



Staff Recommendation

March 23, 2026

Item 5b

Action Item:

Consideration and Approval of Disbursement of Funds for the SB 1 Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program

Ella McDougall, Senior Coastal Resilience Program Manager (Specialist)

Recommended Action: Authorization to disburse up to \$2,079,859 to various grantees who submitted successful applications to the Senate Bill 1 Sea Level Rise Tribal Cultural Resources Funding Program (SB 1 Tribal Track) for tribally-led projects to assess sea level rise vulnerability and inform adaptation strategies for tribal cultural resources.

- 5b.1 Up to \$542,976 to CyArk for the Protecting the Pecho Coast: Northern Chumash Leadership in Climate Resilience project
- 5b.2 \$748,173 to the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation for the Tolowa Dee-ni' Coastal Resilience Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan Project
- 5b.3 Up to \$788,710 to the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria for the Protecting Kashia Cultural Resources from the Impacts of Sea Level Rise project.

Location: Statewide

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives: 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; Goal 2: Maximize Community Benefits and Stewardship; Objective 2.1: Strengthen partnerships with California Native American tribes.

Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:

- Tribally driven protection of cultural heritage, lifeways, and ecological relationships vulnerable to climate impacts

- Tribal leadership in generating data, documentation, and planning frameworks
- Strengthened tribal participation in regional decision-making and consultation
- Expanded equitable access to funding for federally and non-federally recognized tribes
- Flexibility to reflect tribal governance structures and cultural protocols
- Integration of Traditional Knowledges into coastal resilience planning
- Reinforcement of tribal data sovereignty and confidentiality protections
- Capacity building for long-term tribal stewardship and adaptation planning
- Reduction of inequities in climate adaptation funding

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 2024, which included a \$27 million Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund appropriation to OPC for ocean protection and resilience to climate change; and
3. The proposed projects are not ‘legal projects’ that trigger the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section, 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 disbursement of up to \$2,079,859 to various grantees who submitted successful applications to SB 1 Tribal Track for tribally-led projects to assess sea level rise vulnerability and inform sea level rise adaptation strategies for tribal cultural resources.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, grantees 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 \$2,079,859 to fund three projects submitted by, or on behalf of, California Native American tribes under the SB 1 Tribal Track, a component of the SB 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Grant Program (SB 1 Grant Program). These projects will support tribally led efforts to assess vulnerability and plan for the impacts of sea level rise (SLR) on tribal cultural resources, ancestral lands, and lifeways along California’s coast.

Approved by OPC in June 2025 as a component of the SB 1 Grant Program, the SB 1 Tribal Track was established to address longstanding barriers that have limited tribal involvement in sea level rise adaptation planning and assessment of tribal cultural resources, and to address barriers to state climate adaptation funding, including land ownership requirements and land use planning mandates that do not align with tribal governance structures. The SB 1 Tribal Track supports tribes in conducting culturally grounded vulnerability assessments, developing adaptation strategies, strengthening tribal capacity to engage in local SLR planning efforts, and informing broader coastal resilience planning processes.

The three projects recommended for funding represent diverse geographic regions and approaches to understanding and addressing SLR impacts on tribal cultural resources. Together, these projects advance OPC’s goals of supporting tribally led climate resilience, integrating Traditional Knowledge into coastal adaptation planning, and ensuring tribal perspectives inform regional and statewide SLR planning efforts.

All proposals were reviewed by OPC staff for consistency with the SB 1 Tribal Track solicitation and program eligibility. Projects align with data confidentiality requirements, ensuring that tribes retain data sovereignty over tribally sensitive data while ensuring public availability of specific deliverables, such as environmental data. All projects recommended for funding underwent formal tribal consultation.

This represents the first round of SB 1 Tribal Track projects brought forward to the Council for consideration. The Council previously approved \$5,000,000 to release this solicitation; if this set of projects is approved, approximately \$2,920,141 will remain available for future funding. OPC is currently reviewing proposals from the first round of applications that required additional clarification and a second round of applications for potential consideration at the June OPC meeting. A third and final round is expected to close on April 16, with projects anticipated for consideration at the September Council meeting. OPC staff may seek an augmentation of funding at a future OPC meeting, pending the total amount requested by tribal applicants.

