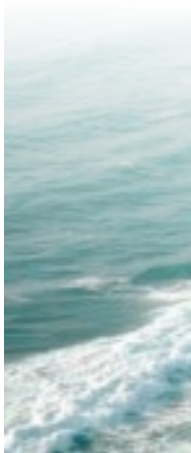


CALIFORNIA
**OCEAN
PROTECTION
COUNCIL**

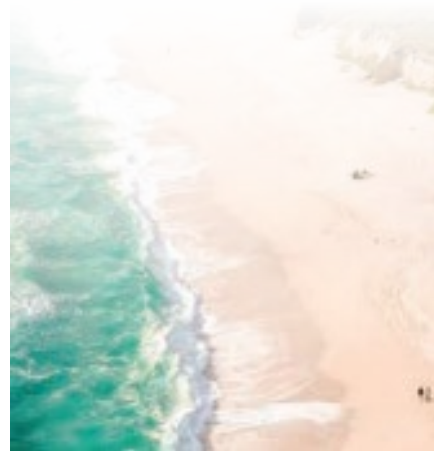
Wade Crowfoot | Secretary for Natural Resources | Council Chair
Yana Garcia | Secretary for Environmental Protection
Malia M. Cohen | State Controller
Ben Allen | State Senator
Dawn Addis | State Assemblymember
Alexis Jackson | Public Member
Megan Rocha | Public Member



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March 24, 2026 – June 16, 2026

*Providing an update on outcomes
and accomplishments since the
previous OPC Meeting.*



Contents

Proposed Federal Actions Impacting California's Coast and Ocean	2
Updates By Strategic Plan Goal	2
Goal 1: Build Resilience to Climate Change	2
Goal 2: Maximize Community Benefits and Stewardship	3
Goal 3: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Biodiversity	4
Goal 4: Enable a Sustainable Blue Economy That Protects Ocean Health	7
Projects Approved by the Executive Director's Delegated Authority	8
Legislation	9
Personnel Notes	11

Proposed Federal Actions Impacting California's Coast and Ocean

Offshore Critical Mineral Exploration and Mining

On February 23, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) [announced](#) a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) to update rules for offshore hard minerals, clarifying or streamlining provisions related to prospecting, leasing, and operations. In response, Secretary Crowfoot submitted a [comment letter](#) on April 27 on behalf of CNRA recognizing the potential significant impacts posed by Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) mineral extraction activities, and emphasized the need for regulations to retain their current form to properly guide agency decisions and actions related to deep OCS mineral exploration and mining.

Updates By Strategic Plan Goal

Goal 1: Build Resilience to Climate Change

Characterizing Contaminated Sites Exposed to Sea-Level Rise and Groundwater Flooding in San Francisco Bay

In May, researchers from UC Santa Cruz and UC Berkeley, with support from OPC, released a [report](#) examining how sea level rise and rising groundwater could affect contaminated sites around San Francisco Bay, with a focus on volatile organic compounds and potential exposure pathways through utility trenches and sewer systems. The report presents a screening method, tested across 21 pilot sites, that combines social vulnerability, contaminant and site characteristics, and infrastructure connectivity to help identify sites that may warrant closer investigation as flooding risk increases.

California Beach Resiliency Plan Public Webinar

On June 18, OPC and the UC Santa Barbara Ocean and Coastal Policy Center will host a public webinar on the California Beach Resiliency Plan, a statewide effort to understand beach vulnerability to sea level rise and identify strategies to improve long-term resilience. Webinar participants will hear updates on the Plan's development, timeline, and key workstreams, including assessments of beach vulnerability, adaptation decision guidance, and statewide policy recommendations. The webinar will also provide an opportunity for attendees to share perspectives on the future of California's beaches and the issues that matter most to their communities. [Register to join here](#).

Bridging Ocean Observing Across the Southern California Bight

In February, the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) and the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations (CalCOFI) convened a workshop among staff members from each agency to identify ways to bridge nearshore and offshore observations in the Southern California Bight. A resulting [workshop report](#) describes the complementary nature of these monitoring programs, avenues for enhanced collaboration, and alignment with state priorities, such as advancing California's goals to conserve 30% of coastal waters by 2030 (30x30) and addressing ocean acidification, hypoxia, and microplastics.

