



California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) Executive Director's Report November 2010

The Executive Director's Report provides an update on outcomes and accomplishments related to OPC activities and projects since the previous OPC meeting. This report covers the period from September 7 to November 29, 2010 and is divided into three sections: Policy Coordination, Science Integration, and Designing and Implementing Innovative Projects.

Policy Coordination for Coastal and Ocean Management

Implementation of ocean and coastal management in California involves many different government agencies and requires a multi-agency approach to address complex issues such as climate change, coastal water quality, and aquatic invasive species. The OPC coordinates policy development and management actions across those agencies that have relevant coastal and ocean jurisdictional management. The goal is to improve the state's development and implementation of successful management solutions.

OPC Steering Committee and OPC Strategic Plan Development:

The charge of the OPC Steering Committee (Committee) is to identify and implement collaborative approaches to California's most pressing ocean challenges in areas that will benefit from a coordinated multi-agency approach. Secretary Snow convened the Committee on July 30, 2010 (see Table 1 below for membership). The Committee works with and advises the OPC on issues such as climate change adaptation, marine spatial planning, implementing marine protected areas, and improving coastal water quality. Specifically, the Committee informs OPC priorities and actions through:

1. Joint fact-finding and identifying cross cutting agency management needs and challenges;
2. Developing improved solutions to complex management issues; and,
3. Advancing policy recommendations and collaborative approaches to implementing these solutions.

Table 1. OPC Steering Committee Members

Brian Baird—Assistant Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Policy, Natural Resources Agency
Lucia Becerra—Acting Director, Department of Boating and Waterways
Derek Chernow —Acting Director, Department of Conservation
Ruth Coleman—Director, California State Parks
Mark Cowin—Director, Department of Water Resources
Peter Douglas—Executive Director, Coastal Commission

John Fisher—Acting Executive Director, Fish and Game Commission
Melissa Jones—Executive Director, California Energy Commission
Amber Mace (Chair)—Executive Director, Ocean Protection Council
John McCamman —Director, Department of Fish and Game
Maziar Movassaghi—Director, Department of Toxic Substance Control
Margo Reid Brown—Director, Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)
Sam Schuchat—Executive Officer, State Coastal Conservancy
Fran Spivy-Weber —Vice Chair, State Water Resources Control Board
Curtis Fossum—Executive Officer, State Lands Commission
Will Travis—Executive Director, SF Bay Conservation and Development Commission

Meeting Outcomes:

Key outcomes of the July 30 Committee meeting include:

- **Subcommittees:** Created subcommittees to address specific issue areas that may be included in the OPC’s next 5-year strategic plan.
- **Committee Purpose:** Reviewed and revised the Committee purpose.
- **OPC Communications:** Agreed that the OPC staff will send updates to the Committee on OPC activities and upcoming meeting themes prior to quarterly meetings.
- **Management Research and Information Prioritization Process (MRIPP):** The Ocean Science Trust (OST) outlined the process to determine priority science information needs that will benefit multiple agencies. As the next step, the OST will follow up with each member agency to learn more about priorities and information needs.
- **Meetings:** Agreed that the OPC will convene the Committee as a whole only as needed. The Committee will conduct the majority of its work via issue-specific subcommittees.

Since the last meeting, the OPC has been working with the Steering Committee to develop five subcommittees to address the five focal areas for the next OPC strategic plan. The approach to the strategic plan includes:

1. Identifying the OPC’s and its partner’s goals for engaging in each of five focal areas
2. Evaluating the issues within each focal area and the potential actions the OPC can implement to achieve the identified goals
3. Developing action plans to direct the OPC’s efforts and track progress relative to goals

To date, two of these subcommittees (coastal and marine spatial planning and climate change adaptation) have met to articulate the State of California’s goal in engaging in each of these areas, and the purpose that the OPC and its partners will seek to achieve through collaborative action.

Marine Debris Steering Committee:

The Marine Debris Steering Committee (Committee) was established to enhance the state’s approach to reducing marine debris by supporting collaboration among state agencies and the implementation of

marine debris reduction programs. Meetings have been postponed until 2011, however, due to insufficient staff capacity and budget. In the interim, OPC staff will contact Committee members over the next few months to clarify the group's goals and seek input on how the group might refine these goals as part of the OPC's strategic planning process.

