



CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources, Council Chair
Matt Rodriguez, Secretary for Environmental Protection
Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor, State Lands Commission Chair
Fran Pavley, State Senator
Toni Atkins, State Assemblymember
Geraldine Knatz, Public Member
Michael Brown, Public Member

Dear Ocean Community,

From rising sea levels, to increasing acidification, the ocean ecosystem is changing. We must be wise in how we adapt to these changes.

Change is happening in more than just our marine environment. We as an organization are moving into a transition phase. The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) is anticipating shifting staff from the Coastal Conservancy to the Natural Resources Agency. This long anticipated consolidation contained in the 2013-14 Governor's Budget, merges the OPC with agency staff in Sacramento to create a united team under the leadership of Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird and myself.

Parting from the Coastal Conservancy is bittersweet. The conservancy has done a phenomenal job in creating, staffing and providing vision to the OPC throughout the development California's ocean program. This transition also provides us a great opportunity to focus on policy analysis and coordination of state and federal efforts to manage our ocean resources.

The OPC is becoming an organization that will increasingly work to bring agencies and interests together to share information, and in the long view, recommend policy and legislation informed by science. I am excited about the opportunity, and look forward to a smooth transition.

In late February, we held a fantastic symposium highlighting the Central Coast Marine Protected Areas. While we be reviewing the highlights and next steps at the OPC meeting. I have to note for those who couldn't make it, that the vibe of the symposium was incredible, and the papers and presentations eye opening. We were reminded how lucky we are to have incredible leaders like Secretary Laird. The Symposium Planning Committee and Steering Committees did a phenomenal job in bringing our ocean community together. We heard from fishermen, elected officials, tribal representatives, NGOs, agency staff, and more. The theme was partnership, and it showed.

The OPC will continue to be a leader, facilitator, and funder as implementation of Marine Protected Areas moves forward. As a first step, we have engaged with our core partners, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Fish and Game Commission, to develop an internal work plan that lays out how we will organize the daunting workload, support each other, and bring in new partners. The second step will be for the council to facilitate among our partners, tribes, and the public the adoption of a network scale implementation framework. This framework document will show how the pieces will work together. For example, how local outreach efforts will dovetail with signage requirements of the Department of Fish and Wildlife, or how citizen monitoring will be incorporated into the Monitoring Enterprise's efforts. We will coordinate tribal, local and state interests to assist in the development of Regional Management Plans required by

the Fish and Game Commission's Master Plan. And lastly, we continue to pay for a significant portion of monitoring costs, leveraging our assets with public and private partners. This plan is ambitious, and will take several years, but it is one that is attainable, and we will continue to strive to make it a reality.

Climate change and sea level rise continue to be major issues for California's ocean ecosystem. The OPC leads the state's Coastal Climate Action Team, which coordinates state government on coastal climate change. In response to direction from the council, the Coastal Climate Action Team has updated the state's guidance on how to incorporate sea level rise projections into planning decisions. The updated guidance is based on information from the 2012 National Academy of Sciences report. The guidance will be presented to the OPC at the March 27 meeting.

At the last OPC meeting, the council directed that \$2.5 million be set aside to help local communities plan for rising sea levels and increasingly severe weather events. Staff members of the Coastal Conservancy, the Coastal Commission, and the OPC have been working to develop criteria on how to spend this money. They will be presenting their recommendations for a grant program to the council on March 27. These small grants can provide seed money for some communities, but more importantly, will help pilot innovative ideas that may be useful to other communities.

Also on March 27, we will have a presentation by the Ocean Science Trust and the Southern California Water Research Project on ocean acidification and the integrated West Coast response.

For the June 28 meeting, I will provide a detailed summary of our projects. If there are specific topics you would like to see covered, please contact me at cat.kuhlman@resources.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Cat Kuhlman
Deputy Secretary for Oceans and Coastal Matters
California Natural Resources Agency