



CALIFORNIA

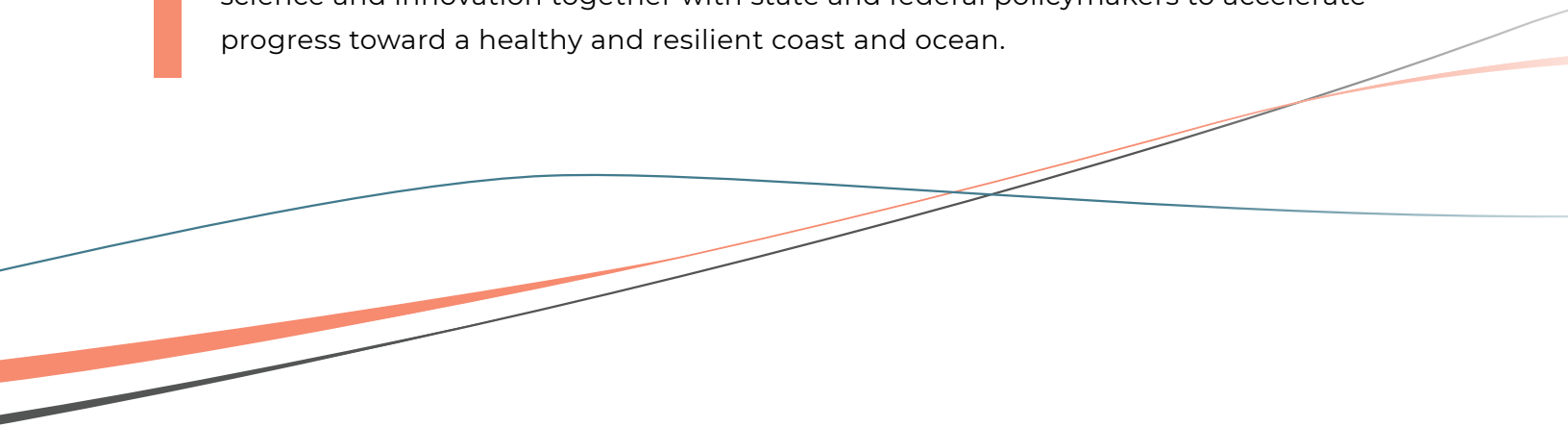
**OCEAN
SCIENCE
TRUST**

**2026-2030
STRATEGIC DIRECTION**



OUR MISSION

We strengthen the bridge between scientific research and sound ocean management. Created by state legislation, we support and bring world-class science and innovation together with state and federal policymakers to accelerate progress toward a healthy and resilient coast and ocean.



Meeting the urgency of the moment as climate change impacts increase

In the 25 years since our creation, much has changed and evolved. California's ocean science community has strengthened and diversified, anchored by the world-class California State University and University of California systems, and leading private universities. We have seen an increasing emphasis on applied research, technological development, and novel solutions. Climate change has also made its presence known in a profound way, revealing ocean acidification, sea level rise, heatwaves, and other cascading threats with a scale, speed, and intensity we could not have imagined in 2000. With impacts to biodiversity, ecosystems, coastal communities, and local economies, climate change intersects with all dimensions of coastal and ocean management and policy.

Trusted science is a powerful tool for uncovering, building, and aligning responsible policy pathways

For the board and staff at California Ocean Science Trust, this roadmap to 2030 reaffirms our commitment to our mission, offers hope for our next chapter of science leadership, and sets out our paths to urgently mobilize funding and support for ocean science in the coming decades. The notion that science should inform policy is not universal at all levels of government, underscoring why California is a special place and why magnifying our action is imperative.

OUR PLACE IN CALIFORNIA

Recognizing the value of independent, objective science—and the wealth of expertise to be found in California’s universities, research institutions, and scientific community—California Ocean Science Trust was created by the California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act (CORSAs, 2000) to mobilize resources and capacity toward policy-relevant and solution-oriented science.

Updates to our founding legislation in 2022 (AB 2287, Stone, Laird) and 2024 (SB 1324, Limón) underscore the critical role that science plays as climate change redefines our coast and ocean, and the essential need for knowledge and expertise to transcend classic disciplinary and sector silos.

GROWING AND STEWARDING AN EXPERT NETWORK

We are proud to serve as a trusted knowledge-broker that legislators, state agencies, and government officials rely upon for actionable science that supports the state’s goals. Core to our mission are our partnerships with the scientific community and the network of experts that we can call on to provide evidence-based insights and guidance. As we look to the coming years, we are placing a renewed focus on building and maintaining a relevant and diverse expert pool, building scientist fluency and comfort in policy engagement, and fostering responsiveness and meaningful opportunities to contribute.

OCEAN SCIENCE TRUST CORE PURPOSES (PRC § 36990):

1. To seek funds for California ocean resource science projects, emphasizing the development of new funding sources.
2. To fund California ocean resource science projects that help fulfill the missions of the state’s ocean resource management agencies.
3. To encourage coordinated, multiagency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science to deliver actionable science solutions that accelerate equitable climate change adaptation.
4. To encourage graduate education programs, training, and workforce development opportunities in management-oriented ocean resource science in public and private universities and colleges in California.
5. To encourage new technologies that reduce the cost, increase the amount, or improve the quality of ocean resource management information.
6. To promote more effective coordination of California ocean resource science useful to management agencies.

