



TO: California Ocean and Coastal Community

FROM: Lester Snow, Secretary for Natural Resources

DATE: June 28, 2010

SUBJECT: June 2010 OPC Meeting Review

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The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) held its latest public meeting June 24-25, 2010 in Santa Barbara. Both the meeting summary, which provides an overview of important actions taken, and the archived webcast can be found online at: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/opc-meetings/>.

The June OPC meeting began with several updates on the status of OPC projects including the OPC evaluation with a preview of the evaluation from the Honorable Fred Keeley, a member of the project's expert advisory panel. The council also heard updates about the Department of Fish and Game /OPC joint workplan and the West Coast Governors Agreement on Ocean Health. In addition, the council heard a special update on the status of the gulf oil spill from Steve Edinger, California Office of Oil Spill Prevention Response (OSPR) Administrator.

#### **Santa Maria River in-stream flow project**

The council unanimously approved the consent item to redirect \$600,000 in proposition 84 funds from the United States Geological Survey to begin an environmental services contract for the completion of the Santa Maria River in-stream flow project. This analysis will investigate the water flow required for adult steelhead passage from the ocean into upstream spawning and rearing habitats, a critical component of the steelhead life history, and to upstream habitat near and in the Los Padres National Forest. It is anticipated that the contractor will use rainfall runoff simulations, groundwater evaluations, and review of annual hydrographs in the analyses. Additional analyses will include: estuarine habitat, mapping to track potential changes in water volume, and water quality monitoring to assess seasonal or annual changes in major water quality parameters.

#### **Light Imaging Detection and Ranging (LiDAR)**

The council authorized \$2.75 million to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the aerial collection and processing of LiDAR elevation data and imagery along the coast of California. This project will produce a single, high resolution topographical map of California's coastal areas. Elevation data are essential for more accurate predictions of the effect of sea level rise on our coast, and this statewide dataset would serve as a permanent record of California's current coastal elevations. Detailed elevation data along the California coast using LiDAR will allow resource managers and coastal community planners to assess and plan for impacts from sea level rise, as well as sudden inundation, such as tsunamis or storm surges. It will also contribute

to wetland restoration planning, floodplain management, storm water management, coastal development, and rapid post-event (e.g., large storms) responses.

### **California Sea Grant Research**

The council approved \$792,000 to California Sea Grant, and \$120,000 to USC Sea Grant from Proposition 84 funds. The OPC has worked with both Sea Grant programs since 2005 to promote research projects that benefit state management needs and help inform policy development at the state level. These funds will be used to fund research projects that inform and improve management decisions affecting California's ocean and coastal environment. The two projects to be funded this year include:

- UC Sea Grant: *Forecasts and Projections of Environmental and Anthropogenic Impacts on Harmful Algal Blooms in Coastal Ecosystems*, Principal Investigator, Raphael Kudela, University of California, Santa Cruz, et al.
- USC Sea Grant: *Maternal Offloading of Accumulated Organochlorine Contaminants in the Round Stingray*, Principal Investigator, Christopher Lowe, California State University, Long Beach, et al.

### ***Toxoplasma gondii***

The council unanimously approved \$380,706 from Proposition 84 funds to the Regents of California, U.C. Davis School of Veterinary Medicine to research, develop and validate protocols to detect the fecal parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* in water samples. Development of a practical water testing method to detect the parasite will assist in the recovery of the threatened sea otter, as well as improve water quality monitoring and public health for humans.

### **OPC Meeting Day Two**

#### **Spotlight on Science**

Dr. Gretchen E. Hofmann, Professor at the University of Santa Barbara gave a presentation entitled "*The Other CO<sub>2</sub> Problem: What are the Consequences of Ocean Acidification on the California Coast?*" Dr. Hofmann's presentation addressed future consequences of elevated carbon dioxide levels in the oceans to important fisheries along the California coast, such as urchins and oysters.

#### **Marine Life Management Act Lessons Learned Study**

OPC Secretary Sam Schuchat gave a brief update on the MLMA lessons learned report. The report notes that while important elements of the MLMA have been successfully implemented "a broad claim of achieving sustainability for the state's fisheries is not supported by available information. Perhaps more importantly, there is only limited and unsystematic evidence of progress toward adaptive decision making and ecosystem-based management of living marine resources as envisioned by the MLMA." The study offers a range of recommendations to improve future MLMA implementation, including six major recommendations:

- 1) Develop a basic, practical management plan for living marine resources, considering the MLMA as one tool among those available.
- 2) Adapt current institutions and policies for greater success within available resources.

- 3) Ensure adequate institutional and policy authority and capacity to successfully achieve the goal of sustainable use of living marine resources.
- 4) Improve management of living marine resources by incremental steps feasible with limited resources.
- 5) Systematically increase scientific knowledge available to inform management of living marine resources.
- 6) Systematically increase the understanding of available institutions, policies and tools to inform management of living marine resources.

OPC, DFG and Fish and Game Commission staff will evaluate the recommendations for potential future actions to translate the lessons into improved management.

### **Oil Platform Decommissioning Study**

The OPC convened two panels: one of experts to provide information regarding a high profile issue in California – “Evaluating Alternatives for Decommissioning California’s Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms: A Technical Analysis to Inform State Policy”, the second to address continuing concerns about decommissioning California’s Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms. The first panel included the contractor for the study, Dr. Brock Bernstein, an independent consultant; Andy Bressler, formerly of Texaco’s California Business Unit; and Dr. Dan Pondella, from Occidental College.

The second panel was convened to address environmental concerns, highlight questions about the study's conclusions and evaluate how it can be used by policymakers. These panelists included; Linda Krop, Environmental Defense Center, Garry Brown, Orange County Coastkeepers and Doug Anthony, Energy Division of Santa Barbara County.

The OPC staff also asked Alison Dettmer of the California Coastal Commission and Cy Oggins, State Lands Commission to participate on the panel to answer any regulatory or specific questions about decommissioning Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms along the California coast.

In response to comments received at the meeting, the OPC will continue to receive written public comment on the study for 30 days. Please send comments to the Council staff by the close of business Monday, July 26, 2010. Instructions on how to submit comments about the study are available at <http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/07/oil-platform-decommissioning-public-comment>. More information about the study is available on the California Ocean Science Trust website: [http://www.calost.org/Oil\\_gas.html](http://www.calost.org/Oil_gas.html). The study and all of the public comment received will be available on the Council's website soon after the close of the comment period.

Thank you for your interest in helping to improve the protection of California’s ocean and coastal resources. I look forward to seeing you at the next OPC meeting and CWO conference scheduled for September 7-8, 2010 in San Francisco.