



MEMORANDUM

TO: Ocean Protection Council

FROM: Amber Mace, Executive Director
Laura Engeman, Project Manager

DATE: November 29, 2010

RE: Ocean Protection Council Program Evaluation Final Report

ATTACHMENT: [OPC Program Evaluation Final Report Executive Summary](#)

REQUESTED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following resolution based on the recommendations in the OPC 2010 Program Evaluation Report:

“The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) recognizes that the Five-Year Program Evaluation Report (Evaluation Report) provided valuable suggestions for improving the ability of the OPC to meet its mandate as defined by the California Ocean Protection Act. The OPC hereby resolves to make improvements to its organizational processes and structure based on the recommendations from the Evaluation Report to the extent feasible as part of a comprehensive effort to refine and improve OPC’s processes, and more specifically, as part of the OPC’s current strategic plan process.”

BACKGROUND:

In its first five years, the OPC made significant contributions to improved ocean and coastal management. These efforts were guided by its authorizing legislation, the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA) and OPC’s first strategic plan (2006). As the organization prepares to develop its next five-year strategic plan, the OPC took the opportunity to undergo a Five-Year Program Evaluation of its performance and impact, anticipating the results of the review would inform future strategies, operations, and approaches to ensure the OPC undertakes its mission in the most effective manner possible.

The NewPoint Group was selected under a Request for Proposals to conduct the evaluation and to produce a final evaluation report by November 2010. The NewPoint Group independently assessed the OPC’s accomplishments and interviewed a variety of representatives from OPC’s partner state and federal agencies, key stakeholders, and funding recipients. An OPC Expert Advisory Panel (Panel) appointed by the OPC in March 2010 (see the March 2010 staff recommendation), reviewed draft materials from the NewPoint Group and provided input and feedback on: (1) the evaluation approach (2) the evaluation report objectives, framework and

context, and (3) the draft evaluation findings and recommendations. The draft Evaluation Report was made available for public comment throughout September 2010. Several comments provided opinions on ocean activities, such as Marine Protected Areas, and opportunities for collaboration. Other letters addressed more substantive issues related to the OPC's policy and leadership roles and institutional structure, and to concerns about the influence of private funding on the agency. These comments were addressed by the NewPoint group and the letters and the NewPoint responses can be found in the final report Addendum.

The Final Evaluation Report is now complete and available on the OPC website (<http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/06/opc-2010-program-evaluation/>). The report provides background on the goals for OPC as established under COPA, summarizes OPC's accomplishments over its first five years including several case studies of OPC projects, and provides recommendations where OPC can refine its focus and improve its effectiveness.

EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Evaluation Report identified 18 recommendations that can be incorporated into future OPC activities and into OPC's approach to solving ocean and coastal resource management problems. OPC staff will undertake improvements based on these recommendations to the extent feasible as part of a comprehensive effort to refine and improve OPC's processes. This will be accomplished through the development of the strategic plan and ongoing institutional efforts.

Strategic Plan

At its September 2010 meeting, the OPC approved a conceptual work plan for a process to update the strategic plan by the end of 2011. This process will involve identifying OPC strategic actions, including rationale and need for OPC engagement, as well as development of an action plan with anticipated outcomes and measureable goals. The following describes how OPC staff will implement changes based on the recommendations from the Evaluation Report into the strategic plan process:

- **Develop a clear vision for the future of California's ocean and coastal resources and the OPC's particular role in achieving this vision.** The evaluation suggests that OPC examine its role as an ocean leader, project funder, and problem-solver and consider these strengths in defining OPC's role and vision for improving the state's ocean and coastal resources over the next five years. In doing so, the OPC will need to take a more deliberative and expanded approach to facilitating policy change through collaborative and coordinated action with other state agencies. To support this change, the strategic plan work plan adopted by the OPC includes the following guiding principle:

“With its partners, develop a clear, strategic vision for California's ocean and coastal resource management, and a focused plan for moving forward that builds on the OPC's core strengths:

- **Council membership:** Coordinated, high-level representation of all California ocean and coastal resource agencies, the state legislature, and the public.
- **Communication and Outreach:** Raise awareness and provide visibility for ocean issues and their value to California.

- Coordination: Facilitate collaborative action among public agencies and key stakeholders.
- Funding: Fund strategic projects and research that advance identified goals for ocean and coastal ecosystems that would not have been supported otherwise, and effectively leverage and distribute funding.
- Decision-Making Informed by Science: Deliver new, highly-relevant information into the policy area through commissioned, targeted, authoritative studies.”
- **Develop criteria to guide selection of OPC focal areas for the strategic plan.** OPC adopted the following criteria to guide selection of the strategic plan at the September 7, 2010 meeting:
 - Significance - The issue area/ problem has a significant effect on the condition and sustainability of coastal and ocean ecosystems and coastal communities.
 - Consistency - Required actions fulfill OPC goals and purpose and match OPC core strengths and statutory authorities.
 - Timeliness - The issue area/problem has developed to a point where the OPC can leverage its core strengths to advance the issue or resolve the problem.
 - Urgency - Action in the near-term is critical for effective engagement.
 - Probable impacts - The OPC can make a critical, tangible, and lasting difference. The benefit to cost ratio is high.
 - Need - The OPC’s core strengths are required for effective state action.
 - Sound science - The OPC’s scientific undertakings will be based on sound science, vetted by independent reviewers.
- **Select approximately five key strategic plan areas for the OPC to focus on over the next five years.** Staff has developed a draft list of five key strategic plan areas. These areas will be used as a starting point, and will be more fully developed and refined through the strategic plan process, including goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for OPC within these areas. The final focal areas will be brought back to the OPC as part of the strategic plan. At this time, the draft list includes:
 1. Climate change adaptation to address sea level rise and other climate impacts to ocean and coastal ecosystems,
 2. Coastal and marine spatial planning to inform decisions about ocean uses off the California coast,
 3. Sustainable fisheries management to ensure healthy and thriving marine ecosystems and fishing communities,
 4. Land-based activities management to reduce impacts to ocean and coastal resources, and
 5. Preparing for emerging industrial uses of the ocean.