Marine Renewable Energy Working Group:

The OPC established the Marine Renewable Energy Working Group (MRE Working Group; see Table 2 for membership) in March 2010 to provide a venue for state agencies to discuss offshore renewable energy developments, collaborate on how to address issues with permitting, planning, and managing these types of projects, and implement the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) /California Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and any other future agreements between state and federal agencies.

Table 2. Marine Renewable Energy Working Group Members

Laura Engeman (Co-chair) – Ocean Protection Council
Eugenia Laychak (Co-chair) – California Energy Commission
Cy Oggins, Susan Young, Madhu Ahuja, Ninette Lee, Jennifer DeLeon –State Lands Commission
Tom Luster, Alison Dettmer – Coastal Commission
Vicki Frey, Steve Ingram, John Dye –Department of Fish and Game
Anne Gillette – California Public Utilities Commission
TBD –State Waters Resources Control Board

The MRE Working Group met on November 17, 2010 to discuss marine renewable energy research priorities, recent updates on wave and tidal projects, and to determine approaches for informing the West Coast Renewable Energy Guidebook (see WCGA activities for more information).

West Coast Governor's Agreement (WCGA) – Action Coordination Team (ACT)

The West Coast Governors Agreement on Ocean Health was signed September 18, 2006, and a subsequent Action Plan was released in mid 2008 that included 26 actions, agreed to by all three governors working in collaboration with federal counterparts in NOAA, DOI, and the USEPA. The WCGA Executive Committee established workgroups, called Action Coordination Teams (ACTs), to coordinate coast-wide implementation of the Action Plan. Each team includes subject level experts from each of the three states and is developing an issue-specific work plan. Ten ACTs are presently active, and several others are under development. Updates from some of the ACTs follow.

Seafloor Mapping: Although the three states' mapping programs are in varying stages of development, all lack good data on very nearshore habitats (10m water depth to shore). Our coasts are turbid, rocky, kelp-filled, and present harsh field conditions, and no single technology has emerged that is appropriate for the entire region. To fill this gap, the Seafloor Mapping ACT was awarded a WCGA grant to evaluate the cost effectiveness of various nearshore data techniques and to create sample onshore-offshore data products for WA, OR, and CA.

Renewable Energy: Several areas of the West Coast hold the potential for wave and tidal energy development. All three states need to understand how to plan for and manage these emerging

industrial uses. The Renewable Energy ACT is developing a "Guidebook for Marine Renewable Energy Planning" that will identify what types of baseline data are needed for planning, determine regional and state data gaps, and establish initial, region-wide, planning principles. The WCGA awarded \$100,000 to the ACT to engage the assistance of a contractor, Pacific Energy Ventures, in initiating development of the guidebook.

Sediment: The Sediment ACT has developed a final report related to the development of "regional sediment management plans that increase beneficial use of sediment in an environmentally responsible manner to protect and maintain critical community economic and environmental infrastructure." (See <http://westcoastoceans.gov/teams/> for the final report).

Climate: The Climate ACT meets monthly and will soon be initiating work on climate-change related shoreline classification and ecosystem impacts. WCGA funding to the OPC and the State Coastal Conservancy, will support an intern performing this work and other sea-level rise adaptation tasks in coordination with the Ocean Science Trust.

Geospatial Data and Information Sharing:

The OPC helped to establish the California Coastal and Marine Geospatial Working Group (CCMG-WG) in February 2010, partially in response to a 2009 OPC resolution. The group's purpose is to facilitate the exchange and analysis of statewide geographic information in order to help protect coastal and marine resources, support environmental assessment efforts, and improve comprehensive coastal and marine planning. In October 2010 the working group was formally recognized by the California Geographic Information System (GIS) Council. Participants in the CCMG-WG are the technical users of geospatial data,¹ and staff from the OPC and NOAA Coastal Services Center chair the group.

The CCMG-WG adopted a resolution in August 2010 urging the state to fund a scoping study that would inform the development of an online data-sharing network and access tool to enable the efficient management, sharing, and downloading of coastal and marine geospatial information for the benefit of natural resource management agency staff, decision-makers, and the greater public. OPC staff expects to release a Request for Qualifications to select a contractor to conduct the scoping study in late November or early December 2010.

