the deployment of six Imaging Flow Cytobots \(IFCBs\)](#) -- automated, real-time sampling technology that enhanced HAB early warning systems along the California coast.

Protecting and Restoring California's Kelp Forests

As a lead-up to California Ocean Day, OPC hosted a public film screening of [Sequoias of the Sea](#), an award-winning documentary that explores the cascading impacts of kelp collapse on Northern California's coastal communities. The film follows the local, cultural, and ecological consequences of kelp loss and uplifts efforts to restore these critical ecosystems. Following the screening, a panel discussion moderated by OPC featured the filmmaker and leaders from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the California Fish and Game Commission, and Fort Bragg's Noyo Center for Marine Science, who each offered insights into California's kelp recovery efforts.

To advance the development of the state-wide [Kelp Restoration and Management Plan](#), staff from OPC and CDFW met with project partners, scientists, and community members, including California Native American Tribes, for a series of in-person meetings in Santa Rosa, California in May. Supported by California Sea Grant and Strategic Earth Inc., meeting topics included identifying concrete actions associated with effective management strategies, advancing and ground-truthing ecological monitoring and modeling efforts, and a roundtable discussion of social and ecological variables affected by kelp forest restoration and recovery. A synthesis of these meetings will be integrated into the KRMP to inform science needs and community perspectives.

On June 17, Secretary Crowfoot will host “[Secretary Speaker Series](#): Saving California’s Underwater Forests.” This public webinar will dive into the issues threatening kelp ecosystems in California. OPC’s Mike Esgro, Senior Biodiversity Program Manager and Tribal Liaison, will participate in the discussion alongside scientists, divers, artists, and tribal members – all who are fighting to protect and restore these magnificent ecosystems.

California Artificial Reef Program Plan

In partnership with CDFW and California Sea Grant, the [California Artificial Reef Program](#) (CARP) Plan being developed via science-based, stakeholder informed programmatic guidance. To support the development of the CARP Plan, staff from OPC, CDFW, and California Sea Grant held [two virtual public listening sessions](#) in February to gain an understanding of constituent needs and concerns regarding the CARP Plan. To further advance this effort, project staff will convene Technical Writing Groups in Summer 2025, composed of subject matter experts, who will assist in the development of the CARP Plan.

Plastic Pollution

Microplastic Sector-Specific Workshops:

In March 2025, OPC hosted two workshops to develop practical strategies for reducing microplastic pollution from the textile and vehicle tire industries. The workshops support [California’s Statewide Microplastics Strategy](#). The textile workshop, held in partnership with Materevolve LLC through an OPC grant, explored the full lifecycle of textiles—from materials and design to laundering and disposal—to identify voluntary actions, research priorities, and long-term policy opportunities. The tire workshop, held with the Ocean Science Trust and supported by OPC’s 2023 [funding for Science Advisor Activities](#), focused on innovations in tire materials, design, and on-vehicle tire wear collection devices that could reduce pollution.

The workshop outcomes and recommendations were summarized in reports that will help to inform California state agencies and legislative actions towards preventing, addressing, and researching microplastic pollution in partnership with industry, academia, and NGOs.

- The [textile workshop report](#) is available.
- The tire workshop report will be available on our [Plastic Pollution webpage](#) mid to late June 2025.

More workshops are on the horizon, focusing on aquaculture and fisheries, single-use foodware and packaging, and agriculture—part of OPC's commitment to a cleaner, healthier future for all Californians.

Microplastic Field Sampling Methods:

A [Technical Report for Sediment and Biota Microplastics Sample Collection](#) was published April 2025. This document, created by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project on behalf of OPC, standardizes methods that will ensure microplastic collection and analysis are done in a consistent manner across different sampling programs.