CalCOFI Conference 2026: A Decade of Remarkable Change

On May 27- 28, OPC staff participated in the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigations (CalCOFI) Conference – [A Decade of Remarkable Change: Heatwaves, Harmful Algal Blooms, Hypoxia, and Other Ocean Changes off the California Coast](#). Several OPC-funded grantees and partners presented results of their research and projects on ocean acidification, offshore wind, microplastics, and the Coast and Ocean Report. OPC staff served on a panel to share how state and federal agencies have responded to ocean change over the last decade.

Ocean Acidification, Hypoxia, and Harmful Algal Blooms Competitive Solicitation

In January 2026, OPC released a [competitive solicitation](#) for Monitoring, Research, and Modeling to Support Ocean Acidification, Hypoxia (OAH), and Marine Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Management in California. This two-track solicitation supports projects that enhance understanding of biological vulnerability to OAH (Track 1) and the drivers, early indicators, and impacts of toxic marine HABs in California (Track 2). OPC received 65 Letters of Intent (LOIs) in response to the solicitation and anticipates investing up to \$6 million in research, monitoring, and modeling to improve understanding and management of OAH and marine HABs in California. Recommended projects are expected to be brought to the September 2026 Council meeting for funding approval.

Goal 2: Maximize Community Benefits and Stewardship

California Natural Resources Agency Tribal Stewardship Policy and Toolkit

In March, the California Natural Resources Agency released a groundbreaking [Tribal Stewardship Policy and Toolkit](#), which sets a goal of expanding tribal stewardship over at least 7.5 million acres of lands and coastal waters – the acreage of land initially promised to California Native American tribes by the federal government in the early years of California's statehood through 18 treaties that ultimately went unratified and were kept secret for decades. The Policy and Toolkit is

intended to address this historical wrong by providing both guiding policy and actionable resources to advance tribal access, collaborative co-stewardship, and ancestral land return across California. OPC has contributed a [toolkit entry](#) focused on opportunities for tribal stewardship of the coast and ocean; an associated [webinar](#) highlights OPC's work to advance tribal stewardship through tribally-led research, monitoring, and restoration, efforts to advance co-management, and funding opportunities.

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting

On May 29, the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council held its second in-person meeting, hosted by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians at the tribe's new Museum and Cultural Center. The Advisory Council is a community-based body that provides a public forum for discussion of issues that affect Sanctuary management. This meeting featured a powerful presentation on the history of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, followed by a museum tour; other presenters highlighted the Sanctuary's new permitting system and efforts under way to map the overlapping regulations and spatial management measures within the Sanctuary. As detailed in [Item 5a](#), OPC's participation in the Sanctuary Advisory Council as well as the Sanctuary Intergovernmental Policy Council will ensure that the State can uplift and support tribal priorities for Sanctuary management.

Goal 3: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Biodiversity

California Joins IUCN as a Subnational Government Member

In April, [Governor Newsom announced that California had made history as the largest subnational government accepted into the International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) – the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. IUCN brings together governments, organizations, and scientists to advance work that protects nature, especially in the face of climate change. Acceptance into this global nature congress builds on California's significant conservation leadership, including last year's [recognition of the state's marine protected area \(MPA\) network on the IUCN Green List](#), which uplifts protected and conserved areas that meet the highest global standards for effective and equitable management. Through IUCN membership, California will help shape global environmental policy, serve as a model for other subnational governments, and tap into the organizations and experts to strengthen conservation efforts at home. Key areas of collaboration include expanding tribal stewardship, scaling nature-based solutions, building climate resilience, and protecting marine ecosystems.

Regional Meetings on Marine Protected Area Petitions

In April and May, the California Fish and Game Commission held regional meetings in San Mateo, Goleta, and San Clemente to receive presentations by petitioners proposing changes to the state's Marine Protected Area Network (15 petitions received by the Commission December 2023) and to receive public input on these petitions. OPC leadership and staff attended all three regional meetings in person to understand petition goals and community perspectives. As outlined in the OPC [March 20 letter to the Commission](#), OPC will provide policy recommendations on these petitions for the August FGC meeting. The Commission is expected to make decisions on MPA petitions by the end of this year.