Climate Change:

The Coastal and Ocean Climate Action Team Working Group (CO-CAT Working Group; membership shown in Table 3) is composed of senior level staff from California state agencies with ocean and coastal resource management responsibilities. The CO-CAT Working Group's task is to ensure the state's ability to adapt to climate change impacts on ocean and coastal resources while supporting implementation of global warming emission reduction programs.

¹ To date: California Coastal Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, California Environmental Resources Evaluation System, California Ocean Protection Council, California State Lands Commission, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, State Coastal Conservancy, NOAA Coastal Services Center, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries, and Stanford University's Center for Ocean Solutions (COS).

Governor's Executive Order S-13-08 directed state agencies to consider a range of SLR scenarios for the years 2050 and 2100 in order to assess project vulnerability and reduce expected risks and to increase resiliency to sea-level rise. Executive Order S-13-08 also called for the OPC to work with other state agencies to support an expert panel through the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) that would develop recommendations for what ranges of SLR to use for vulnerability assessments. The NAS final report is likely to be released in 2012. In the meantime, the state still needs to make decisions that would benefit from SLR guidance. To fill this need, OPC staff convened a Sea-Level Rise Task Force to coordinate state agencies in developing a Sea-Level Rise Interim Guidance Document ("guidance document"). This document will assist state agencies in developing approaches to incorporate SLR into planning decisions prior to the release of the NAS report.

To ensure the interim guidance was based upon the best available science, the SLR Task Force call on the OPC's Science Advisory Team for advice. Working collaboratively from July through October 2010, the SLR Task force used the Science Advisory Team and technical input from experts in state agencies to reach agreement on sea-level rise recommendations. These recommendations form the basis for the draft resolution on sea-level rise that will be discussed at the November 2010 OPC meeting.

Table 3. Coastal and Ocean Climate Action Team Working Group Members

Gregg Albright, —Deputy Secretary, Environmental Policy and Integration , Business, Transportation and Housing Agency
John Andrew—Executive Director, Climate Change Department of Water Resources
Ruth Coleman—Director, California State Parks
Susan Hansch—Chief Deputy Director, California Coastal Commission
Garth Hopkins—Chief, Office of Regional and Interagency Planning Department of Transportation
Amber Mace (Chair)—Executive Director, California Ocean Protection Council
Sonke Mastrup—Deputy Director, Department of Fish and Game
Maziar Movassaghi—Director, Department of Toxic Substance Control
Sam Schuchat—Executive Officer, State Coastal Conservancy
Frances Spivy-Weber—Vice-Chair, State Water Resources Control Board
Paul Thayer—Executive Officer, State Lands Commission
Will Travis—Executive Director , San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

Science Informing Policy:

The OPC is committed to improving decision-making by integrating science. OPC staff participate in many committees and collaborative activities that relate to sharing and coordinating data and information for management. The California Ocean Science Trust (OST) is the OPC's key partner on science-related issues. This organization facilitates science-based decision-making by connecting science to policy and management, and it operates as an independent objective organization. Specifically, OST serves as an objective translator, identifying the best science available to inform ocean policy decisions; it leverages state support with extramural funding; and it provides an institutional home to incubate programs that respond to state science, data, and information needs. Several examples of the projects through which the OPC is working with OST to help institutionalize science-based decision-making follow.

Technical Advice and Peer-Reviewed Studies

Evaluating Alternatives for Decommissioning California's Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms – A Technical Analysis to Inform State Policy: This OST-coordinated study synthesized current biological, economic, and legal data surrounding the issue of West Coast platform decommissioning, and identified gaps where additional data are needed. The report was released and made available for public comment in June 2010. Since then, it was used to inform AB 2503, state legislation sponsored by Speaker John A. Pérez, on platform decommissioning and converting decommissioned platforms to artificial reefs. AB 2503 was passed by the legislature, and signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger in late September.

Management Research and Information Prioritization Process (MRIPP): As part of the OPC strategic planning process, the OST is working with the OPC to systematically assess and prioritize science needs of state agencies with ocean and coastal jurisdictions. OPC staff, the OPC Science Advisory Team, and the OPC steering committee are participating in this effort.

