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Ocean Protection Council Priorities for University of Southern California Sea Grant Research Proposals

This document provides guidance to researchers preparing proposals to submit to the University of Southern (USC) California Sea Grant program for possible funding by the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC). This grant to the USC Sea Grant program is part of the continuing grants made annually by the OPC for management-oriented coastal and ocean research.¹

Background

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) was established to improve the management and protection of ocean and coastal resources and ecosystems. One of the many ways the OPC achieves this purpose is by supporting innovative research that directly informs and improves the stewardship of ocean resources through a partnership with the two California Sea Grant programs. At its public meeting on February 29, 2008, the OPC will consider furthering this partnership by authorizing a third round of scientific research which will address current OPC priorities. Pending approval, the OPC may disburse up to \$1,000,000 to the USC Sea Grant and California Sea Grant College programs. These priorities pertain only to the USC Sea Grant Program; details of the California Sea Grant allocation are available through the California Sea Grant College Program.

This round of funding addresses priority areas derived from the OPC five-year strategic plan *A Vision for Our Ocean and Coast*,¹ the OPC FY2007/2008 Funding Priorities,² and the California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy.³

2008 OPC Guidelines for Research – A Focus on Water Quality

At its February 29, 2008 meeting, the OPC will consider and adopt priority areas for the 2008 USC Sea Grant. While many challenging problems currently impact California's coastal marine environment, the OPC and USC Sea Grant Program propose to focus attention in the 2008 grant round on a single overarching priority issue: **Water quality**. By examining a single priority issue through one or more research projects, it is envisioned that more comprehensive and applied outcomes will be produced.

At its February 29, 2008 meeting, the OPC will consider and adopt priority issues for the 2008 USC Sea Grant Program. This proposed priority issue is being released in advance of the meeting to provide sufficient time for research proposal preparation. However, this priority area is subject to change, and a final list of priority area(s) will be posted immediately following the February meeting if funding is approved.

¹ The proposed disbursement will be made to the Sea Grant programs (\$200,000 to USC Sea Grant Program and \$800,000 to California Sea Grant College Program) as a directed project pursuant to the OPC Funding Guidelines updated on June 14, 2007.

The OPC and USC Sea Grant Program are requesting that researchers submit proposals with the intent to comprehensively assess an aspect of water quality. Priority will be given to research that provides a better understanding of scientifically-based pollutant standards, water quality indicators (including for emerging pollutants and endocrine disruptors), Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), watershed functioning, and/or pollutant origin and dynamics

Research projects must address or substantially contribute to improving management decisions, protection, conservation, or restoration of the State's coastal and ocean water quality. These endeavors must support the provisions of the California Ocean Protection Act (California Public Resources Code § 35550, et seq.) and be consistent with the actions contained in the OPC five-year strategic plan.

Pending OPC approval, the USC Sea Grant Program will allocate \$200,000 of OPC funding to focused research proposal(s) in an area relevant to water quality and state resource management needs. This amount will be disbursed over a 2-3 year period to one or more research projects. The number of projects to be funded will be determined by proposal quality and relevance.

Proposals that address the following points are encouraged:

- Assess the current state of knowledge and work with resource managers to identify the key information needs to address pressing ocean and coastal resource management issues.
- Illustrate a strong connection to management by demonstrating how the project can assist, complement, or augment the work of state agencies in their efforts to manage, protect, conserve, or restore coastal or ocean water quality.
- Identify mechanisms to translate results to improved management practices.
- Examine status and trends through synoptic and long-term assessments.
- Identify sources and processes of ocean pollution that impact the health of humans and the marine environment.
- Integrate research and monitoring across disciplines and programs optimizing the approach to ecosystem-based management.
- Promote or be of discernible benefit to the public, including current and future generations
- Develop decision support tools for end users.
- Be of greater-than-local interest.

Applied Tools and Products

Successful proposals will promote the development of products and tools that will directly improve ocean resource management and establishing mechanisms for ensuring these tools and products reach key user groups. Examples include:

- Identifying useful indicators
- Developing predictive models
- Developing metrics and methods for evaluating the impacts of alternative regulatory choices or management actions

Translation and Integration of Results

Successful proposals will deliver results that improve resource management practices. Work plans for each proposal must specify which resource managers and/or regulators will be integrated into the work as it progresses from clarifying the problem statement to developing, testing, and disseminating tools and products. Each proposal must include one or more letters of support from end users (government or non-government) identifying the anticipated value and use of the project results to the public, research community, and/or state government. Because translation and dissemination of research results is critical for improving resource management, the involvement of one or more Sea Grant or State Agency advisors is encouraged.

Research will be considered that involves cross-boundary or regional aspects, such as regional and international coordination.

OPC Funding Considerations

Proposals must have at least a 50% matching funds, however, research proposals requesting OPC funds do not have restrictions on the *source* of the matching funds. Federal sources will be considered eligible as matching funds.

Research conducted with OPC funds must limit the indirect costs rate to 25% or less.

Review Process

Proposals for OPC funds will undergo the same review process as other Sea Grant proposal submissions, including review by the Resources Agency Sea Grant Advisory Panel (RASGAP), which will review proposals for OPC priorities. There will also be an independent scientific peer review process conducted by USC. The OPC will have staff involved in all stages of the review process, including the technical review and final decision-making. At its discretion, the OPC may request additional review by likely user groups of the research findings or suggest coordination of complimentary proposals. Concurrence on the selected research projects will be required from the OPC before funds are awarded.

Useful Websites

1. The OPC 5-year strategic plan *A Vision for Our Ocean and Coast*
http://resources.ca.gov/copc/docs/OPC_Strategic_Plan_2006.pdf
2. OPC FY2007/2008 Funding Priorities
http://resources.ca.gov/copc/docs/FinalFundingPriorities2008_amended.pdf
3. California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy
http://resources.ca.gov/copc/InfoResOut_Strategy_final.pdf