

CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

Staff Recommendation
October 17, 2016

Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Collaborative Network Small Grants Program

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$294,000.00 to Coastal Quest to a) plan and facilitate a Marine Protected Area (MPA) Collaborative Network Statewide Forum that would result in a charter for the MPA Collaborative Network, and b) to help create and administer a grants program that would provide one round of funding to each of the 14 entities that make up the MPA Collaborative Network. Awards will help support the priority tasks that are part of the MPA Management Program.

LOCATION: Statewide MPA Network

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): Marine Ecosystems

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A: Map of the MPA Collaborative Network

Exhibit B: The California Collaborative Approach: Marine Protected Areas Partnership Plan

Exhibit C: Images of past MPA Collaboratives volunteers and previously-funded projects

Exhibit D: Support Letters

FINDINGS AND RESOLUTION:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following findings:
“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibit(s), the Ocean Protection Council hereby finds that:

- 1) The proposed projects are consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the Ocean Protection Act.
- 2) The proposed projects are consistent with the Ocean Protection Council's grant program funding guidelines (Interim Standards and Protocols, August 2013).

- 3) The proposed action by the Council is not a ‘legal project’ that triggers the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21068 and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, section 15378.”

Staff further recommends that the OPC adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 35500 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The California Ocean Protection Council hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$294,000.00 to Coastal Quest to plan and facilitate a Statewide MPA Collaborative Network Forum and support the launch and administration of a grant program that will provide awards to members of the MPA Collaborative Network for projects that support the MPA Management Program.”

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, Coastal Quest shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director of the OPC detailed work plans, schedules, staff requirements, budgets, and the names of any contractors intended to be used to complete the projects, as well as discrete deliverables that can be produced in intervals to ensure the projects are on target for successful completion. All projects will be developed under a shared understanding of process, management and delivery.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Following the completion of California’s MPA network in 2012, the State recognized the need for more capacity and increased coordination across the state in order to support the Outreach and Education, Enforcement and Compliance, and Research and Monitoring focal areas that compose the MPA Management Program. In partnership with a diverse group of stakeholders, the state helped support the creation of the MPA Collaborative Network, which engages local experts, members of the public, and local law enforcement across all of California’s coastal counties in stewarding the MPA Network (see Exhibit A). The Collaborative Network is a key partner in the MPA Management Program and that relationship is described in more detail in the 2014 “The California Collaborative Approach: Marine Protected Area Partnership Plan,” (see Exhibit B).

Fourteen Collaboratives currently operate within the Collaborative Network. Each Collaborative is composed of volunteers that provide in-kind support at no cost to the state who participate in outreach and education activities, citizen science projects and work with local law enforcement to ensure effective management and compliance with MPA regulations. A Network Director, funded by outside philanthropic funding, works with the Collaboratives on the ground to ensure communication and coordination across the Collaborative Network, and represent the Collaborative Network on the MPA Statewide Leadership Team.

The next step in the organizational development of the Collaborative Network is to create a formal charter that defines the goals, mission, and membership requirements. Plans are under way to hold a MPA Collaborative Network Statewide Forum in the early spring of 2017 to gather the co-chairs of each of the 14 Collaboratives with state agency partners. With the proposed funding, Coastal Quest will organize and facilitate the statewide forum meeting and administer funds to pay for travel costs of up to 30 Collaborative co-chairs to the meeting in Sacramento.

Once the charter has been ratified, Coastal Quest will provide support for the creation and administration of a grants program to help further state priorities in the MPA Management Program. Coastal Quest staff will create the grant guidelines in collaboration with OPC, the MPA Statewide Leadership Team and others as appropriate. Coastal Quest will administer the grants while assisting the Collaboratives in building grant application and management skills.

Grants will fund individual Collaborative projects that support MPA Management Program activities including those related to outreach and education, enforcement and compliance, and research and monitoring. Projects could include but would not be limited to the creation of waterproof materials for anglers, signs in and around popular fishing areas and ports, community outreach programs, and outreach materials and programs in multiple languages. Similar projects previously completed by the Collaborative Network have greatly improved the outreach to various stakeholder groups across the Statewide MPA Network.

Coastal Quest is a 501(c) 3, tax-exempt non-profit that aims to enhance sustainable coastal resource management to protect, sustain, and enhance the natural heritage of our coastal areas, and has worked closely with the Collaborative Network on past projects, and has the in-house expertise in community engagement around ocean issues and the capacity to administer a grant program for the Collaborative Network that does not currently exist in state service. OPC staff will remain involved in project vetting and will be available to provide guidance to Coastal Quest staff throughout the project.

Project History

In 2014, philanthropic funding made available \$10,000 dollar grants to each of the fourteen Collaboratives. The grants and the grant review was done by Resource Legacy Fund (RLF) and the goal was to fund projects that were consistent with the state needs in the Outreach and Education focal area of the MPA Management Program. The submitted Collaboratives projects focused on improving outreach to various stakeholder groups for the MPA Network, and produced educational videos, brochures and outreach programs that targeted broad audiences.