This project is one of the first steps towards [designing and implementing a statewide plastic monitoring network](#) to gain a better understanding of the extent and severity of microplastics contamination in coastal California, which will help inform potential policy solutions and management decisions. These procedures will be incorporated into the Statewide Plastics Monitoring Strategy and Multi-Year Plan currently under development and have already been implemented as part of the [Southern California Bight Regional Monitoring Program](#). Together, these actions support implementation of the California [Statewide Microplastics Strategy](#).

Goal 4: Support Ocean Health Through A Sustainable Blue Economy

Protecting Whales and Sea Turtles and Ensuring Thriving Fisheries

OPC staff have reviewed nominations for the voting sport fishing, non-voting sport fishing, voting crab processing, and non-voting NGO appointed seats on the [Dungeness Crab Task Force](#), and will make recommendations for appointments to Secretary Crowfoot later this month. OPC staff continue to collaborate with CDFW staff to conduct elections for commercial fishing representatives based in Crescent City, Fort Bragg, San Francisco, and south of Half Moon Bay; ballots were mailed to the fleet on May 30. OPC staff anticipate selecting and seating new representatives on the Task Force by the end of August 2025.

The commercial Dungeness crab opener was delayed until January 5th coastwide due to high whale concentrations, and until January 15th from Cape Mendocino to the Oregon border due to setbacks in meat quality testing. Through the [Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program](#), CDFW closed the fishery from Pigeon Point to the Mexico border on April 3rd, and from the Sonoma/Mendocino County line to Pigeon Point on May 3rd. As of [May 19th](#), the fishery remains open from the Sonoma/Mendocino County line to the Oregon Border with a 25% gear reduction and a 30-fathom depth constraint in place.

So far this year, three humpback whale entanglements have been reported; one was attributed to California commercial Dungeness crab gear, and the rest to unknown fishing gear. OPC continues to address whale entanglement concerns through collaborative partnerships, best-available science, gear innovation, and entanglement response and outreach. OPC has funded The Nature Conservancy and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations to expand coverage of a lost gear recovery program lead by the fishing community, and to develop an application which will enable users to submit geotagged photos of lost gear. OPC continues to support entanglement response and testing of alternative ropeless fishing gear through the [National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#).

Informing Responsible Offshore Wind Development

OPC, in collaboration with state, federal, and tribal partners, is leading development of a blueprint to launch a West Coast Science Collaborative (WCSC) for Offshore Wind. The WCSC will 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 anticipates initiating a robust public engagement process in summer 2025 to gather broader feedback on the draft blueprint, including in-person workshops planned on the North and Central Coast alongside tribal consultation, round tables, and targeted outreach.

OPC staff have continued engagement in recurring meetings of the [California Offshore Wind and Fishery Working Group](#), focused on developing a statewide approach to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on fishing and fisheries. Along with the working group, OPC previously funded Northern Economics to develop the commercial and recreational fisheries socioeconomic methodology. OPC recently expanded this funding to include development of a tribal fisheries methodology using information derived from literature review, interviews, and roundtables with California tribes planned for the summer and fall of 2025.

On May 20-21 the Pacific Offshore Wind Summit, hosted by Offshore Wind California, took place in Sacramento. OPC Senior Offshore Wind Program Manager Abby Mohan participated in a panel discussion on addressing the needs for regional collaboration in offshore wind development.

Legislation

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

[AB 14 \(Hart\)](#): Coastal resources: Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program. This bill would require OPC to participate as an advisory stakeholder to the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program, supporting a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program along the coast in order to reduce air pollution, the risk of fatal vessel strikes on whales, and harmful underwater acoustic impacts.

[AB 399 \(Boerner\)](#): Coastal resources: coastal development permits: blue carbon demonstration projects. This bill would authorize the California Coastal Commission to authorize blue carbon demonstration projects to demonstrate and quantify these projects' carbon sequestration potential.

