



**Staff Recommendation**

December 9, 2025

Item 6b

**Action Item:**

**Consideration and Approval of Disbursement of Funds for the Senate  
Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program**

Megan Williams, Coastal Resilience Program Manager

**Recommended Action:** Authorization to disburse up to \$3,616,941 to various grantees who submitted successful applications to the Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program (SB 1 Grant Program) for sea level rise (SLR) adaptation planning projects, and to augment the Senate Bill 1 Technical Assistance Program (SB 1 TA Program), as follows:

- 6b.1 Up to \$397,150 to the City of Arcata for the “Arcata Sea Level Rise Adaptation Pathways Plan”
- 6b.2 Up to \$750,000 to the City of Pismo Beach for the “Pismo Beach Local Coastal Program Update”
- 6b.3 Up to \$298,971 to the City of Newport Beach for the “Newport Beach Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment”
- 6b.4 Up to \$1,170,820 to Sonoma County/Permit Sonoma for the “Sonoma County North Bay Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan”
- 6b.5 Up to \$1,000,000 to Coastal Quest for the “Senate Bill 1 Technical Assistance Program”

**Location:** Statewide

**Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives:** Goal 1: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Communities in the Face of Climate Change; Objective 1.1: Build Resiliency to Sea-Level Rise, Coastal Storms, Erosion and Flooding

## Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:

The SB 1 Grant Program meets many of the strategies and actions outlined in Goal 1 of OPC’s [Equity Plan](#), which is to establish and implement more equitable and sustainable community engagement and funding methods to expand and enhance opportunities for ocean and coastal projects, policies, and research. According to the [SLR Adaptation Criteria](#), each project, regardless of phase, must include outreach, education, and community engagement, especially to environmental justice (EJ) communities and tribes, as part of the project’s scope. Equity and EJ benefits include community engagement, locally driven adaptation priorities, improved coastal habitat, and safer coastal access.

## Findings and Resolution:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibit(s), OPC hereby finds that:

1. The proposed projects are consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the California Ocean Protection Act;
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the Budget Act of 2022 which included a \$37.5 million Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund appropriation for implementation of Chapter 236 of the Statutes of 2021 (SB 1); and
3. The proposed projects are not ‘legal projects’ that trigger the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21068 and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations section 15378.”

Staff further recommends that OPC adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 35500 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“OPC hereby approves the authorization to disburse up to \$3,616,941 to various grantees who submitted successful applications to the Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program (SB 1 Grant Program) for sea level rise (SLR) adaptation planning projects, and to augment the Senate Bill 1 Technical Assistance Program (SB 1 TA Program), as follows:

- Up to \$397,150 to the City of Arcata
- Up to \$750,000 to the City of Pismo Beach
- Up to \$298,971 to the City of Newport Beach
- Up to \$1,170,820 to Sonoma County/Permit Sonoma
- Up to \$1,000,000 to Coastal Quest

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, each grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director of the OPC detailed work plans, schedules, staff requirements, budgets, and the names of any contractors intended to be used to complete the projects, as well as discrete deliverables that can be produced in intervals to ensure the projects are on target for successful completion. All projects will be developed under a shared understanding of process, management, and delivery.”

### Executive Summary:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council approve the disbursement of up to \$3,616,941 to fund four SLR planning projects submitted by local governments and to augment OPC’s SB 1 Technical Assistance (TA) Program, which provides tailored application support to local, regional, and tribal governments applying to the SB 1 Grant Program.

In August of 2023, [OPC approved](#) the disbursement of up to \$95.9 million for the SB 1 Grant Program to fund SLR adaptation planning or implementation projects. The SB 1 Grant Program implements [Senate Bill 1 \(Atkins, 2021\)](#) and also supports local governments in meeting the requirements of [Senate Bill 272 \(Laird, 2023\)](#), which requires all coastal local governments to adopt SLR plans by 2034, integrated into Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) or San Francisco Bay Subregional Shoreline Adaptation Plans (SSAPs).

The SB 1 Grant Program offers two tracks of funding – Track 1 for SLR pre-planning and planning, and Track 2 for project implementation. Track 1 opened for proposal submission in December of 2023, and accepts proposals on a non-competitive, rolling, quarterly basis, provided the proposals satisfy the program requirements. Track 2 was [approved by OPC](#) in September 2025 and is anticipated to open in the coming months, pending completion of administrative processes required for program launch. In this seventh round, OPC received six Track 1 proposals requesting \$4.43 million. All proposals were reviewed by OPC staff, in collaboration with either California Coastal Commission (CCC) or San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) staff, depending on the project area location. Proposals were reviewed for adherence to the [SLR Adaptation Criteria](#) and the evaluation criteria set forth within the solicitation.