- **Identify specific strategic plan performance metrics to monitor the OPC's accomplishments relative to the goals identified in the strategic plan.** The OPC strategic plan work plan outlined a process for selecting each issue area which includes the development of an action plan and anticipated outcomes and measureable goals. Staff will develop metrics as part of this process to monitor and determine OPC progress.

Institutional Improvements

The remaining Evaluation Report recommendations suggest institutional changes to improve OPC effectiveness. Staff will refine and improve the OPC's institutional structures and processes in ways that support these recommendations to the extent feasible, including the following:

Organizational Leadership and Accountability

- **Institutionalize a culture of leadership, follow-through, and accountability.** Staff will work to institute these principles at the staff level, through the Council and its actions, and with respect to its relationships with other agencies and the public.
- **Prepare a work plan that commits the OPC to working on specific policy issues.** Staff will develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and collaborative approach for each of the high-level OPC focal areas identified in the strategic plan that will take the form of a work plan. The work plan will be updated on a schedule considered appropriate for the actions identified within it.
- **Increase involvement and participation of the Council in OPC activities.** Staff will be working with the Council to develop processes for increasing Council participation such as Steering Committee workgroups, increased involvement in OPC workshops, and improved Council-staff communication approaches.
- **Revise staffing functions to more closely support the OPC's mission under COPA.** Management will consider strategies for enhancing staff expertise at OPC, including adding new capacity in areas of previously limited experience such as policy and institutional analysis.
- **Implement a transparent award process for OPC funded projects and improve communication of project outcomes.** Staff recently provided a full list of all OPC funded projects on the website and will be continuing to refine funding award processes and improve communication with the Council and the public on the outcomes of OPC funded projects.

Coordination

- **Reestablish the OPC Steering Committee.** The Committee has been reestablished and staff is now working to develop Committee working groups to collaboratively engage Committee members in developing the OPC strategic plan and other OPC activities.
- **Build effective collaborative relationships with other state agencies and establish an internal staff culture that encourages effective coordination and collaboration.** Staff will be using the Steering Committee and actions identified in the strategic plan process to further identify approaches and methods for enhancing collaboration and coordination with other state agencies.

Financing

- **Develop and implement a comprehensive OPC financing strategy.** Staff will be developing a strategy for directing and obtaining funds to support actions identified through its strategic plan process.
- **Increase OPC efforts to obtain private and federal sector funding for ocean protection.** Staff will be developing fund development strategies through the strategic plan process and continuing to identify appropriate funding sources for leveraging OPC actions.

Science Integration

- **Direct resources to develop and analyze credible scientific information and data to inform state actions on controversial policy issues.** Staff will be developing actions and funding strategies through the strategic plan process.
- **Improve the effectiveness of the Science Advisory Team (SAT) in ensuring OPC decisions are informed by the best available science by targeted and enhanced involvement of the SAT in OPC activities.** Staff are already working to improve the effectiveness of the SAT through the following steps: (1.) OPC Managers are invited to participate in semi-annual SAT meetings to enhance communication, (2.) OPC Management has committed to seek SAT involvement on all technical products/funding requests that would benefit from peer review or scientific opinion, (3.) OPC Management and the SAT receive monthly updates from science advisor to enhance communication, (4.) the SAT is invited to participate in the five-year strategic planning framework. Conversely, the SAT has re-committed to supporting the OPC with technical products, expert advice, providing appropriate peer reviewers, and working to inform the five-year strategic plan as well as yearly priority issue areas for Sea Grant funding.

Communication and Outreach

- **Increase OPC outreach and communication through a sustained communication strategy.** Staff will develop a communication strategy that is consistent with outreach goals and with staffing capacity.
- **Increase outreach and opportunities for public input on OPC activities.** Staff is working on several efforts including an improved website with enhanced information content; providing updates on OPC activities through quarterly reports from the Executive Director, Secretary, and the Science Advisor at the OPC meetings; inviting public review and input where appropriate; and developing summaries of OPC accomplishments over the last five years that will be publicly available on the OPC website.

Through the OPC Steering Committee, OPC meetings, and direct engagement with the Council, it is expected that staff will provide periodic updates on how institutional processes are being improved and enhanced to meet these recommendations.