With the RLF small grants program wrapping up, the Collaborative Network will no longer have the financial support needed to continue projects that support the MPA Management Program. Continuing support to Collaboratives MPA projects will help the state and its partners to meet resource management goals related to the MPA Management Program in a highly leveraged and effective way.

Specific Objectives include:

- Hold a statewide forum that will result in the creation of a charter for the Collaborative Network and help formalize the partnership between the Collaborative Network and the state.
- Support the Collaboratives on projects that include but are not limited to general outreach materials, kiosks and exhibits, and MPA curricula and programs that meet the prop 84 guidelines and align with the MPA Statewide Leadership Team Work Plan. Such projects will:
 - Continue to build on the public-private partnership that leverages existing resources while identifying collaborative funding opportunities for the Collaboratives.
 - Support the Collaboratives on projects that will help educate stakeholders about the importance, regulations and management associated with California's MPA Network.
 - Build capacity within each Collaborative to help with the grant application process, successful project execution, and seeking other funding sources for future projects.

Overarching goal of project: Bring the Collaborative Network representatives together with state agency partners to formalize the partnership between the Collaborative Network and the state through creating an official charter and MOU, and support MPA Collaboratives projects that will expand the on-the-ground MPA related materials and information that are available to stakeholders.

Project Timeline:

The statewide forum will occur in the spring of 2017. The small grants program will have one focused grant round and funds awarded will support projects to be carried out within 18 months of the award of funds.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize up to \$294,000.00 to be granted to Coastal Quest to organize and facilitate a Collaborative Network Statewide Forum

and develop, administer and manage a MPA Collaborative Network Small Grants Program.

Ocean Protection Council	\$294,000.00
TOTAL	\$294,000.00

The funds will come from the Ocean Protection Council’s appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of funds for purposes consistent with Section 35650 of the Public Resources Code, establishing the California Ocean Protection Trust Fund (Pub. Res. Code § 75060(g)). Under Section 35650(b), Ocean Protection Trust Fund monies may be expended for projects authorized by the OPC that are identified as appropriate Trust Fund purposes, as specified. The project is consistent with the Trust Fund purposes as discussed in the following section.

CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, because it is consistent with trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2) as projects which:

- E) Allow for increased public access to, and enjoyment of, ocean and coastal resources, consistent with sustainable, long-term protection and conservation of those resources.
- F) Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.
- J) Protect, conserve, and restore coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.

The proposed project will help foster improved management of the MPA Network and the coastal resources it protects by supporting the MPA Management Program.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project implements Focal Area C: Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems. Specifically this project will foster partnerships between State agencies and its stakeholders to help the entities that manage the MPA Network.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the OPC’s interim Grant Program Funding Guidelines for Proposition 84 funds, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. Directly relate to the ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds:

This project will directly support outreach and education and enforcement activities that foster stewardship and protection of our ocean and coastal resources.

2. Have demonstrable support from the public: See letters of support in Exhibit D.
3. Be of greater-than-local interest: The proposed grant program will support projects to be carried out by the 14 MPA Collaboratives across the Statewide MPA Network.

Additional Criteria

4. Employ an innovative approach to problem solving: Due to the clear MPA Management priority tasks outlined in the MPA Statewide Leadership work plan, the MPA Collaboratives can assess local priorities and pursue projects that meet the needs of the state as well as are a high priority for local stakeholders.
5. Improve the manner in which the State manages coastal and ocean resources: Currently, the Collaborative Network plays an important role in the State's MPA Management Program, especially in efforts surrounding Outreach and Education and Enforcement and Compliance, and continuing support of these efforts will build more capacity for future MPA management activities.
6. Resolution of more than one issue: Formalizing the Collaborative Network's partnership with the state through a charter will strengthen future collaborations between MPA Network stakeholders, and make funding MPA related projects carried out by the Collaboratives easier. The state requires partnerships with other agencies, NGOs and the Collaborative Network to effectively meet the priority tasks in the outreach and education area of the Statewide Management Program. Supporting Collaborative Network projects will continue to help build this capacity. The Collaborative Network plays an important role in assisting officers with MPA regulation enforcement and violations, so continuing support of these activities will help maximize enforcement across the MPA network.
7. Leveraging: The Collaborative members are all volunteers, which results in thousands of hours of in-kind support within the MPA Management Program for the State.
8. Timeliness or Urgency: With MPA Baseline Monitoring wrapping up in the North Coast, California is in the process of fully implementing the Statewide MPA Management Program. The Collaboratives will play a key role in uniting Outreach and Education efforts across the Network.
9. Coordination: Formalizing the partnership between the state and the Collaborative Network through a charter and MOU will help streamline coordination on projects between the state and the Collaborative Network. Projects funded will also foster partnerships between state agencies, NGOs and the Collaborative Network.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed authorization is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15378(b)(4). If funded projects include the installations of MPA signs or kiosks or other projects considered 'legal projects'

under CEQA, the OPC expects the Collaboratives, working closely with Coastal Quest and responsible permitting agencies with legal jurisdiction over the installation, shall consider whether CEQA exemptions such as those found in CEQA Guideline sections 15303, 15304 and 15307 are applicable.