



# the Northcoast Environmental Center



June 15, 2020

Mr. Wade Crowfoot  
Secretary for Natural Resources  
Chair, Ocean Protection Council  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: [Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds for a Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory](#)

On behalf of the Northcoast Environmental Center and our member groups throughout California's north coast region, I write to express strong support for the Ocean Protection Council's (OPC) goal to protect and increase California's wetland acreage 20 percent by 2030.

The inclusion of rocky intertidal and beach habitat as part of California's wetlands is confirmation of the important role they play in the coastal ecosystem and will significantly improve the state's ability to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We also strongly encourage OPC to pass a resolution supporting a review and update of the California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy (CEMP) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in concert with California state agencies, stakeholders and sovereigns.

Our coastal estuaries are the nursery grounds for many commercially and recreationally important marine species on which our communities depend, from salmon to Dungeness crab and other shellfish, to halibut, herring and many more. Eelgrass is the metaphorical furniture in these estuary homes and plays a crucial component to the health and survival of these species.

Worldwide, eelgrass and other seagrasses are in trouble: approximately 30 percent of this habitat has vanished since the 1870s. California is lucky to have CEMP in place since 2015, which helps to ensure no net loss of eelgrass habitat function in state coastal waters.

NOAA is currently in the process of conducting an evaluation of CEMP implementation and the best available science on eelgrass to determine if the five-year-old policy needs to be updated to better achieve its goal of no net loss.

An OPC Resolution supporting NOAA's efforts to review and update CEMP would be an important indication of California's continued commitment to protect, conserve and restore eelgrass habitat. Please work toward this resolution as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Larry Glass  
President and Executive Director  
Northcoast Environmental Center  
PO Box 4259  
Arcata, CA 95518

Cc:  
NOAA NMFS, Habitat Division  
California Coastal Commission  
Bay Conservation and Development Commission  
CA Department of Fish and Wildlife



June 11, 2020

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources  
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via: [COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov](mailto:COPCpublic@resources.ca.gov)

**RE: Item 5 - Consideration of Authorization to Disburse Funds for a Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory**

Dear Secretary Crowfoot and members of the Ocean Protection Council:

On behalf of California Waterkeepers, California Coastkeeper Alliance submits this letter in strong support of the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorizing disbursement of funding to San Francisco Estuary Institute to develop a coastal wetlands, beaches, and watersheds inventory. By approving this project, the OPC would fill a longstanding and important gap in understanding existing coastal wetland habitat across the state.

This investment is critical to the OPC’s Strategic Plan Target 1.1.7, which sets a target that 10,000 acres of coastal wetlands will be protected, restored or created by 2025, and increase the acreage of coastal wetlands in California by 20 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040. California cannot achieve this target without an inventory baseline of our existing coastal wetlands. This disbursement will create such a inventory baseline, and we applaud the OPC for making strategic funding decisions based on implementing the OPC’s new Strategic Plan.

It is critical that we restore California’s coastal wetlands before they are lost completely, but we must first establish a baseline understanding of existing coastal wetlands. Over the past century, most of California’s wetlands have been filled or converted to other uses – leaving the state with just 10 percent of its historic wetlands. Despite providing natural flood protection, coastal wetlands are not immune to the effects of rising seas. According to the [California Climate Change Center](#), 350,000 acres of California’s critically important coastal wetlands will be inundated by rising sea levels if not protected.

Thank you to OPC staff for identifying this project and addressing a critical data gap in our knowledge of coastal wetlands. This inventory will serve not only as a tool for the OPC’s restoration goals, but also for researchers, advocates, policymakers, and organizations working to better understand and improve the health of our coastline.

Sincerely,

Sean Bothwell  
Executive Director  
California Coastkeeper Alliance



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## State Water Resources Control Board

June 12, 2020

Mark Gold, Executive Director  
California Ocean Protection Council  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth street, suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: Letter of Support for Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory**

Dear Dr. Gold,

The California Wetlands Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW) is pleased to offer its support for the project proposal submitted by the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI): *Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory*.

We understand that the project will use the mapping procedures of the California Aquatic Resource Inventory (CARI) to create a digital inventory of the intertidal and inland wetlands and other surface waters of the contiguous, 8-digit Hydrologic Units (aka HUC-8 watersheds) for the entire California coast, including the San Francisco Estuary. We also note that the updated CARI will be integrated into the EcoAtlas Information System. The CWMW members have helped to support and develop CARI and EcoAtlas since 2009. They are increasingly used in local, regional, and statewide environmental planning and management. Your Inventory will help increase and improve their uses for a very broad array of interests.

We appreciate that the Inventory will utilize existing datasets to their full appropriate extent, and will turn to the CWMW Level 1 Committee for advice and review as deemed necessary and useful. This will help the CWMW support coordinated aquatic resource conservation statewide.

We note that the Inventory will include an online dashboard to enable the OPC and the public track changes in the distribution, abundance, diversity, and condition of surface waters for the coastal watersheds. This new dashboard will help the CWMW address critical information needs that have been identified in the State Wetland Plan.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 916-341-5726 or via email [paul.hann@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:paul.hann@waterboards.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Paul Hann, Co-Chair  
California Wetlands Monitoring Workgroup.

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E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | EILEEN SOBECK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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[pewtrusts.org](http://pewtrusts.org)

June 17, 2020

Mr. Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources  
Chair, Ocean Protection Council  
California Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Action Item 5 – Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory**

Dear Secretary Crowfoot and Members of the Ocean Protection Council:

On behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts, thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of support for the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) staff recommendation under Action Item 5, *Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory*, at your June 2020 meeting. By funding the design and development of a baseline inventory of California's coastal wetlands and related resources, the recommended action will help to ensure that OPC and its partners have the critical data needed to implement key objectives and targets in the OPC Strategic Plan, including completion of a statewide Coastal Wetlands Action Plan.

As noted in the Project Summary under this item, California's coastal wetlands, estuaries, and beaches provide invaluable ecosystem services across the coast – from serving as nursery habitat for most of the state's fish species to mitigating the effects of climate change. Given the dramatic declines in these vital habitats over the past century, coupled with the projected near- and longer-term impacts of sea level rise, conservation and restoration of what remains – as well as creation of new acreage where feasible – is crucial to ensuring the continued existence of coastal wetlands and their myriad benefits to the people and ecosystems of California. We appreciate the OPC Strategic Plan's focus on developing a Coastal Wetlands Action Plan that seeks to meet these challenges head on, and we agree that the Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory represents a core component of this Plan. Further, the inclusion in the inventory of rocky intertidal habitats and watersheds that drain directly to the coast will result in a more comprehensive, robust, and durable assessment of a range of coastal habitat types.

Pew is pleased to support adoption by the OPC of the staff recommendation for implementing the Coastal Wetlands, Beaches, and Watersheds Inventory. Thank you for your consideration, and for your work to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for California's coastal and marine ecosystems and communities.

Sincerely,

Gilly Lyons  
Officer, Conserving Marine Life in the U.S., Pacific  
[glyons@pewtrusts.org](mailto:glyons@pewtrusts.org)