



Staff Recommendation

June 16, 2026

Item 4b

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 \$1,462,485 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.

- 4b.1 Up to \$713,952 to the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians for the “Kwaavichuyam Moomat Pohaylu - Protect our Coast Project”
- 4b.2 \$748,533 to Blue Lake Rancheria for the “Blue Lake Rancheria Tribal Cultural Coastal Resurgence Initiative 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 \$1,462,485 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:

The SB 1 Tribal Track was [approved by OPC in June 2025](#), as a component within the SB 1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Grant Program, with an authorization of \$5 million. The SB 1 Tribal Track is intended 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. Staff recommend that OPC approve the disbursement of up to \$1,462,4857 to fund two projects submitted by, or on behalf of, California Native American tribes under the SB 1 Tribal Track. These projects will support tribally led efforts to assess vulnerability and plan for the impacts of sea level rise on tribal cultural resources, ancestral lands, and lifeways along California’s coast.

Background:

The SB 1 Tribal Track supports tribes in conducting culturally grounded vulnerability assessments, developing adaptation strategies, strengthening tribal capacity to engage in local sea level rise planning efforts, and informing broader coastal resilience planning processes.

This represents the second round of SB 1 Tribal Track projects brought forward to the Council for consideration. The first round was approved by Council in March 2026. If this set of projects is approved, approximately \$1,457,656 will remain for a third and final round expected for consideration at the September OPC meeting. OPC staff may request an augmentation of funding at the September OPC meeting to allow for a fully funded third and final round, pending final review and consultation of the proposed projects.

The two projects recommended for funding represent diverse geographic regions and approaches to understanding and addressing sea level rise 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 sea level rise 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. Tribes were invited to government-to-government consultation on both of the recommended projects.

Project Summaries:

4b.1 Kwaavichuyam Moomat Pohaylu - Protect our Coast Project

Project Summary:

The Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians project will strengthen tribal capacity and evaluate sea level rise vulnerability across Luiseño ancestral coastal homelands in Southern California. The project area includes coastal areas where sea level rise and coastal hazards may occur, including the southern Channel Islands (San Nicolas Island, San Clemente Island, Santa Barbara Island, and San Miguel Island), Santa Catalina Island, and the mainland coastline extending from Solana Beach to San Clemente. The scope of the proposed project also includes coastal portions of key watersheds and lagoon systems, including San Elijo Lagoon, Baticuitos Lagoon, San Dieguito Lagoon, and Agua Hedionda Lagoon, as well as the lower reaches of the San Luis Rey and Santa Margarita River watersheds.

The project will develop a geographic informational systems (GIS)-based sea level rise vulnerability assessment using publicly available climate and coastal hazard datasets overlaid with confidential tribal cultural resource information to identify areas and resources vulnerable to flooding, erosion, and other coastal hazards. The vulnerability assessment will support future adaptation planning, consultation, and co-stewardship efforts while remaining for internal tribal use. Additional project activities include staff trainings on coastal processes, sea level rise impacts, GIS tools, and adaptation strategies; youth leadership and workforce development programming focused on coastal stewardship and sea level rise vulnerability; and relationship-building and educational site visits with coastal land-managing agencies and partners. Deliverables include GIS-based exposure maps and vulnerability assessment products, staff training and educational programming, youth climate leadership activities, and engagement with regional partners to support future adaptation planning and long-term stewardship of Luiseño ancestral coastal areas.

Equity and Environmental Justice Benefits:

This project advances equity by supporting the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians' tribally led effort to assess and plan for sea level rise impacts to culturally significant ancestral coastal homelands that have historically been excluded from conventional coastal planning and management processes. Although the Tribe's reservation is located inland, the project centers on their ancestral lands including coastal lagoons, shorelines, islands, and waterways that remain deeply important to Luiseño cultural identity, stewardship, and traditional practices. By centering tribal leadership, traditional knowledge, and culturally informed planning approaches, the project supports tribal

self-determination and strengthens the Tribe’s ability to engage in future adaptation planning, consultation, and coastal stewardship discussions.

The project will include a vulnerability assessment and associated GIS datasets to support the Tribe’s long-term ability to evaluate risk, participate in coastal planning processes, and guide future adaptation efforts. The project also builds long-term tribal capacity through trainings on sea level rise science, GIS tools, coastal monitoring, adaptation strategies, and youth leadership development focused on climate resilience and stewardship. All final deliverables will reflect appropriate tribal data sovereignty and confidentiality requirements, as defined by the Tribe, with training materials, capacity building activities, and learning opportunities made available to the greater Luiseño community.