Aquatic Invasive Species Vector Risk Assessments Project: The OST is continuing its coordination of the Aquatic Invasive Species Vector Risk Assessments Project, a scientific assessment of the relative risks of commercial fishing, recreational boating, aquaculture, live bait, live imported seafood, and aquariums and aquascaping. This project will help determine the appropriate policy actions that will support early detection and rapid response, as well as prevent introduction of invasives. The OST has assembled three project teams, each of which will take on two vectors.

Sources and Pathways for Plastic Debris and Subsequent Toxic Releases into the Pacific Ocean, Final Report: Plastic debris continues to accumulate in the Pacific Ocean. To take effective action, the state urgently requires improved understanding of the potential impacts of toxic releases on marine species from plastics as they degrade in seawater. The OPC coordinated with the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to initiate an assessment of these issues and subsequently called on the OST to ensure the scientific credibility, authoritativeness, and usefulness of the final report resulting from this assessment. The OST is presently refining the report by engaging expert scientists through contracts and a peer review process. Anticipated finalization of the report is March 31, 2011.

Coordination of the OPC Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT)

The OPC Science Advisory Team (OPC-SAT) provides technical advice on OPC reports, evaluates the technical merits of scientific projects proposed to the OPC, and recommends outside experts to serve as peer reviewers for OPC proposals and projects. The OST coordinates the OPC-SAT and biannual meetings between the OPC-SAT and the OPC management team. These meetings provide an important opportunity for collaborative dialogue about how to improve the scientific quality of OPC projects and products. The OST has scheduled the next Joint OPC-SAT/OPC management team meeting on January 31, 2011 in Oakland, CA.

Coordination of Peer Reviews: To strengthen the scientific integrity of OPC projects and proposals, the OST draws upon the expertise of the OPC-SAT to coordinate scientific peer reviews of *all* projects or proposals with a technical and/or scientific component. A second round of review may be required for proposals that are sent back to the principle investigators for revision to ensure all comments are appropriately addressed prior to any funding decisions. For projects that do not warrant formal peer review, the OST works with the OPC-SAT to provide informal scientific comment

Ongoing peer reviews include projects such as: developing a Fishery Management Plan for CA spiny lobster; a 5-year collaborative research study on the impacts of bottom trawling gear on soft-bottom seafloor habitats on the central coast; an examination of new and existing fishery catch data to better understand the status of thresher and mako sharks in California; and The Aquaculture Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) prepared by the California Department of Fish and Game.

Guidance to the Coast and Ocean Climate Action Team (CO-CAT): As mentioned above, the OST, in response to request by the OPC, solicited advice from OPC-SAT member to inform work of the CO-CAT Sea-Level Rise Task Force. This advice was critical in development of the forthcoming Sea-Level Rise Interim Guidance Document for state agencies.

Seafloor and Shoreline Mapping:

Sustainable management of California's highly productive coastal and marine resources requires accurate mapping of the coast and seafloor. The OPC is developing these maps in partnership with state and federal agencies and academic institutions.

- Seafloor data collection in state waters (10m water depth to 3 nm) is nearly complete, with only a small area along the central coast remaining unmapped (due to be collected in early 2011). Focus for 2011 will be data collection in San Francisco Bay. Considerable progress was made in 2010 on ground-truthing the seafloor data, which is now 60% complete.
- Building off data collected through CSMP in state waters, the extension of the San Andreas Fault (past 3 miles) was mapped by an interagency team consisting of the USGS, Oregon State University and NOAA this fall.
- Experiments with different technologies in the nearshore continue in coordination with OR and WA. CSU Monterey Bay is leading an effort in CA to attach a sonar system onto a jet ski to collect data in the nearshore of selected marine protected areas.

- Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funding will start a more active product development phase in early 2011.
- Logical extension of mapping is a pilot project focusing on ecological habitat mapping, drawing in the biologists and oceanographers.
- High resolution coastal LiDAR and aerial imagery is currently being collected throughout California and will be completed by the end of the year, in collaboration with ACOE, NOAA and others. Data will be available to the public in late 2011.
- A team of state and federal agencies are discussing product development from these data sets (with sea level rise analysis being a priority) and will hold a workshop in early 2011.
- Creative partnerships with other agencies collecting data will allow for an interesting time series of data to be compiled in Southern California looking at beaches before and after this El Niño/La Niña cycle.