As part of this item, staff also recommends continued investment in the SB 1 TA Program, launched in 2023 – the first of its kind at OPC – to ensure equitable access to SB 1 funding. Through a [competitive solicitation](#), Coastal Quest was selected to design and administer the SB 1 TA Program in coordination with OPC. Over the past two years, the SB 1 TA Program has helped increase the reach of the SB 1 Grant Program and secure more than \$17 million in SB 1 Track 1 funding for California communities. The TA Program also supports applicants under the recently launched [SLR Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program](#), a dedicated funding track for California

Native American tribes to assess and plan for SLR impacts to cultural resources and ancestral lands. As the SB 1 Grant Program expands to include implementation projects under Track 2, the demand for technical assistance is expected to increase substantially to support applicants in developing high-quality and effective proposals for implementation-focused projects to increase the resilience of California’s coast and San Francisco Bay shoreline to SLR. Given the SB 1 TA Program’s demonstrated success and growing demand, staff recommend augmenting the program to extend services through 2027.

Together, the four recommended projects and the SB 1 TA Program augmentation will continue to expand the reach and impact of the SB 1 Grant Program – ensuring that California’s coastal and tribal communities have equitable access to state resources, technical support, and science-based planning needed to advance statewide resilience to SLR by 2034, consistent with the directives of SB 1 (2021, Atkins) and SB 272 (2023, Laird).

## **Track 1 (Pre-Planning, Data Collection, and Planning) Project Summaries:**

### **6b.1 Arcata Sea Level Rise Adaptation Pathways Plan**

#### **Project Summary:**

The City of Arcata (City) proposes to develop a Sea Level Rise Adaptation Pathways Plan to guide implementation of its draft Local Coastal Element and build upon the recently completed *Arcata Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (2025)* to identify relevant adaptation strategies for the City. Using an adaptation pathways approach, the Plan will identify clear triggers and phased adaptation responses for Arcata’s shoreline zones, integrating technical analyses with community input to prioritize feasible, equitable solutions. This effort will include targeted geotechnical data collection, identification of adaptation thresholds, and 10% concept designs for one to two priority locations. As a small, rural community on the subsiding Humboldt Bay shoreline, Arcata faces some of the state’s highest relative rates of SLR. The project will enable the City to meet SB 272 SLR planning requirements, refine its measured retreat strategy, and inform future implementation funding while advancing coastal resilience for vulnerable neighborhoods, natural areas, and public infrastructure.

#### **Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:**

Arcata is a disadvantaged rural community where median household income is approximately 56% of the state average, and several low-lying census tracts near Humboldt Bay are identified as “Very High Risk” in FEMA’s National Risk Index due to flooding and seismic hazards. These neighborhoods include concentrations of affordable housing, small businesses, and Cal Poly Humboldt students, all vulnerable to flooding and groundwater intrusion.

The project will build on more than a decade of community engagement completed through the City's Local Coastal Element update and related adaptation planning. Engagement will include multilingual workshops, walking tours, and targeted outreach in frontline neighborhoods to ensure broad participation. The City will continue its collaboration with the Wiyot Tribe and Blue Lake Rancheria to incorporate Tribal perspectives and cultural resource protection into the planning process. Through inclusive outreach and locally driven decision-making, the Adaptation Pathways Plan will ensure that Arcata's most vulnerable residents and cultural partners directly inform long-term adaptation priorities.

### **About the Grantee:**

The City of Arcata will serve as the lead grantee and manage overall project implementation and consultant coordination. The City has extensive experience advancing coastal resilience planning, having completed multiple vulnerability assessments, adaptation strategies, and a Local Coastal Element update currently under review by the California Coastal Commission.

Arcata's interdisciplinary project team, led by the Public Works and Community Development Departments, will ensure technical consistency and alignment with the SB 1 SLR Adaptation Criteria. The City's longstanding collaboration with state and regional partners positions it well to deliver this planning effort. Through the development of the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Pathways Plan, Arcata will strengthen compliance with SB 272 and provide a replicable model for small, rural coastal communities seeking to translate long-term adaptation strategies into actionable, community-supported plans.

### **Project Timeline:**

This project will be completed over two years.

### **Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$397,150 to the City of Arcata for the Arcata Sea Level Rise Adaptation Pathways Plan.

