

# OPC

Executive Summary ■

**T**he California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) commissioned this independent white paper evaluation of the OPC. The OPC, in existence for only five years, represents a unique model of ocean governance.

## A. Why an OPC White Paper?

### White Paper Objectives

This white paper provides an opportunity for the OPC to evaluate progress to-date. Just as importantly, the white paper offers a road-map for future OPC activities.

This evaluation comes at an important transition period for the OPC. Created in Governor Schwarzenegger's first-term, the OPC is now changing to a new government administration. It is also time for the OPC to develop its second, five-year strategic plan. This OPC white paper helps guide the OPC as the organization moves into its next phase of development.

The white paper also serves as a communication tool, and catalog, of the OPC's achievements. In its first five years the OPC focused on developing its organization and implementing projects. The descriptions of accomplishments, case studies, and funded projects in this evaluation are a first step in better conveying the OPC's activities.

### White Paper Approach

The findings and recommendations in this OPC white paper are based on six months of independent research and analyses. In preparing the white paper, relevant publications, Council meeting minutes and webcasts, legislation, OPC resolutions, and numerous other documents were reviewed. Structured confidential interviews were conducted with a diverse mixture of over sixty key OPC stakeholders.

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Finally, this evaluation was informed by an expert advisory panel with broad knowledge and expertise in policy development and governmental processes. Eight distinguished individuals provided guidance to the project team in conducting this evaluation, and in producing practical and actionable recommendations.

## B. Why an OPC?

### Pacific Ocean Threats and Importance of the OPC

California enjoys a 1,100 mile ocean coastline comprised of beaches, rocky cliffs, harbors, estuaries, and cities. The Pacific Ocean is one of the state's most valuable resources. As Californians, we have a deep connection and reliance on our healthy ocean. More than 85 percent of California's citizens live in coastal counties. Californians' quality of life, environmental security, and economic prosperity are all integrally linked to its ocean.



Giant kelp in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary  
Credit: Claire Fackler, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries

We depend on the Pacific Ocean to regulate global carbon and water cycles, which in turn influence weather patterns and temperatures. The Pacific Ocean is home to countless species and diverse ecosystems. These ocean resources support local and global food production and substantial economic activity.

Yet, the Pacific Ocean has never before faced such severe threats. The devastating 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill serves to illustrate the fragility of ocean and coastal resources, and the high cost of environmental disaster. Over 90 percent of global warming from the last fifty years has been absorbed by all the oceans. Now, warmer ocean temperatures are contributing to the decline in phytoplankton, at the base of our food chain.

The Pacific Ocean is threatened by warming temperatures, ocean acidification, and sea level rise. Pollution, most of it from our activities on land, deteriorates ocean ecosystems. Coastal development does the same. Fishing, once a way of life for many Californians, has declined substantially. Invasive species result in significant economic costs and ecological damage.

For decades, Californians have taken their Pacific Ocean for granted. The Pacific Ocean, covering one-third of the earth's surface and representing one-half of the world's ocean area, was thought to be large enough to absorb whatever damage humans inflicted. Over the last decade it became apparent that this is no longer the case. It is also clear that the patchwork of state and federal laws to address ocean management is not sufficient. We can no longer manage the ocean by addressing only one aspect at a time. Two leading national studies, *America's Living Oceans, Charting a Course for Sea Change* (2003) and *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century* (2004), identified these issues and institutional shortcomings. California was the first state to adopt key recommendations from these two prominent national reports and thus created the OPC.

## California Ocean Protection Act and Establishment of the OPC

In 2004, Governor Schwarzenegger and the California Legislature, recognized the value of our Pacific Ocean resource when they passed the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA). The COPA created the OPC as essentially an experiment in governance – a new institution responsible for protecting and conserving ocean and coastal resources.

To achieve the critical goal of ocean protection, the COPA assigned the OPC three primary objectives: (1) coordinating and fostering collaboration among state agencies, (2) recommending changes to state and federal policies and laws, and (3) improving the use of science in policy-making. The COPA also created a trust fund for projects that would protect and preserve ocean and coastal resources.