[AB 452 \(Irwin\)](#): Coastal recreation: designated state surfing reserves. This bill would require the State Coastal Conservancy to establish criteria and an application process for designating an area of the coastline as a state surfing reserve and would require that OPC consider and include these reserves in the state's 30x30 goal. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 807 \(Dixon\)](#): Conservation and mitigation bank: marine artificial reefs. This bill would expand the definition of "conservation bank" and "mitigation bank" to include marine artificial reefs and allow the construction of marine artificial reefs for the purposes of establishing conservation or mitigation banks.

[AB 823 \(Boerner\)](#): Solid waste: plastic microbeads: plastic glitter. This bill would prohibit cleaning and personal care products containing one ppm or more by weight of plastic microbeads or containing plastic glitter.

[AB 900 \(Papan\)](#): Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: science-based management and stewardship. This bill would require the California Natural Resources Agency to update the *Pathways to 30x30 Report* with recommendations to improve stewardship of 30x30 lands, as part of the 2027 annual report on progress made toward achieving the 30x30 goal.

[AB 996 \(Pellerin\)](#): Public Resources: sea level rise plans. This bill would establish a process by which local governments are encouraged to consult with the California Coastal Commission (Commission) while developing sea level rise adaptation plans, ahead of the January 1, 2034 statutory planning deadline set by SB 272 (Laird, 2023).

[AB 1056 \(Bennett\)](#): Gill nets: permits. This bill would eliminate the provisions in the Fish and Game Code that authorize the transfer of commercial-use gill or trammel net permits upon the disability or death of the original permitholder to another qualified individual.

[AB 1086 \(Muratsuchi\)](#): Marine Carbon Initiative. This bill would require the California Air Resources Board to establish a new Marine Carbon Initiative to create a new council, research program, and an expedited marine carbon research program permitting process. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1102 \(Boerner\)](#): Sea level rise and groundwater rise: contaminated sites: report. This bill would require the Department of Toxic Substances Control and the State Water Resources Control Board to submit a report to the legislature about all contaminated sites that are vulnerable to sea level rise and groundwater rise. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1417 \(Stefani\)](#): Energy: Voluntary Offshore Wind and Coastal Resources Protection Program: community capacity funding activities and grants. This bill would create the Offshore Wind

Community Capacity Funding Grant Account within the Voluntary Offshore Wind and Coastal Resources Protection Fund to finance capacity funding activities and would require offshore wind entities to provide financial assistance to this new grant account for the three-year period after executing an offshore wind lease.

[AB 1448 \(Hart\)](#): Coastal Resources: Oil and gas development. This bill requires the State Lands Commission or a local trustee to consider additional factors before approving a lease renewal, extension, amendment, assignment, or modification for oil- and gas-related infrastructure upon tidelands and submerged lands within state waters associated with Pacific Outer Continental Shelf leases.

Personnel



Jikara Anderson, Associate Governmental Program Analyst

Jikara joined OPC as an Administration and Finance Analyst in April 2025. Before OPC, she was the concierge of the California Natural Resources Agency Headquarters building and a Fiscal Policy Analyst for the children's unit of the California Department of Social Services. Jikara holds a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Labor Studies from UC Santa Barbara (UCSB). In addition, she is a published article writer with the UCSB Law Journal, and she was a writing tutor for UCSB students during her time as an undergraduate. In her free time, she enjoys volunteer tutoring, making jewelry, and paddleboarding.

OPC 2025 Summer Interns

This summer, OPC will welcome five undergraduate interns who will help advance OPC's strategic priorities while gaining meaningful professional experience within state government. Kiani Baetsle (UC Berkeley), Paige Thionnet (UC Berkeley), Jacob Wagner (UC Santa Barbara/Ventura College), and Kate Robinson (UCLA) were selected for the fifth year of OPC's ten-week paid summer internship program, which is focused on providing undergraduate college students with the opportunity to build a foundational background, professional experience, and robust overview of California's coastal and ocean science, policy, and management work. Anne Larson will join OPC through a merit-based Environmental and Policy Internship (EPIC) from Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability and the Haas Center for Public Service, the seventh year of an ongoing partnership between OPC and Stanford.