

Ocean Protection Council Priority Objectives

Objective: Governance

Maximize the effectiveness of funds spent to protect and conserve coastal resources.

Maximize the effectiveness of state agency efforts to protect and conserve ocean and coastal resources.

Objective: Mapping

Monitor and map the ocean environment to provide data about conditions and trends.

Objective: Enforce Pollution Controls

Coordinate and support the personnel and programs needed to enforce existing water quality standards.

Objective: Habitat Restoration

Restore and maintain valuable ocean and coastal habitats and resources.

Objective: Marine Life Protection Act

Help complete and implement a statewide network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Objective: Marine Life Management Act

Help to establish ecologically and economically sustainable fisheries.

Objective: Encourage Sustainable Economic Activity

Encourage emerging coastal and ocean activities that will provide new economic opportunities for the State, can be conducted in a sustainable manner, and are consistent with the goals and objectives of the California Ocean Protection Act.

Ocean Protection Council

Ocean Community Support for the Next 5 Years

The ocean conservation community is committed to implementing the concepts described in the Pew Ocean Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy reports. We view California's Ocean Protection Act as one of the main vehicles for that implementation on the west coast. COPA is the first and most concrete embodiment of the ecosystem based management principles adopted by the commissions. As such, it is a model for future efforts; the nation is watching. Under state law, the main goals of the OPC are high level policy goals consistent with the recommendations of the two commissions. They include:

- Integrate and coordinate the state's laws, institutions, and initiatives having a bearing on the protection and conservation of ocean biodiversity, ecosystem health, and resources.
- Analyze and identify gaps, bottlenecks, and logjams that are impeding the implementation of COPA and other important ocean conservation and management efforts and find ways to overcome them.
- Provide a set of guiding principles for all state agencies to follow, consistent with existing law, in protecting the state's coastal and ocean resources.
- Encourage cooperative management with federal agencies, to protect and conserve representative coastal and ocean habitats and the ecological processes that support those habitats.
- Provide for public access to the ocean and ocean resources, including to marine protected areas, for recreational use, and aesthetic, educational, and scientific purposes, consistent with the sustainable long-term conservation of those resources.
- Identify scientific research and planning that is useful for the protection and conservation of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems, and coordinate and assist state agencies in addressing those needs. (PRC §35515)

Funding is not the only tool to accomplish these goals.

While the OPC's funding has received the lion's share of scrutiny, we would remind the OPC that much can be accomplished through the discussions and direct actions of OPC members.

We hope that the Ocean Protection Council will focus a great deal of energy over the next several years on coordinating the activities of government agencies charged with protecting the air, rivers, estuaries, and the ocean. It will be important to ensure that cross-jurisdictional issues that impact ecosystem health do not fall through the cracks. We recommend the following principles to the OPC for evaluating as they entertain projects and programs:

1. Add value and maximize leverage; if other funds are available, how will OPC funds provide incentives for an effective program, or attract greater support?
2. Identify cross-cutting issues that are impeding progress toward ecosystem based management and address them
3. Provide funding to fill specific gaps, targeting projects and programs that are consistent with OPC mission and strategic plan
4. Catalyze a new way of doing business, provide leadership rather than crisis management, and develop innovative approaches

Specifically, we hope to see the Council continue its leadership in supporting the implementation of the state's two landmark pieces of legislation, the Marine Life Management Act and the Marine Life Protection Act. OPC coordination of MPA monitoring, funding of DFG Marine Region activities, support for the California Fisheries Fund, and grants to fishery organizations are all critical components of a strategy to support implementation of these two laws.

The surprise addition of \$90 million from a recent bond for use by the Council should be treated as rare opportunity to identify a set of priorities that maximize the leveraging power of that \$90 million. We may not have funding like this again.

To that end, we suggest spreading the money out over a five-year period using the rough guidelines outlines below. These categories match those outlined in the OPC's strategic plan.

1.) Sustainable Fisheries

- Grants for fishery management programs and projects to help foster ecologically and economically sustainable fisheries
- Identification of statutory and regulatory impediments to the improvement of fisheries management (e.g., drivers of reform, fee structures, area management, comanagement, cooperative research, etc)

2.) Marine Life Protection Act Implementation

- Grants to assist in adaptive management and the implementation of marine protected areas including monitoring and other activities that benefit the successful implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act
- Continued coordination of MPA monitoring activities.
- Integration of MPA monitoring with fisheries monitoring, stock assessment, and harvest control rules

3.) Physical Processes and Habitat Structure

- Acquisition and easement funding, including project implementation for habitat restoration projects
- Coordination of policies and regulations to ensure that these investments are facilitated and protected

4.) Ocean & Coastal Water Quality

- Identify how the OPC can coordinate and incentivize the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars from other state stormwater programs to maximize the implementation of new pollution controls, new technology, once-through cooling, and water quality testing. Report on possible methods for the OPC to leverage greater action out of these programs and future ones and develop grant program for implementation.

5.) General Ocean Protection, Coordination and Governance

- Identify gaps in coordination and enforcement among agencies. Develop grants to agencies to better coordinate their efforts and enforce existing laws and OPC resolutions.

6.) Emerging Issues and Innovative Projects

- Contribution for projects to promote WCGA
- Development of strategies to move to area based management of the Oceans
- Strategic Opportunity grants

7.) Research and Monitoring

- Grants for mapping and monitoring programs to improve our knowledge of the ocean and its habitat.
- Grants for research projects identified as high priorities by the OPC and its SAT.
- These funds should be also address research issues associated with the above six priorities