Actions to Address Plastic Pollution

Senate Bill 54: Plastic Pollution Mitigation Fund: The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)/OPC, and the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) invite public input to inform the Plastic Pollution Mitigation Fund (PPMF), established by the Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act (Senate Bill 54, 2022). Beginning in July 2027, California will receive \$500 million annually for ten years from producers of plastics, for a total of \$5 billion, shifting the responsibility for plastic pollution from the public to producers. The primary goal of this Fund is to reduce the environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution across the lifecycle of plastics, while prioritizing its benefits for communities that have been disproportionately and negatively impacted by plastic pollution. More information, including webinar recordings, slides, and information regarding future engagements are available on the [PPMF webpage](#). Tribal consultation and a [public survey](#) were launched March 26 to inform priority uses of the Fund and help shape future grant administration of the Fund to best meet the needs of California Native American tribes and communities.

Statewide Microplastics Strategy: Sector-Specific Workshops: The [Statewide Microplastics Strategy](#) calls for sector-specific workshops to investigate, conduct an alternatives analysis, and identify sector-specific recommendations to reduce microplastic pollution. In May, OPC and the Ocean Science Trust hosted virtual workshops with the fisheries and aquaculture industries. The goals of these workshops were to hear industry perspectives on potential voluntary measures that could be adopted to reduce microplastics pollution, as well as identify impactful research and development needs related to microplastics in these sectors. By engaging participants from industry, academia, nongovernmental organizations, and state and local government, the workshop series provided an opportunity to identify challenges, practical constraints, and shared opportunities within each of these ocean sectors. Workshop reports will be published this summer. Additionally, these workshops helpful inform staff recommendations for ongoing efforts

to address microplastic pollution, provided in the 2022 Statewide Microplastics Strategy: Legislative Report presented as an information item ([Item 6b](#)) at this OPC meeting.

Publication of the Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy Accomplishments Report: The [California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy Accomplishments Report: January 2018 – August 2025](#) was published by OPC, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Program (NOAA MDP), California Sea Grant (CASG), and the University of Southern California Sea Grant (USCSG). This report highlights the collaborative and meaningful work California stakeholders and state agencies have done towards addressing ocean litter and plastic pollution in California by implementing the [2018 California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy: Addressing Marine Debris from Source to Sea](#). This work reflects the collective commitment, resilience, and momentum of partners working to translate the strategy into lasting impact. OPC, NOAA MDP, CASG, and USCSG will begin work on the next iteration of the Ocean Litter Strategy this year.

Federal Action on Microplastics: The Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched [Systematic Targeting of MicroPlastics \(STOMP\)](#), a \$144 million effort to address toxic microplastics in the human body. With a two-phased approach, this program aims to advance work to measure microplastics in the human tissue, as well as identify ways to affordably remove microplastics from the body. While California supports the need to advance microplastic measurement methodology and understanding of impacts to human health, the state additionally emphasizes the need to address the microplastic pollution problem at its source.

Accelerating Kelp Forest Protection and Restoration

OPC and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife continue to make progress on developing a statewide [Kelp Restoration and Management Plan \(KRMP\)](#), a first-of-its-kind roadmap for protecting and restoring kelp forests across California. In April, the KRMP Community Working Group – an informal advisory body convened to provide interested members of the public with the opportunity to inform KRMP development – finalized a set of recommendations for the KRMP that reflect the perspectives, interest, and feedback of a wide variety of coastal communities. Additionally, in June, CDFW and OPC hosted a virtual KRMP Tribal Forum to share information with California Native American tribes and initiate discussions regarding collaborative stewardship of kelp forests with tribes. Finally, last week, OPC, CDFW, and California Sea Grant convened the KRMP Science Advisory Committee for an in-person meeting to begin finalizing a kelp restoration toolkit for California – a key component of the KRMP.

Draft California Artificial Reef Program Plan Scheduled for Public Review

In collaboration with California Sea Grant, OPC staff have supported the development of the California Artificial Reef Program (CARP) Plan, led by CDFW. CDFW will release and solicit feedback on the draft Plan from California Native American tribes and other partners with a 60-day tribal consultation and a 45-day public comment period occurring in summer 2026. Independent scientific peer review is scheduled to begin in early July concurrently with the consultation and public comment period. The final CARP Plan is anticipated to be released in 2027. Information regarding the comment period can be found on the [CARP website](#).

