



By Electronic Mail

June 10, 2013

Chair John Laird and Members of the
Ocean Protection Council
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, California 95814

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Re: Disbursement of Funds to the California Natural Resources Agency

Dear Chair Laird and Members of the Ocean Protection Council:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Ocean Conservancy and our over one million members and activists - more than 250,000 of whom reside in California – **we are writing to express our support for the disbursement of \$418,500 from the environmental license plate funds to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)** to facilitate a smooth transition for staff positions from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) to CNRA, provide adequate funding for the salary of the Ocean Protection Council's (OPC) Executive Director, support outreach and communication efforts of the Thank You Ocean campaign, and fund the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation to assist in the development of a statewide governance and implementation plan for California's network of marine protected areas.

OPC Administrative Actions

In March 2013, NRDC and Ocean Conservancy, along with 6 other environmental non-profit organizations, voiced support for OPC's reorganization through consolidation of staff positions and streamlining management and supervisory authority within the OPC rather than within the SCC. We believe this reorganization will energize the policy role of the OPC and strengthen ties between the OPC, the agencies it coordinates, and the Legislature - helping to improve the efficiency and long-term effectiveness of ocean management in California. Therefore, we support OPC disbursing funds to provide adequate workspace and equipment for OPC staff in Sacramento and to pay the remaining portion of the Executive Director's salary and expenses through June 30, 2013.

Communication and Outreach of Ocean Issues and MPA Implementation

Ongoing communication and outreach regarding ocean issues is critical to educating the public and generating a sense of pride for and ownership of our coastal resources. We recognize the valuable role of the Thank You Ocean campaign in addressing this need and support its funding as the communication

and outreach arm of the OPC.

Furthermore, we support funding the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation for outreach and community engagement activities that will inform the development of statewide and regional implementation plans for the State's marine protected area (MPA) network. The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) has been an ongoing priority for our organizations and for the State, and California's MPA network represents the culmination of over a decade of hard work by thousands of citizens, scientists, and policymakers. Though the coastal planning efforts have been completed, enduring success of these special places depends on continued monitoring, enforcement and community stewardship.

The OPC's 2013-2017 Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of these implementation efforts and states that the OPC should:

- *Work with partners to effectively advance MPA management, enforcement, monitoring, education, and outreach across a broad range of public and private entities that are engaged in marine resource protection and restoration activities;*
- *Coordinate MLPA implementation with other ocean management agencies to improve management effectiveness; and*
- *Support coordination of MLPA partners to facilitate communication, collaboration, and cost effective implementation of the MLPA.*

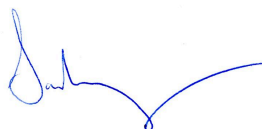
Development of regional and statewide MPA implementation plans will ensure continued public involvement in protected area management, generate stewardship, and help incorporate monitoring information into management decisions. The goal is to promote the collective, long-term investment in the ecological success of our MPAs, which will provide biological and economic benefits long into the future.

Thank you for opportunity to comment on this issue. We appreciate OPC's leadership in establishing a unified vision for ocean governance in California.

Very truly yours,



Karen Garrison
Co-Director, Oceans Program
NRDC



Samantha Murray
Director, Pacific Program
Ocean Conservancy