OUR PATHS TO 2030

We bring our organization's mission to life via four core roles. While the issues we work on evolve over time, these roles stand as the most impactful and holistic expression of our founding legislation. We are both responsive to individual needs and requests from state partners, and proactive in bringing scientific knowledge, capacity, and solutions to decisions shaping the future of California's coast and ocean. Strengthening key aspects or introducing new initiatives grounded in these roles will move OST into position to more impactfully fulfill our call.



Delivering Science Advice for Policymakers

We deliver timely and policy-relevant scientific roadmaps, analyses, peer reviews, and guidance to state partners including California Ocean Protection Council, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, State Lands Commission, and California Department of Insurance. Increasingly, climate change intersects with the jurisdiction of many other departments, commissions, and boards within the California Natural Resources Agency and California Environmental Protection Agency. The 2024 update to our founding legislation facilitates California's broad access to ocean science and strengthens our ability to implement our CORSA mandate to encourage coordinated, multiagency, multi-institution approaches to ocean science.

OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL SCIENCE ADVISOR

California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) protects and restores California's coast and ocean by advancing innovative, science-based policy and management, making strategic investments, and catalyzing action through partnerships and collaboration. Ocean Science Trust applies our aligned science mission to advance OPC's strategic priorities in our role as Science Advisor, and as the chair of OPC's Science Advisory Team, by providing the best available science and through partnership with the scientific community. We convene expert panels and working groups to deliver policy-relevant advice and products, seek opportunities to encourage alignment of other public and private research investments with state priorities, and activate an interdisciplinary network of scientists across California's universities and science institutions to elevate emerging issues and scientific advancements.





Bringing Science to Lawmaking

Legislative staff in committees and offices call on us to provide administrative testimony, expert briefings, and scientific analyses. We hold fluency and capacity in the cadence of state lawmaking and budget processes; we both nimbly respond to Legislative requests for science advice and proactively elevate salient ocean science topics. On issues including blue carbon potential, DDT and microplastic pollution, sea level rise and the kelp loss crisis, our work—and science—has directly informed legislative action. We also deliver the California Ocean Bill Tracker, a bespoke tool to support academics, students, and partners in deepening understanding of state policy priorities and the nexus with ocean science.



Supporting Student Research

In a rapidly changing climate future, California's ability to steward its ocean resources will depend on scientists who can anticipate emerging trends and challenges and align their innovative research with the state's most critical needs. Preparing the next generation to meet this charge demands real opportunities to understand how to connect the potential of their research to decision-making in the state. To effectively execute our mandate to encourage these early career scientists, we will provide direct support to students and promote mentorship and training opportunities for designing and executing research directly informing state resource management decisions.

SEACHANGE SCHOLARS FUND

In 2026 we will launch a new funding program to support graduate students and catalyze innovative, applied research that promotes effective coast and ocean stewardship and increases California's future-ready ocean science capacity. With initial partnerships for a pilot phase including CSU COAST, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Coastal Science & Policy Program, UC Santa Cruz, we will provide access to new research opportunities for students with direct resource management and real-world impact.





Stewarding Investments in Ocean Science

Science that informs and shapes ocean management and policy doesn't happen by accident. In the coming five years, we will bring our dual experience in responsible stewardship of public and private funds and igniting interdisciplinary research collaborations to address state science priorities, as we chart a course to becoming the financial trust originally envisioned in our founding legislation. With the collaborative and partnerships-based approach to the West Coast Ocean Science Action Agenda as a foundation, we will complement and work alongside other ocean science funders in California and the U.S. West Coast. Together we can grow—thoughtfully rebuilding where needed—the science funding that delivers actionable and timely knowledge to the decisions shaping the future of our coast and ocean.

U.S. WEST COAST OCEAN SCIENCE ACTION AGENDA

In partnership with the Oregon Ocean Science Trust, Washington Department of Ecology, and the West Coast Ocean Alliance, and on behalf of the broader ocean science community, we are responding to the opportunity to speak with a unified regional voice on shared science priorities. Together, we are developing an Action Agenda that will articulate shared ocean and coastal research, monitoring, and technology innovation priorities. This effort will set the foundation for aligned public and private investments in ocean science—including the institutions, people, infrastructure, and workforce education and training opportunities needed—to deliver on shared priorities in the coming decades.





LOOKING AHEAD

We exist at the nexus of the different worlds of science and government; by definition, our success is the success of our partnerships and our shared progress. We are grateful to the many scientists, government policy-makers and resource managers, nonprofit leaders, and community members who have supported, challenged, and collaborated with us over the past 25 years. The bold experiment is working, but there is much more to do to ensure a strong bridge between California's research enterprise and the sound management of the state's ocean resources.

California's national and global leadership—on ocean science and durable, equitable ocean policy—is more important now than ever. We commit to bringing our mission and our dual accountability to both ocean science and the State, to serve California in the years ahead.



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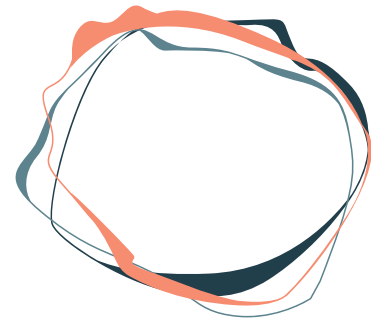
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