Project Summary:

5b.1 Protecting the Pecho Coast: Northern Chumash Leadership in Climate Resilience

Project Summary:

The yak tit^{yu} tit^{yu} yak tihini Northern Chumash Tribe (ytt), in partnership with CyArk, proposes the *Protecting the Pecho Coast: Northern Chumash Leadership in Climate Resilience* project to document, assess, and support adaptation planning for tribal cultural resources along approximately 14 coastal-adjacent miles of the Pecho Coast near Diablo Canyon in San Luis Obispo County. The project will conduct site visits and community engagement to identify high-risk cultural locations and apply high-resolution Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) and photogrammetry to create baseline documentation of coastal cultural landscapes. These datasets will support erosion and slope stability assessment through digital terrain modeling, soil analysis, and field observation as well as tribal knowledge.

The project will produce detailed documentation and a vulnerability-informed understanding of erosion impacts to cultural resources, alongside training for Tribal members in digital documentation and monitoring techniques to support long-term stewardship. Deliverables include high-resolution geospatial documentation, erosion assessment outputs, and a co-developed findings report that informs culturally appropriate adaptation strategies while protecting sensitive information. The project is expected to strengthen tribal capacity to monitor change over time and inform future conservation and adaptation actions along the Pecho Coast.

Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:

This project advances equity by supporting ytt's tribally led protection of ancestral lands and cultural resources that have historically been excluded from conventional coastal planning processes. The Pecho Coast contains significant Northern Chumash cultural heritage that faces increasing erosion pressure yet has limited dedicated planning resources focused on tribal priorities. By centering Tribal leadership, TK, and cultural protocols, the project ensures that adaptation planning reflects Indigenous stewardship responsibilities and cultural continuity.

The project also builds long-term Tribal technical capacity through training in LiDAR, photogrammetry, and monitoring approaches, enabling ongoing stewardship beyond the grant period. Sensitive cultural information will remain under Tribal authority, reinforcing tribal data sovereignty while still allowing appropriate information sharing to inform broader coastal resilience planning where appropriate.

About the Grantee:

CyArk is a nonprofit organization specializing in digital documentation and preservation of cultural heritage sites worldwide. CyArk will partner closely with ytt, which will guide priorities, site identification, cultural protocols, and interpretation of findings. Together, the partnership combines technical expertise in 3D documentation with ytt Tribal leadership and TK to ensure culturally appropriate and scientifically robust project outcomes.

Project Timeline

This project will be completed over 2 years.

Project Financing

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$542,976 to CyArk for the Protecting the Pecho Coast: Northern Chumash Leadership in Climate Resilience project.

5b.2 Tolowa Dee-ni' Coastal Resilience Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan

Project Summary

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation is proposing the Tolowa Dee-ni' Coastal Resilience Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan to evaluate and plan for the impacts of SLR and coastal hazards across its ancestral lands in far northern California. The project area encompasses coastal lands in Del Norte County, centered around the Smith River estuary, Lake Earl, and adjacent marine and riparian zones, extending from the Oregon border south to Wilson Creek. The project will conduct a tribally led vulnerability assessment that examines SLR risks across multiple “core sectors,” including tribal cultural resources, coastal habitats and species, water quality and supply, sacred spaces, community access, infrastructure, and socioeconomic vulnerability. The assessment will integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with scientific tools such as LiDAR mapping, hydrodynamic modeling, shoreline change analysis, and groundwater studies to evaluate risks from tidal and fluvial flooding, erosion, and saltwater intrusion.

The project will include robust community engagement and guidance from a Tribal Advisory Committee and will result in a Community Engagement Plan, Visioning Summary, Vulnerability Assessment, and Adaptation Plan identifying adaptation pathways, action thresholds, and implementation strategies. The Tribe has committed to coordinating with the City of Crescent City (considered for funding in [Item 5a.1](#)) to ensure that project data, methods, and findings can inform future jurisdictional SLR planning and compliance with SB 272, helping to strengthen regional

alignment, avoid duplication of effort, and provide the Tribe with needed information to meaningfully engage in future consultations for local land use planning.

Equity and Environmental Justice Considerations

This project advances equity by supporting tribally led planning to protect ancestral lands, cultural resources, and ecological systems that are foundational to Tolowa Dee-ni’ identity and stewardship responsibilities. The Tribe’s ancestral territory includes low-lying estuarine, wetland, and coastal environments that are vulnerable to SLR impacts, and Tribal members have observed ongoing changes such as flooding and shoreline retreat that affect cultural practices and access.

By integrating TEK with scientific modeling and ensuring community-driven engagement, the project strengthens tribal capacity to define adaptation priorities consistent with cultural protocols. The effort also positions the Tribe to participate meaningfully in regional planning processes and government-to-government consultation, helping to ensure tribal perspectives shape future land use and coastal resilience decisions in Del Norte County. Sensitive cultural data will remain under tribal authority, reinforcing tribal data sovereignty while enabling strategic coordination where appropriate.