## ***6b.2 Pismo Beach Local Coastal Program Update***

### **Project Summary:**

The City of Pismo Beach (City) proposes to build upon its ongoing CCC LCP Local Assistance Grant, which currently advances an update to the City's General Plan/LCP, including the Safety Element, to address SLR and coastal hazards. OPC funding would support additional technical analyses and

engagement activities that complement the CCC-funded work, ensuring the City’s Safety Element and LCP update are supported by the most current data and broad community input.

The proposed effort includes four coordinated components: high-resolution bluff mapping using drone-based LiDAR; two-dimensional fluvial-coastal flood modeling for Pismo Creek; enhanced public and tribal engagement, including digital surveys and focus sessions with underserved groups; and concept-level adaptation design visualizations. These tasks would integrate seamlessly with the CCC project to strengthen its scientific foundation and community relevance. The resulting updates will better equip the City to evaluate risk, communicate tradeoffs, and identify feasible adaptation measures – advancing SB 272 compliance and local resilience along this dynamic stretch of the Central Coast.

### **Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:**

While the City of Pismo Beach does not contain designated disadvantaged communities under [CalEnviroScreen 4.0](#), the project area includes several vulnerable populations, particularly in low-lying neighborhoods near Pismo Creek that are prone to fluvial and coastal flooding. These areas contain much of the City’s most affordable housing, including mobile home parks and multifamily residences, and are home to many elderly residents and people with disabilities. The proposed engagement process will prioritize these residents through targeted outreach, accessible meeting formats, and multilingual materials to ensure meaningful participation in adaptation planning.

The project also includes direct coordination and consultation with California Native American tribes, including the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, and Salinan tribes, to incorporate cultural resource considerations into the City’s coastal planning framework. Through expanded engagement and improved access to information, this effort will help ensure that future adaptation strategies equitably reflect the needs, priorities, and lived experiences of those most affected by coastal hazards.

### **About the Grantee:**

The City of Pismo Beach has demonstrated strong readiness and capacity to advance coastal resilience planning through its ongoing General Plan/LCP update in coordination with CCC. The City is supported by Brian Schwartz of Urban Planning Concepts, Inc., who serves as the City’s planning consultant and is leading the LCP update process. Together, they have established a strong planning foundation and project management structure to integrate this effort with the City’s broader adaptation planning and ensure successful completion of the proposed work.

### **Project Timeline:**

This project will be completed over two years.

### **Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$750,000 to the City of Pismo Beach for the Pismo Beach Local Coastal Program Update. This project includes leveraged state funds through the CCC LCP Local Assistance Grant Program of \$900,000 for a project total of \$1,650,000.

### **6b.3 Newport Beach Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment**

#### **Project Summary:**

The City of Newport Beach (City) proposes to complete a citywide SLR Vulnerability Assessment to update and expand upon the City's 2019 vulnerability study, which was limited to public trust tidelands within Newport Bay and portions of the open coast. The new assessment will provide a comprehensive evaluation of SLR and related coastal hazards across the entire coastal zone using the 2024 State of California SLR Guidance and best available science.

The project builds on the City's ongoing General Plan and Safety Element update, which has already engaged the community on hazard and resilience issues, and will maintain that momentum through targeted public outreach and coordination with CCC. Completion of the citywide assessment will establish the scientific and engagement foundation for future adaptation planning and represents a key step toward SB 272 compliance by 2034.

#### **Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:**

While the City of Newport Beach does not contain a significant number of disadvantaged communities within its coastal zone, the City recognizes several populations that may be particularly vulnerable to SLR rise impacts. These include its substantial senior population – approximately 22% of residents, many of whom live alone or with disabilities – and lower-income renters concentrated in select coastal neighborhoods. The project's outreach program will include accessible meeting formats, targeted engagement through community groups serving older adults, and outreach events at convenient, transit-accessible locations.

The City also recognizes that Newport Beach's beaches and harbor areas are regularly visited by environmental justice communities from nearby inland cities, including Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Costa Mesa, as well as from the Inland Empire, who seek recreation and relief from higher summer temperatures. The project's engagement program will incorporate this broader regional

perspective, emphasizing equitable access and the shared importance of protecting these coastal resources for all Californians.

### **About the Grantee:**

The City of Newport Beach has an established LCP and has recently advanced key planning initiatives to address coastal hazards through its ongoing General Plan and Safety Element update. These efforts have strengthened coordination among City departments and built community awareness of SLR risks, creating a strong foundation for this next phase of work. The City has selected Moffatt & Nichol, which prepared its 2019 SLR Vulnerability Assessment for tidelands areas, as lead consultant, with PlaceWorks supporting community engagement and outreach. Together, the team brings local experience and technical expertise to deliver a comprehensive, science-based vulnerability assessment that will inform future adaptation planning and policy development.

