



**Staff Recommendation**

December 9, 2025

Item 4

**Action Item:**

**Consideration and Adoption of the 2026 – 2030 Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan: *Safeguarding Our Coast and Ocean for All Californians***

Jenn Eckerle, Executive Director

**Recommended Action:** Adopt the 2026 – 2030 Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan: *Safeguarding Our Coast and Ocean for All Californians*.

**Location:** Statewide

**Exhibits:**

Exhibit A: [2026 – 2030 Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan: \*Safeguarding Our Coast and Ocean for All Californians\*](#)

**Findings and Resolution:**

Staff recommend that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 35500 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“OPC hereby adopts the *2026 – 2030 Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan* (Exhibit A) and directs staff to work with agency and other partners to implement this plan over the next five years.”

**Executive Summary:**

The [2026 – 2030 Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan: \*Safeguarding Our Coast and Ocean for All Californians\*](#) (Exhibit A) provides an ambitious, science-based roadmap for protecting and restoring California’s coast and ocean through the end of this decade. It is anchored by four interconnected goals:

**Goal 1: Build resilience to climate change**

**Goal 2: Maximize community benefits and stewardship**

**Goal 3: Safeguard coastal and marine biodiversity**

**Goal 4: Enable a sustainable blue economy that protects ocean health**

This Strategic Plan is similarly ambitious to the previous [2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan](#) but provides increased focus on actions that OPC will lead, as well as elevating actions that are key priorities for collaborative work with state agencies and other partners. The 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan provides a high-level framework of OPC priorities and maintains flexibility to respond to new strategies and integrate emerging issues. This Strategic Plan was shaped through extensive outreach and engagement with Council members, OPC’s Environmental Justice Advisory Board, local, state and federal agencies, tribes, conservation organizations, fishermen, scientists, community members, and the general public.

Achieving these goals requires OPC’s leadership and contributions by an extensive network of partners and institutions. This Plan is both a blueprint for OPC’s work and a broader call to action to enable a healthy, thriving coast and ocean now and for the generations to come.

### **Project Summary:**

To communicate and guide its policy and investment priorities, OPC adopts a strategic plan every five years. Since 2020, the Council’s work has been driven by the 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan and centered on four key goals: climate change, equity, biodiversity, and a sustainable blue economy. In anticipation of the conclusion of the 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan, OPC staff initiated a year-long process to solicit input, identify key priorities, and develop a new strategic plan that will direct OPC’s work from 2026 to 2030.

### **Purpose:**

The final 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan articulates OPC’s goals over the next five years and will direct policy and investment priorities through 2030. It also provides our partners and all Californians with a clear understanding of what the Council wants to accomplish with the aim of aligning collective action toward these goals. The Plan includes clear targets to track progress and success, ensuring accountability and transparency in OPC’s work. It aims to institutionalize OPC’s core values and maintain critical momentum and continuity for staff and partners through the end of the decade.

The 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan is equally ambitious as the previous [2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan](#) but provides increased focus on actions that OPC will lead, as well as elevating actions that are key priorities for collaborative work with state agencies and other partners. This final Plan provides a

high-level framework of OPC priorities and maintains flexibility to respond to new strategies and integrate emerging issues. Critically, it will guide more specific work plans to achieve these objectives.

## Process:

The 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan was shaped through extensive outreach and engagement with Council members, OPC’s Environmental Justice Advisory Board, local, state and federal agencies, tribes, conservation organizations, fishermen, scientists, community members, and the general public. This engagement included:

- An [initial discussion](#) at the September 10, 2024 Council meeting.
- [Listening sessions](#) and tribal roundtables across the state between November 20, 2024 and February 18, 2025, beginning with virtual listening sessions and tribal roundtables and in-person meetings in Arcata, San Francisco, Pacific Grove, Morro Bay, Long Beach, and Imperial Beach. These sessions resulted in participation by over 150 members of the public.
- Input gathered through an online form, which provided nearly 100 written comments that shaped early input into draft Plan priorities.
- Release of the [draft 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan](#) on May 30, discussion on the draft Plan at the [June 2025 public Council meeting](#), followed by a public webinar, continued tribal consultation, and a written public comment period through August 1, 2025.

## Revisions from Draft to Final:

OPC received over 30 individual comments letters on the draft Plan, many of which were submitted by coalitions of multiple organizations. The final 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan reflects revisions based on input received on the draft Plan and includes:

- Acknowledgement in the introduction that California Native American tribes have been stewarding the state’s coastal lands and waters since time immemorial.
- Inclusion of a new objective under Goal 2 (Objective 2.3) focused on increasing safe and equitable access to the coast, with new targets on:
  - Expanding low-cost coastal access;
  - Better understanding how Californians visit and experience the coast to address barriers to coastal access;
  - Supporting projects that provide recreational and commercial fishing experiences to underserved youth; and
  - Improving seafood contamination monitoring (with a focus on subsistence fishing and pollution hotspots) and fish advisories to improve seafood safety and minimize impacts on public health.

- Revised targets that acknowledge the role of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Statewide Leadership Team for effective and coordinated MPA management and prioritize investments in long-term MPA monitoring.
- Increased restoration targets for coastal wetlands and kelp forests.
- Strengthened and new targets addressing water quality impacts from nutrients, bacteria pollution, plastics and microplastics.
- A new target prioritizing ongoing leadership of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification as part of OPC’s international efforts.
- Revised objective under Goal 4 (Objective 4.1) to better articulate OPC’s commitment to supporting fishing communities and revised targets that: broaden the scope of data modernization efforts; direct adoption of a statewide Aquaculture Action Plan; and include community sustainability planning and waterfront infrastructure as priorities for advancing climate-resilient fishing communities.

## 2026 – 2030 Goals and Objectives:

The final 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan builds on the four key goals outlined in OPC’s 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan and carries forward many objectives that remain relevant. The Plan also includes a dedicated section focused on tracking change over time, as well as issues and state priorities that were not included in the previous plan, such as conserving 30 percent of California’s coastal waters by 2030 (30x30). The final Strategic Plan is provided in Exhibit A; goals and objectives are summarized below, with changes from draft to final underlined.

## **Goal 1: Build Resilience to Climate Change**

- Objective 1.1: Protect communities and ecosystems from the impacts of sea level rise, coastal storms, erosion, and flooding.
- Objective 1.2: Limit causes and impacts of ocean acidification, hypoxia, and harmful algal blooms.

## **Goal 2: Maximize Community Benefits and Stewardship**

- Objective 2.1 Strengthen partnerships with California Native American tribes.
- Objective 2.2: Expand engagement with underserved communities.
- Objective 2.3: Increase safe and equitable access to the coast
- Objective 2.4: Build an inclusive ocean and coastal workforce.
- Objective 2.4: Enhance public outreach, understanding, and awareness.

## **Goal 3: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Biodiversity**

- Objective 3.1: Conserve 30% of California’s coastal waters by 2030.
- Objective 3.2: Strengthen the performance and durability of California’s Marine Protected Area Network.
- Objective 3.3: Restore vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Objective 3.4 Protect and improve coastal and marine water quality.
- Objective 3.5 Strengthen international partnerships to advance biodiversity conservation across the globe.

## **Goal 4: Enable a Sustainable Blue Economy that Protects Ocean Health**

- Objective 4.1: Support thriving fishing communities, climate-resilient fisheries and sustainable aquaculture.
- Objective 4.2: Understand and minimize impacts from offshore wind on the environment, tribal cultural resources, and coastal communities.
- Objective 4.3 Reduce impacts from other industrial uses of the ocean.