Ocean Observing:

The Coastal Ocean Currents Monitoring Program (COCMP) is a collaborative statewide program to monitor and map the surface currents off the coast of California. This unprecedented program is a partnership of academic and government institutions working with industry and non-governmental organizations to design a real time monitoring system along the state's 1,100 miles of coastline.

The implementation phase of COCMP is ending in 2010, with the establishment of a network of more than 50 shore-based HF Radar (high frequency radar) operating along the coast. Uses of COCMP data over the past five years have included oil spill response, wastewater discharge monitoring, beach water quality monitoring, plume tracking at urban rivers during storm events, search and rescue efforts, climate change analysis, harmful algal bloom (HAB) tracking and forecasting, and coastal inundation modeling. OPC partners at the Regional Ocean Observing Associations (RAs) through their work on the COCMP have become national leaders on surface current mapping and derived applications.

The RAs and OPC staff are now working together to develop operational funding for COCMP at the state and federal level. A consultant report evaluating the effective and efficient use of ocean observing data for ocean management (the Synthesis of Coastal Ocean Observing Products) will be released in spring of 2011.

Designing and Implementing Innovative Solutions

The OPC is a national and international leader in the design and implementation of innovative solutions for ocean and coastal management issues. Examples that follow highlight of a few key projects OPC is working on with its partners.

OPC Five-Year Program Review:

The Final OPC Program Evaluation report was released November 15, 2010 and is now available on the OPC website. This report recognized the significant achievements of the OPC over the last five years and has identified opportunities for the OPC to become even more effective in the future. Staff has proposed that the OPC make improvements based on the report recommendations through its strategic plan process and an ongoing effort to improve institutional operations. See the November memorandum for more information.

Sustainable Fisheries:

The OPC has been supporting and assisting with the implementation of three innovative sustainable fisheries projects.

California Sustainable Seafood Initiative (CSSI): Assembly Bill 1217 (Monning, 2009) requires the OPC to develop and implement a voluntary seafood promotion program for California fisheries. The intent of AB 1217 is to encourage California fisheries to seek certification in accord with internationally accepted standards for sustainability and to promote the purchase and consumption of certified sustainable California seafood. The CSSI panel has met three times this year to discuss the important elements of creating a sustainable seafood program for California fisheries.

Collaborative Fisheries Research (CFR) Organization: The OPC assisted the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) in establishing an organization to support collaborative research throughout the state. The CFR organization will develop, solicit, and fund projects with the goal of creating partnerships between fishermen and scientists to develop fisheries data necessary to the Department of Fish and Game, the Fish and Game Commission, and the OPC. In September 2010, the CFR hired an Executive Officer, Dr. Pete Nelson, who has relocated to Santa Cruz from Humboldt County.

Incubation of the MPA Monitoring Enterprise

Successful implementation of California's ground-breaking Marine Life Protection Act, over the long term will require gathering and using monitoring data to adaptively manage the statewide network of marine protected areas (MPAs). With support from the OPC and private partners, the OST is incubating the MPA Monitoring Enterprise, created in 2007 to lead development of cost-effective monitoring for this purpose.

The MPA Monitoring Enterprise has developed a systematic process of building regional monitoring plans through the engagement of scientists and stakeholders. The Fish and Game Commission is expected to adopt marine protected areas for the MLPA South Coast Region (Point Conception to the

California/Mexico border) by the end of 2010. Accordingly, the MPA Monitoring Enterprise, in partnership with the Department of Fish and Game, initiated a consultative process for monitoring planning, including three public workshops in July that solicited stakeholder views on monitoring priorities. More than 120 stakeholders attended the workshops that were held in Santa Barbara, Santa Monica, and Carlsbad.

Completion of the South Coast Region Monitoring Plan will involve consultation with scientists and technical experts to develop draft monitoring approaches and metrics; Presentation and discussion of draft monitoring approaches and metrics at a second round of public workshops, likely in October or November; Release of a draft monitoring plan for public comment in 2011; and Submission of the final monitoring plan to the Fish and Game Commission.