The OPC was envisioned as a unique state entity capable of integrating, and coordinating, the state’s laws and institutions responsible for conserving and protecting ocean and coastal resources. The OPC brought a visionary and comprehensive approach to California ocean policy and ocean problem-solving. The OPC’s tools included a non-regulatory role, high-level steering council, science focus, and an associated trust fund.

California is a national leader in taking a comprehensive and coordinated approach to ocean and coastal resource management and policy. Yet, there is much still to do. It is critical that California, and the OPC, have the tools and vision needed to continue their important work to protect our Pacific Ocean and California coastal resources.

California’s investment in the Pacific Ocean to-date has been relatively minor. In creating the OPC, and the many laws, regulations, and agencies that preceded it, California has made a good start. However, as compared to the complex and extensive protection approaches to our air, water, and land,

we have relatively ignored the Pacific Ocean. Through the OPC, the state has an opportunity to bring the level of focus and vision to ocean policy and management that this essential Pacific Ocean resource deserves.

## C. What has the OPC Accomplished?

The OPC was created by California statute six years ago. One of the OPC’s most significant accomplishments may be the simple fact of its existence. The OPC is a unique entity in ocean governance, and the only such organization nationwide. In the OPC’s start-up years, it: (1) formed a small but dedicated organizational unit within the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), (2) developed a strategic plan, (3) funded projects, (4) conducted projects, and (5) provided policy leadership on key issues.

**Exhibit ES-1**, on the next page, summarizes evaluation findings in seven areas.

### Leadership in Ocean Management

The OPC brings leadership to ocean management in California. The Council elevates discussion of ocean issues to the cabinet level in state government. The OPC plays a key role in raising awareness about ocean threats and potential solutions, within, and far beyond, state government. The OPC brings agencies together to work on ocean management and policy problems. The OPC serves as a role model to the rest of the nation, and adds depth and breadth to the state’s ocean policy. Below are just a few examples of these important OPC accomplishments.

The OPC’s role in marine debris broadly publicized the ocean litter issue. While public awareness about marine debris was already growing, the OPC’s February 2007, resolution on reducing and preventing marine debris elevated this topic to a new level. In drawing attention to this complex problem, the OPC’s actions

