



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor  
LESTER A. SNOW, Secretary for Natural Resources

September 20, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: California Ocean Protection Council support for:

- A national commitment to fund ocean protection, conservation, restoration, and understanding; and the specific objectives articulated in the *National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) Act of 2010 (S. 3641)*
- The President's Budget Request for the Regional Ocean Partnerships Program
- Legislation to Address Coastal Impact Assistance Program disbursements

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell:

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) supports a bold new national commitment to ocean protection and establishing a permanent federal fund to support this protection. This commitment is consistent with the vision of the US and Pew Ocean Commissions, and with the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force established by the Council on Environmental Quality which identified a \$3.9 billion annual unmet need to adequately manage our ocean and coastal resources. Specifically we support:

- ❖ a new national commitment to funding objectives such as those articulated in the *National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) Act of 2010 (S. 3641)*;
- ❖ the President's \$20 million budget request to support regional ocean governance and marine spatial planning; and
- ❖ legislative improvements to the Coastal Impact Assistance Program to increase the efficiency of this federal grant program.

The OPC was created to help California take action to more effectively protect and manage its ocean and coastal resources—resources that are of statewide, national, and international significance. Along with myself, members of the OPC include the Secretary for Environmental Protection Linda Adams; State Lands Commission Chair and State Controller John Chiang; former mayor of San Diego and current CEO and President of the Golding Group, Susan Golding; Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles, Geraldine Knatz; State Assembly member Pedro Nava and State Senator Fran Pavley.

A recent review of the OPC's first five years of operation chronicles the \$66 million in direct funding for ocean and coastal projects that benefit all Americans who depend upon our oceans for the vast array of services they provide. Through public and private partnerships, California leverages its investment to improve our understanding of ocean currents, the coastal seafloor, offshore ocean uses and areas critical to fish habitat and reproductive success. However, there remains a significant unmet need to continue these efforts into the future.

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Energy Resources, Conservation & Development Commission • Native American Heritage Commission • Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy • San Diego River Conservancy  
San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development Commission • San Gabriel & Lower Los Angeles Rivers & Mountains Conservancy • San Joaquin River Conservancy  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy • Sierra Nevada Conservancy • State Lands Commission • Wildlife Conservation Board



### Importance of National Support For Coastal and Ocean Health

As articulated in the *Final Recommendations of The Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (Council on Environmental Quality, July 19, 2010)*, a healthy ocean regulates and sustains our climate and provides much of the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the ecosystem services that support healthy fisheries and provide valuable recreational activities. There is a direct connection between healthy oceans and coasts and vibrant coastal communities and economies. Therefore, efforts undertaken to understand, protect, and restore our oceans support not only the California economy, but also the economic health of the nation.

Given the ecological and economic importance of coastal and ocean ecosystems, the time is right to increase our investment in the coastal and ocean resources we depend on. The connection between coastal and ocean ecosystems and our economy was underscored by the recent Gulf oil spill, which tragically demonstrates the environmental and economic importance of early planning and dedicated funding to protect these resources.

### Support for the specific objectives articulated in the *National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) Act of 2010 (S. 3641)*

The OPC believes that creating a dedicated source of funding will allow government entities at all levels, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions to better address the issues facing our coast and oceans. For example, the NEO will fund activities such as:

- Conservation and restoration of ocean resources;
- Development of baseline science, monitoring, and observation data to facilitate sustainable uses that will create jobs and support coastal economies;
- Research and planning for ocean and coastal effects of climate change, to ensure that coastal communities and resources are resilient and able to adapt to changing conditions.

### Support the President's \$20 million dollar budget request for the Regional Ocean Partnerships

In 2006, the Governors of California, Oregon, and Washington created the West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health, which launched a proactive regional collaboration to protect and manage the ocean and coastal resources along the entire West Coast. The West Coast Governors endorse the President's budget request for \$20 million to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Ocean Service to support a competitive NOAA grant program for Regional Ocean Partnerships. Other ocean partnerships located throughout the nation are also supporting this budget request.

Ocean processes do not start and stop at state borders, and this fact emphasizes the need for regional approaches that cross jurisdictional lines. The marine waters that cover over 70% of the earth's surface are connected across state, national, and international boundaries. Currents transport heat, nutrients, and, sadly, pollution across thousands of miles; migratory species such as neo-tropical birds and Atlantic Bluefin tuna rely on marine and coastal habitats and connect remote areas across space and time; shipping and marine transportation link marine and coastal environments across the globe. Issues such as climate change, invasive species, and large ecosystem disruptions, demonstrate the need for region-wide responses. Regional Ocean Partnerships are a critical piece of the new National Ocean Policy, and new resources will be required to implement its recommendations.

### Support for legislation to expedite Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) disbursements

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (the Act) established the CIAP to help offset the impacts of offshore oil and gas development on coastal states. The program requires eligible coastal states (i.e., Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama,

Alaska, and California) to obtain approval of a State CIAP Plan from the Secretary of the Interior before receiving funds appropriated under the Act. The primary purpose of a State Plan is to specifically describe all the projects the state and its local political subdivisions intend to implement with CIAP funds. Per the Act, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) within the Department of Interior is responsible for working with the six eligible states in implementing the CIAP.

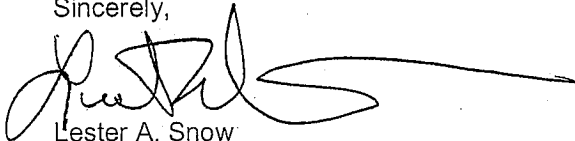
Unlike NOAA which administered the program previously, BOEMRE has instituted a second level of review in its granting process for each individual project based on their interpretation of the Act. This additional review is time-consuming and results in costly project delays with minimal improvements in the projects. To address this situation, we recommend that Congress enact legislation directing the BOEMRE to do the following:

- 1) Immediately disburse CIAP payments to eligible states and local political subdivisions upon the approval of a State Plan by the Secretary of Interior and
- 2) Eliminate requirements for eligible states and local political subdivisions to submit any additional project applications and any other requirements (other than notifying the Secretary of which projects are being carried out under the State Plan) to receive CIAP payments.

If enacted, this legislation will enable California and the other five CIAP states to receive the previously-approved CIAP funding immediately and implement projects without additional delays.

We thank you for your commitment to protecting our nation's coastal and ocean ecosystems. We look forward to your action to ensure that present and future generations benefit from the ecological, economic, educational, social, cultural, spiritual, nutritional, and recreational resources of our ocean. The OPC and its staff are prepared to assist you in supporting these important initiatives. Please contact the OPC's Executive Director for additional information.

Sincerely,



Lester A. Snow  
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council  
Secretary for Resources

cc: The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke  
Under Secretary Jane Lubchenco, NOAA  
Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar  
Director Michael Bromwich, BOEMRE