



Informational Item
September 30, 2025

Item 4

2025 OPC Summer Internship Program

2025 Summer Interns: Paige Thionnet, Jacob Wagner, Kiani Baetsle, Katherine Robinson, Anne Larson

In summer 2025, OPC hosted a cohort of five undergraduate interns who helped advance priorities in OPC's Strategic Plan to Protect California's Coast and Ocean while gaining meaningful professional experience within state government. Paige Thionnet, Jacob Wagner, Kiani Baetsle, and Katherine Robinson were selected for the fifth year of OPC's ten-week paid summer internship program, which provides 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 joined OPC through a merit-based award from the Woods Institute, Environment and Policy Internships (EPIC) program at Stanford University, the seventh year of an ongoing partnership between OPC and Stanford.

While the goal of OPC's summer internship program is to provide students with an opportunity to increase their skills, knowledge, and exposure to ocean and coastal conservation in California, the contributions to OPC's work by this year's internship cohort has been significant. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for these dynamic and dedicated students who will surely bring positive change to the future of ocean conservation.

Paige Thionnet



Paige is a senior at UC Berkeley studying Environmental Sciences, with a minor in Marine Science. During her time at OPC, she had the privilege of working on a variety of projects related to sea level rise (SLR) planning with Climate Change Program Manager Ella McDougall, along with the rest of the OPC Climate Team. In collaboration with the Ocean Science Trust, Paige updated OPC's dataset documenting the status of SLR planning across the state and co-authored a key-takeaways document that will appear in OPC's upcoming Coast and Oceans Report Card. Additionally, she

supported OPC’s SB 1 Grant team on the launch of the new Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program, drafting materials for the solicitation, informational webinar, and program webpage. Paige also participated in the review process of OPC’s most recent round of SB 1, Track 1 proposal submissions. Her summer at OPC has encouraged her to continue exploring career options at the intersection of marine science and conservation policy.

Jacob Wagner



Jacob is a senior at UC Santa Barbara, majoring in Environmental Studies, with a minor in anthropology. His time at OPC was full of insight and new experiences, and he had the opportunity to work on projects centered around the OPC Climate Team. During his internship, he authored one-pagers for OPC’s Tribal Engagement Strategy and OPC’s Equity Plan, respectively. He also worked closely with the Environmental Justice Advisory Board and Better World Group, synthesizing, analyzing, and presenting data from the OPC Engagement and Partnership Survey at both the high-level and low-level ends of analysis. Jacob additionally got the chance to see the innerworkings of Tribal Affairs and Engagement within OPC, coming to understand the processes in which the agency and the state consult, communicate, and engage with California’s tribal communities and stewards. His time with OPC has motivated and inspired him to continue his path in environmental science and explore career options with state agencies.

Kiani Baetsle



Kiani is a senior at UC Berkeley, majoring in Conservation and Resource Studies with a minor in Geospatial Information Science and Technology. Her time at OPC was spent in close collaboration with Biodiversity Project Manager Pike Spector and the OPC Biodiversity Team, through which she had the privilege of working on various projects rooted in marine policy and research. Kiani framed and helped draft an informational item on 2025 Kelp Research and Restoration, where she compiled an update of various kelp-related research developments and restoration efforts within California. She also undertook the development of the Coast and Ocean Monitoring spreadsheet, a hub of information on long-term monitoring programs in the state. She reviewed programs of various entities and governance levels through this project and helped develop tracking classifications for efficient reference of such programs in the future. Her experience in this internship reinforced her passion for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration efforts and has inspired her to further explore a future in the nexus between science, management, and governance.

Kate Robinson



Kate is a senior at UCLA majoring in Environmental Science with a concentration in Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences. She is interested in marine conservation and the intersection of science and policy. During her summer with the Ocean Protection Council, Kate supported Water Quality Program Manager Kyla Kelly in the development of OPC's upcoming workshop on "Solutions to Microplastics in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Industries" by conducting background research on potential solutions, synthesizing scientific literature, and soliciting interagency perspectives. She also contributed to OPC's accomplishment report for the 2018-2024 Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy by reviewing and summarizing partner progress reports, and to the development of California's HAB Report Card by supporting the Ocean Science Trust in processing harmful algal bloom (HAB) fisheries closure data. In addition to these projects, Kate assisted across programs as needed, gaining broad exposure to state-level ocean policy. At OPC, she discovered how much she enjoyed applying science to policy, an experience that strengthened her interest in marine conservation and pointed her toward pursuing a future in ocean policy work.

Anne Larson



Anne is a senior at Stanford University, majoring in Human Biology with a focus in Environmental Science, Policy, and Oceanography, and minoring in Science Communication. During her time at OPC, she collaborated closely with Marine Protected Areas Program Manager Staci Lewis and the Biodiversity team. Her main project was the development of a comprehensive petition evaluation matrix, where she assessed proposals for changes to California's MPA network with a focus on kelp forest habitat representation and tribal engagement and co-management. In building this tool, Anne integrated insights from recent scientific literature, the 2022 Decadal Management Review, and spatial analysis, ensuring petitions were evaluated through ecological, equity, and governance lenses. In addition, she partnered with the Communications team to design and launch OPC's Kelp Myth vs. Fact series, creating public-facing materials that highlight the ecological, cultural, and economic importance of kelp forests. Her internship deepened her interest in the intersection of science, equity, and policy, and she hopes to continue pursuing a career in marine conservation and ocean governance.