About the Grantee

The Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation is a federally recognized Tribe headquartered in Smith River, California, with ancestral lands spanning coastal and inland areas of Del Norte County and extending into southern Oregon. The Nation has a strong history of ecological research and stewardship, including marine monitoring initiatives and collaborations that integrate TEK with western science. Through its Tribal Historic Preservation Office and environmental programs, the Nation has demonstrated experience in cultural resource protection, consultation, and coastal resilience efforts. The proposed project builds on this foundation, leveraging existing technical capacity and partnerships to develop a comprehensive, tribally led SLR adaptation framework.

Project Timeline

This project will be completed over 2 years.

Project Financing

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$748,173 to the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation for the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Coastal Resilience Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan Project.

5b.3 Protecting Kashia Cultural Resources from the Impacts of Sea Level Rise

Project Summary

The Kashia Band of Pomo Indians is proposing a tribally led project to identify and assess cultural sites within its coastal ancestral territory that are vulnerable to SLR and related coastal hazards. The project will combine existing GIS cultural site data, desktop modeling using the USGS Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS), and on-site field assessments to evaluate exposure to shoreline change, cliff retreat, flooding, and storm surge under multiple SLR scenarios. Sites will be analyzed using a structured prioritization framework that considers projected SLR exposure, cultural importance, presence of human remains, field observations, and additional risk factors.

The project will result in a comprehensive GIS inventory of vulnerable sites and a ranked prioritization system to guide adaptation decisions, such as protection in place, relocation, or other culturally appropriate responses. The project area encompasses approximately 40 miles of the Sonoma County coastline, extending from Gualala Point in the north to Salmon Creek in the south, featuring areas susceptible to SLR-related impacts, including flooding, bluff erosion, and Russian River confluence flooding. The project will support and inform coordinated planning with State Parks and other land managers where cultural sites are located.

Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits

This project advances equity by supporting the protection of unique Kashia cultural sites, including burial sites and ancestral landscapes, many of which are located on lands no longer under Tribal ownership. Rising seas and erosion threaten these resources, and several sites have already been lost within recent years. By developing a systematic, tribally defined prioritization framework, the project strengthens Kashia’s ability to direct limited resources toward the most vulnerable and culturally significant locations.

The effort builds Tribal capacity in coastal hazard modeling, GIS analysis, and field documentation, positioning the Tribe to engage more effectively with state, regional, and federal agencies that manage lands within Kashia territory. The project reinforces tribal data sovereignty by ensuring sensitive cultural site information remains confidential while enabling strategic coordination with partners as needed. By addressing climate threats to ancestral lands, the project supports cultural continuity, intergenerational stewardship, and long-term community resilience.

About the Grantee

The Kashia Band of Pomo Indians is a federally recognized Tribe with ancestral territory spanning approximately 40 miles of the Sonoma County coastline. The Tribe maintains active Cultural and

Environmental Departments with experience in GIS mapping, LiDAR interpretation, drone-based ecological surveys, and cultural resource documentation. Kashia has longstanding working relationships with California State Parks, regional agencies, and academic partners to protect cultural and natural resources within its ancestral lands. This project builds on that foundation, leveraging existing technical capacity and partnerships to assess and plan for sea level rise impacts to Kashia cultural heritage.

Project Timeline

This project will be completed over 2 years.

Project Financing

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$788,710 to the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria for the Protecting Kashia Cultural Resources from the Impacts of Sea Level Rise project.

Project Financing:

Staff recommends that OPC authorize \$2,079,859 to various grantees who submitted successful applications to the SB 1 Tribal Track for tribally led projects to assess sea level rise vulnerability and inform adaptation strategies of tribal cultural resources.

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| 5b.1 CyArk | \$542,976 |
| 5b.2 Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation | \$748,173 |
| 5b.3 Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria | \$788,710 |
| TOTAL | \$2,079,859 |

The anticipated source of funds will be from the Budget Act of 2024, which included a \$27 million Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund appropriation to OPC for ocean protection and resilience to climate change. The recommended projects support the purpose of this appropriation by addressing the impacts of SLR on tribal cultural resources and supporting community-led climate

adaptation strategies. The projects are additionally aligned with the solicitation and funding requirements.

Consistency with California Ocean Protection Act:

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, because it is 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.
- Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.
- Provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources.
- Protect, conserve, and restore 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 under the SB 1 Tribal Track (Pre-Planning and Planning) 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.