### **Project Timeline:**

This project will be completed over two years.

### **Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$298,971 to the City of Newport Beach for the Newport Beach Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment.

## ***6b.4 Sonoma County North Bay Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan***

### **Project Summary:**

Sonoma County, in partnership with the City of Petaluma, proposes to develop the Sonoma County North Bay Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan, a multi-jurisdictional subregional shoreline adaptation plan for the San Pablo Bay and North San Francisco Bay shoreline. The project will produce a BCDC Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP)-compliant Subregional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (SSAP) addressing approximately 12 miles of shoreline along the Petaluma River, Sonoma Creek, and adjacent baylands, consistent with RSAP Elements A-G.

Building on ongoing Highway 37 resilience planning and related regional initiatives, the plan will provide a coordinated framework for shoreline and transportation corridor adaptation, ensuring consistency across jurisdictions and alignment with existing regional priorities. The project will also include updated vulnerability mapping and targeted technical analyses to inform strategy development and community engagement. Together, these efforts will create a shared foundation

for implementing equitable, science-based shoreline adaptation strategies and position Sonoma County and its partners for long-term compliance with SB 272.

### **Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:**

The proposed planning area includes several environmental justice communities identified in Sonoma County’s draft Environmental Justice Element, particularly along the San Pablo Bay shoreline and lower Petaluma River corridor, where residents experience higher pollution burdens, lower incomes, and greater exposure to flooding. The project will build on existing County engagement frameworks to ensure early and sustained involvement of tribal governments, community-based organizations, and historically underserved neighborhoods in defining critical assets, priorities, and adaptation strategies.

Public engagement will meet BCDC’s Equity Assessment Standard and focus on integrating local and tribal knowledge into technical and policy outcomes. By centering community participation throughout the planning process, the project aims to produce equitable, implementable strategies that reflect the needs and values of those most affected by SLR while strengthening coordination across jurisdictions through the County’s partnership with the City of Petaluma.

### **About the Grantee:**

Permit Sonoma will lead this effort in partnership with the City of Petaluma. The County has established capacity for managing complex regional planning initiatives and will build on prior climate and hazard mitigation work to deliver an actionable, RSAP-compliant shoreline adaptation plan. The project will be closely coordinated with ongoing Highway 37 resilience efforts led by Caltrans and the Resilient 37 partnership to ensure shoreline and transportation strategies along the San Pablo Bay corridor are aligned and mutually supportive. Together, the County and City bring the technical, administrative, and interagency experience necessary to advance a cohesive adaptation planning effort for the North Bay.

### **Project Timeline:**

This project will be completed over three years.

### **Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$1,170,820 to Sonoma County/Permit Sonoma for the Sonoma County North Bay Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan.

## Technical Assistance

### **6b.5 Senate Bill 1 Technical Assistance Program**

#### **Project Summary:**

The SB 1 TA Program was launched in 2023 as a two-year pilot to promote equitable access to state funds through the SB 1 Grant Program. Administered by Coastal Quest in coordination with OPC, the SB 1 TA Program provides tailored support to eligible applicants – including local governments, regional agencies, and tribes – at every stage of the grant application and execution process.

The SB 1 TA Program offers a tiered range of services to address applicants’ varying levels of need – from initial consultation and proposal development to advanced project scoping, budgeting, stakeholder engagement, and post-award work plan preparation. In addition to direct technical support, the Program includes a dedicated Outreach and Education component to expand awareness of the SB 1 Grant Program, relevant funding opportunities, and connect underrepresented jurisdictions and tribal partners with available resources. Through this comprehensive approach, the SB 1 TA Program ensures that applicants have the tools and expertise necessary to develop high-quality, community-informed proposals and successfully execute funded projects.

Over the past two years, the pilot has proven highly successful, demonstrating exceptional effectiveness and an impact on equity. Nearly all fully supported applicants (94%) were awarded SB 1 funding, accounting for 58% of total dollars awarded to date. With more than \$17 million in funding awarded to TA-supported applicants — and nearly half of those awards going to high-priority disadvantaged or tribal entities — the program has significantly advanced access, readiness, and success across California’s diverse coastal and tribal communities.

The SB 1 TA Program has become an integral component of the SB 1 Grant Program, supporting outreach and public awareness of the program, the continued success of Track 1 planning projects, the SLR Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program, and soon, Track 2 implementation project funding anticipated to launch in the coming months. This augmentation will extend the SB 1 TA Program through 2027, enabling Coastal Quest and OPC to continue providing tailored, capacity-building support to local, regional, and tribal governments statewide as they prepare for and implement SLR adaptation projects under the SB 1 Grant Program.