About the Grantee:

The Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians is one of six federally recognized Luiseño Tribes and will lead all aspects of project development, coordination, and implementation through its Cultural Resources Department and Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). Although the Rincon Reservation is located inland in northern San Diego County, the Tribe maintains deep cultural, spiritual, and historical connections to its ancestral coastal homelands, which extend across northwestern San Diego County, western Riverside County, Orange County, and the Southern Channel Islands. The Tribe has existing experience coordinating with regional Tribes, state and federal agencies, lagoon conservancies, and local land managers through cultural resource consultation, environmental stewardship, and intertribal collaboration efforts.

Project Timeline

This project will be completed over 2 years.

Project Financing

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$713,952 to the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians for the Kwaavichuyam Moomat Pohaylu - Protect our Coast Project.

4b.2 Blue Lake Rancheria Tribal Cultural Coastal Resurgence Initiative Project

Project Summary

Blue Lake Rancheria will assess sea level rise risks to culturally significant resources and support Tribal-led adaptation and restoration planning within ancestral coastal territories in Humboldt County. The project area focuses on the Wigi (Humboldt Bay) and Baduwa’t (Mad River) watersheds and associated coastal zone areas within Blue Lake Rancheria ancestral territory. The

project will evaluate vulnerabilities to cultural species, landscapes, and waterscapes using a “braided approach” that integrates traditional knowledge, Indigenous Science, community-based participatory methods, and existing sea level rise science and datasets. The proposed methodology includes spatial analysis, vulnerability matrices, ecosystem and species sensitivity assessments, community feedback, and site-specific analysis to evaluate exposure, sensitivity, adaptive capacity, and relative vulnerability of cultural resources to sea level rise impacts.

The project includes extensive engagement through interviews, listening sessions, and cultural workshops, alongside development of two major planning products: a public-facing Synthesis Report and a beta Living Database of Relational Knowledges. These products are intended to support future adaptation planning, restoration prioritization, and Tribal engagement in local and regional coastal planning and consultation processes. The project will also support engagement with local jurisdictions and regional planning efforts related to Humboldt Bay shoreline adaptation and coastal development, helping ensure that Tribal priorities, traditional knowledge, and cultural resource considerations are incorporated into future sea level rise planning and land use discussions.

Equity and Environmental Justice Considerations

This project advances equity by supporting Blue Lake Rancheria’s tribally led effort to assess and plan for sea level rise impacts affecting culturally significant landscapes, waterscapes, species, and ecological relationships within ancestral coastal territories in Humboldt County. The project centers Indigenous stewardship and cultural resurgence in coastal areas that have historically been altered through jurisdictional land management practices and excluded from conventional coastal planning efforts.

The project integrates traditional knowledge, Indigenous Science, community engagement, and existing sea level rise science to support culturally grounded adaptation planning. Interviews, cultural workshops, youth engagement, and development of the Living Database are intended to strengthen tribal capacity, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and future restoration and resilience planning. Sensitive cultural information and database contents will remain under tribal authority, reinforcing tribal data sovereignty and tribally-led decision-making.

About the Grantee

Blue Lake Rancheria is a federally recognized Tribe located in Humboldt County, California, with ancestral territory spanning the Wigi (Humboldt Bay) and Baduwa’t (Mad River) watersheds and surrounding coastal areas of the Northern California coast. The Tribe has extensive experience leading environmental stewardship, climate resilience, cultural resource protection, and restoration initiatives, including development of the Tribal Cultural Landscape Assessment (TCLA),

participation in regional sea level rise planning efforts, and partnerships focused on watershed restoration and Indigenous stewardship. Through its Tribal Historic Preservation Office, environmental programs, and regional partnerships, Blue Lake Rancheria has demonstrated experience in community-based planning, Tribal consultation, and integrating traditional knowledge with western science. The proposed project builds on this foundation by advancing a tribally led approach to sea level rise vulnerability assessment, cultural resource planning, and long-term coastal resilience.

Project Timeline

This project will be completed over 2 years.

Project Financing

Staff recommends that OPC authorize disbursement of up to \$748,533 to Blue Lake Rancheria for the Blue Lake Rancheria Tribal Cultural Coastal Resurgence Initiative Project.

Project Financing:

Staff recommends that OPC authorize \$1,462,485 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.

4b.1 Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians	\$713,952
4b.2 Blue Lake Rancheria	\$748,533
TOTAL	\$1,462,485

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 sea level rise 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.