Goal 4: Enable a Sustainable Blue Economy That Protects Ocean Health

Ropeless Gear Authorized in the Dungeness Crab Fishery

California's commercial Dungeness crab fishery, one of the state's most valuable commercial fisheries, opened in January 2026 under delayed and restricted conditions designed to reduce whale entanglement risk. As humpback whales began returning to California waters in the spring, the CDFW authorized the first commercial use of whale-safe ropeless gear under its [Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program](#) (RAMP), beginning [south of Pigeon Point on April 3, 2026](#) and later expanding to additional fishing areas after the traditional fishery closed. Ropeless gear keeps lines and buoys from trap fisheries on the seafloor until they are remotely released, thereby reducing entanglement risk while allowing continued fishing access. The authorization followed years of testing and collaboration between the State, gear manufacturers, fishermen, and conservation organizations such as the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, whose [OPC-supported Innovative Gear Library](#) provides fishermen access to ropeless gear for real-world testing. The State continues to support the testing and evaluation of whale-safe fishing technologies and other strategies for reducing entanglement risk including utilizing best-available science, supporting entanglement response and outreach, and advancing partnerships.

Salmon Fishery Returns After Three-Year Closure

This year, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife [announced the return of commercial salmon fishing](#) after three straight years of fishery closures. California's salmon fishery, which supports commercial and recreational fishing industries, coastal economies, and the cultural and subsistence traditions of many California Native American tribes, faced unprecedented restrictions from 2023 through 2025 due to historically low abundance forecasts for Sacramento River and Klamath River fall-run Chinook salmon. Ocean salmon fisheries were fully closed in 2023 and 2024, the commercial fishery remained closed in 2025 and a highly limited recreational season was authorized in 2025, while the State advanced recovery efforts through the [California Salmon](#)

[Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future](#), including habitat restoration and hatchery improvements to rebuild salmon populations affected by drought, poor environmental conditions, and climate change.

This year, the State will utilize a novel in-season management framework to monitor commercial and recreation salmon catch and ensure that harvest does not exceed guidelines. The summer [commercial fishery](#) opened May 1 from Point Arena to the U.S./Mexico border, and open fishing days will persist throughout the summer until the harvest limit is reached. The fall commercial fishery will open September 4 in a limited area around San Francisco, with similar restrictions. The [recreational ocean salmon fishery](#), which opened on April 11, will also experience more opportunities this year.

Projects Approved by the Executive Director’s Delegated Authority

Grantee	Project	Amount	Description
Fathom Consulting Inc.	Barred Sand Bass Stock Assessment	\$72,372	This project will support adaptive fisheries management in alignment with the 2018 MLMA Master Plan for Fisheries and OPC 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Target 4.1.2. The project will develop time-sensitive elements necessary to support Item 8.a.2. including a peer-reviewed stock assessment as well as tools and management procedures for an upcoming Management Strategy Evaluation for the barred sand bass fishery.
University of California, San Diego	Continued Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Monitoring of Chemistry and Biology	\$199,622	This project will support the measurement of seawater CO ₂ system properties and pteropod species composition and abundance as part of a broader effort to quantify ocean acidification and its effects on marine organisms.

Point Blue Conservation Science	Sustaining Ocean and Acidification Monitoring of Chemistry and Biology in North-Central California	\$199,862	This project will sustain and enhance the long-term tracking of ocean acidification and associated biological responses in north-central California. By maintaining high-quality measurements of carbonate chemistry and biological indicators, the project will support early detection of ecosystem stress, inform science-based management, and contribute to state and federal ocean acidification monitoring networks.
---------------------------------	--	-----------	---

Legislation

The following is an update on coastal and ocean-related legislative proposals tracked by OPC staff this legislative session.

[AB 35 \(Alvarez\)](#): Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024: Administrative Procedure Act: exemption: program guidelines and selection criteria. This bill would exempt the adoption of regulations needed to implement programs of the act from the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act.

[AB 946 \(Bryan\)](#): Natural Resources: equitable outdoor access: 30x30 goal: urban nature-based projects. This bill would encourage the Governor’s office, state agencies, and the Legislature, when distributing resources, to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal and the Outdoor for All Initiative, and to maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities to the extent possible. This is a two-year bill.

[AB 1740 \(Zbur\)](#): Coastal resources: local coastal program: coastal development permits: City of Santa Monica. This bill would require the City of Santa Monica to submit a local coastal program for the city’s portion of the coastal zone to the California Coastal Commission by January 1, 2029, and would waive certain coastal permit requirements for specified road-right-of-way projects.

[AB 1881 \(Ramos\)](#): California Indian Freedom Act of 2026. This bill would prohibit a government agency from burdening a California Indian or California Native American tribe’s exercise of religious beliefs or spiritual practices, unless absolutely necessary, would authorize a California Indian or tribe to assert a legal violation of these provisions, and would require government-to-government consultation for government projects that may impact a sacred site or cultural landscape.