## **Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:**

The SB 1 TA Program directly advances OPC’s Equity Plan Goal 1 by expanding equitable access to funding and capacity-building support for communities with varying levels of need. The Program prioritizes assistance for environmental justice communities, small and rural jurisdictions, and California Native American tribes, while remaining available to all eligible SB 1 applicants.

The SB 1 TA Program’s tiered approach ensures that support is matched to applicant capacity – from light-touch services such as application review and budgeting guidance, to high-touch assistance involving project scoping, stakeholder and tribal engagement, and preparation of detailed work plans post-award. This flexibility has allowed Coastal Quest and OPC to reach a broad spectrum of applicants statewide, including those with limited staff capacity or technical expertise.

By extending the SB 1 TA Program through 2027, OPC will continue to lower barriers to participation in the SB 1 Grant Program, ensure that local and tribal perspectives shape project design, and strengthen the ability of under-resourced communities to plan for and respond to SLR impacts.

## **About the Grantee:**

Coastal Quest is a nonprofit organization with extensive experience advancing coastal resilience through strategic partnerships, grant management, and community-based capacity building. As administrator of the SB 1 TA Program since its launch in 2023, Coastal Quest has successfully designed and implemented a statewide model for equitable access to SB 1 Grant Program funding, directly supporting dozens of local, regional, and tribal governments in developing high-quality proposals and securing over \$17 million in SB 1 awards across the state.

Coastal Quest leads a multidisciplinary team including Farallon Strategies, Indigenous Justice, the Bay Area Regional Climate Collaborative, the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability, the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, and the University of California, Santa Barbara. Together, the team brings complementary expertise in project development, community engagement, tribal coordination, coastal science, and program evaluation and adaptive management. The team works in close partnership with OPC staff to ensure consistent communication, adaptive management, and accountability across all technical assistance activities.

Given its demonstrated success, strong collaborative relationships, and specialized knowledge of SB 1 Grant Program requirements, Coastal Quest is uniquely positioned to continue administering and expanding the SB 1 TA Program through 2027.

**Project Timeline:**

This augmentation extends the Program for an additional two years (through 2027).

**Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$1,000,000 to Coastal Quest for the Senate Bill 1 Technical Assistance Program.

**Project Financing:**

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council authorize encumbrance of up to \$3,616,941 to the following:

<b>Recommended SB 1 Grant Program Projects</b>	<b>OPC</b>	<b>Non-OPC</b>
<b>Track 1 (Pre-Planning, Data Collection, and Planning) Projects</b>		
6b.1 City of Arcata	\$397,150	
6b.2 City of Pismo Beach	\$750,000	\$900,000
6b.3 City of Newport Beach	\$298,971	
6b.4 Sonoma County/Permit Sonoma	\$1,170,820	
<b>Technical Assistance</b>		
6b.5 Coastal Quest	\$1,000,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,616,941</b>	<b>\$900,000</b>

The anticipated source of funds will be from the Budget Act of 2022, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund appropriation (Fiscal Year 2022/2023) to OPC for implementation of the California Sea Level Rise Mitigation and Adaptation Act of 2021, enacted under Chapter 236 of Statutes of 2021 (SB 1, Atkins). Pursuant to SB 1, funding is designated “for the purpose of making grants to local and regional governments to update local and regional land use plans to take into account sea level rise and for directly related investments to implement those plans.” Consequently, all projects

under the SB 1 Grant Program will focus on SLR adaptation and fall within the pre-planning, planning, or implementation project phases. These projects will follow the SLR Adaptation Criteria, developed in accordance with SB 1 and in consultation with the SLR Collaborative.

### **Consistency with California Ocean Protection Act:**

The proposed projects are consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, because these projects are consistent with trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2) as projects which:

- Eliminate or reduce threats to coastal and ocean ecosystems, habitats, and species.
- Allow for increased public access to, and enjoyment of, ocean and coastal resources, consistent with sustainable, long-term protection and conservation of those resources.
- Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.
- Provide funding for adaptive management, planning coordination, monitoring, research, and other necessary activities to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change on California's ocean ecosystem.

### **Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):**

The various proposed projects are not 'legal projects' that trigger the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21068 and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, section 15378. If a project were determined to be a 'legal project' under CEQA, the proposed projects are statutorily exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations section 15262 as feasibility and planning studies.