[AB 2045 \(Connolly\)](#): Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act. This bill would remove the January 1, 2027 repeal date, extending the operation of the Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act until January 1, 2032.

[AB 2051 \(Wicks\)](#): Public resources: Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group. This bill would require the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, in consultation with the Secretary for Environmental Protection, to form a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group, a Coastal Resilience Permitting Roadmap, and a Coastal Resilience Permit Advisory Group.

[AB 2734 \(Hart\)](#): Vehicles: special interest license plates. This bill would revise the formula for how funds from the Whale Tail environmental specialty license plate are allocated. One half of the funds would be allocated to the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account for coastal public education programs administered by the California Coastal Commission, and the second half would be allocated to the Coastal Access Account to support the Explore-the-Coast grant program administered by the State Coastal Conservancy.

[SJR 12 \(Laird\)](#): Proposed 2026-2031 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program: Opposition. This measure strongly opposes new offshore drilling in federal waters off the Pacific coast and would request the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management hold public hearings in California and prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement on the 2026-2031 proposed oil and gas leasing program.

[SB 1021 \(Choi\)](#): Fishing and Hunting: Youth Program. This bill would require the Fish and Game Commission, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, to establish a program to increase opportunities to fish and hunt for youth with life-threatening illnesses and youth who have lost a parent in service to the state or country.

[SB 1180 \(Allen\)](#): Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act: California Plastic Pollution Mitigation Fund. This bill would require fund expenditures to achieve purposes relating to the mitigation of adverse impacts of plastics and the shift away from plastic dependency and updates the fund's grant program implementation process.

[SB 1393 \(McGuire\)](#): Commercial fishing: steelhead trout: Dungeness crab. This bill would increase the steelhead trout fishing report-restoration card base fee and would extend Dungeness crab fishing provisions including OPC's role in operating the Dungeness crab task force.

[SB 1394 \(Limón\)](#): Environmental protection: lands and coastal waters: conservation goals: reports. This bill would require the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency's annual 30x30 progress report to include information that represents newly conserved acreage and distinguishes it from acreage previously reported as conserved.

Personnel Notes



Hallie Brown, Biodiversity Program Manager & Tribal Liaison

Hallie joined OPC as its Biodiversity Program Manager & Tribal Liaison in April 2026, after serving as the 2025 Biodiversity Program California Sea Grant State Fellow for OPC. Hallie earned her M.S. in Coastal Science and Policy at UC Santa Cruz in 2024, where her research focused on advancing Indigenous-led coastal stewardship in California with a focus on biocultural restoration, food sovereignty, and state policy. Previously, she worked in partnership with the Tribal Marine Stewards Network (TMSN) as the Tribal Coastal Stories Project Associate for the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation to create outreach and education materials that highlight the TMSN partner Tribes' stewardship and relationships with their coastal and ocean territories.

Nate Buchanan, California Sea Grant Fellow – Climate Team

Nate joined the OPC Climate Team as a 2026 California State Sea Grant Fellow. He graduated with honors from Haverford College in 2022 and will earn his MA in Environmental Policy Management from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in May 2026. His research examines multijurisdictional governance challenges in sea level rise adaptation and focuses on advancing equitable, nature-based solutions to climate change in California. Prior to OPC, Nate was a Coastal Flood Adaptation Fellow at OneShoreline in San Mateo County, where he helped support place-based, multi-benefit sea level rise adaptation projects in the California policy context. He previously spent two years teaching English in Madrid, Spain. In his free time, Nate can be found playing novice volleyball, birding in salt marshes, and reading.





Justin Funa, *California Sea Grant Fellow – Biodiversity Team*

Justin (he/him/his) joined OPC as a 2026 California Sea Grant State Fellow for the Biodiversity team, where he supports work on ocean biodiversity, climate-ready fisheries, and equitable coastal stewardship across California. He earned his M.A.S. in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego, focusing on community-based shark and ray conservation in the Philippines through spatial mapping and collaboration with local fishers and NGOs. A U.S. Air Force veteran, Justin brings experience in marine field research, operations, and stakeholder engagement. Originally from the Philippines, he cares deeply about building ocean policy that reflects the needs of coastal communities. Outside of work, he enjoys diving, surfing, hiking, and exploring the California coast on his motorcycle.