## Exhibit ES-1

## OPC Findings in Seven Categories

Category	Finding
<b>A. Advancing Policies</b>	<p><b>Policy Finding</b></p> <p>The OPC's resolutions have been an effective tool to inform debate and influence ocean management policies on several issues. At the national level, the OPC is seen as a leader on ocean issues. At the state level, the OPC is still experimenting with exactly how to execute its role as an ocean policy leader. In its first five years, the selection of resolution topics, and OPC policy areas in general, has been opportunistic. Moving forward, the OPC has an opportunity to focus on policy as part of a larger vision.</p>
<b>B. Providing Science for Governmental Decision-Making</b>	<p><b>Science Finding</b></p> <p>The OPC has played a valuable role in articulating the importance of science, and in providing a venue through which to incorporate scientific research into the decision-making process. This is the area in which the OPC has arguably had the greatest success. As it moves forward, the OPC has an opportunity to more consistently and strategically apply scientific input to particular policy areas. In addition, as the Science Advisory Team (SAT) becomes more established, the OPC can better utilize the knowledge of these experts.</p>
<b>C. Funding Projects and Research</b>	<p><b>Project Funding Finding</b></p> <p>The COPA established the California Ocean Protection Trust Fund to expend on projects and activities, but also directs the OPC to "use California's private and charitable resources more effectively in developing ocean protection and conservation strategies." OPC funded projects such as seafloor mapping, marine monitoring, and specific research projects, have advanced a number of important ocean research and policy issues. Most OPC funding has supported scientific research and monitoring. The OPC has leveraged its \$65.9 million in (primarily) bond funding to generate a total of \$109.1 million in funding for 88 ocean-related projects. Going forward, the OPC has an opportunity to focus project spending through specific strategies or initiatives, to improve transparency in funding processes, and publicize the final outcomes of projects. Finally, while the OPC has leveraged private foundation monies (\$11.8 million, 27 percent of leverage funds), there is an opportunity to develop additional private and federal support for ocean protection issues.</p>
<b>D. Coordinating Governmental Ocean Activities</b>	<p><b>Coordinating Finding</b></p> <p>One of the primary goals of the COPA, and arguably the most challenging role for the OPC, is to promote coordination and collaboration of state agencies in order to improve state efforts to protect ocean resources. The OPC has had successes in this area, most notably climate change adaptation and seafloor mapping. However, the OPC has an opportunity to better fulfill its role as coordinators. Going forward, the OPC can enhance efforts to formally and informally reach out to state and federal agencies and identify specific ocean resource problems that could be solved by better coordinating agency efforts and resources. The OPC's coordinating efforts should be part of a strategic, focused approach.</p>
<b>E. Organization and Operations</b>	<p><b>Organization and Operations Finding</b></p> <p>As a new organization, the fact of OPC's very existence is an accomplishment. The OPC's relationship with the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) allowed the Council to get off to a quick start, particularly in terms of efficiently funding research and projects. The OPC's experienced management team brings a broad range of expertise to the organization. Going forward, the OPC's staff capacities can be more clearly aligned with its mission, and the Council itself could be more engaged in OPC activities.</p>
<b>F. Strategic Planning</b>	<p><b>Strategic Planning Finding</b></p> <p>In its first year and a half, the OPC conducted an inclusive and open process to develop a strategic plan. As a new organization, the OPC deliberately chose to write a broad strategic plan, allowing the OPC to carry out a wide range of activities, and to respond to emerging issues as they arose. Now, after five years of experience, the OPC has an opportunity to create a more focused strategic plan that brings a clear sense of direction as to where the OPC should focus its efforts. This plan would include specific criteria to guide OPC decision-making, clarify OPC's role, and articulate a vision for California ocean policy and management. In developing its next strategic plan, the OPC should incorporate specific metrics, and a clear means by which the OPC can measure its success.</p>
<b>G. Communication and Outreach</b>	<p><b>Communication and Outreach Finding</b></p> <p>The OPC has communicated with its immediate stakeholders through its list-serve, web page, and one-on-one communications. The public comment period at OPC meetings provides the public with a unique opportunity to present ocean issues to policy-makers in a public forum. However, there are still many individuals and organizations involved in ocean and coastal issues that are unaware of the OPC. The OPC can improve communication with the legislature, other state agencies, coastal communities (local governments, fishermen, ocean resource and tourism industries), and the public, about its activities and accomplishments.</p>

prompted several pieces of new state legislation. Legislation related to marine debris is being considered in the 2009/10 legislative session. The OPC's marine debris activities supported city and county governments in their efforts to pass local ordinances to reduce marine debris.



Marine debris in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, Pacific Ocean  
Credit: Claire Fackler, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries

California's landmark climate change bill, AB 32, requires the state to address climate change. In 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger released Executive Order S-13-08 calling for the state to develop an adaptation strategy to address impacts from climate change and for OPC to take specific actions to address sea level rise. Our long coastline and ocean economy make California especially vulnerable to climate change impacts. California needs a cohesive statewide response to adequately address this issue, and the OPC is part of that response. The OPC is leading the state's Coastal and Ocean Working Group for the Climate Action Team (CO-CAT). The goal of the CO-CAT is to ensure the state's ability to adapt to climate change impacts on ocean and coastal resources while supporting implementation of global warming emission reduction programs.

The OPC's active involvement in the West Coast Governors' Agreement (WCGA) on Ocean

Health has strengthened regional cooperation. The fact that three states are working together increases opportunities for federal support of regional ocean activities. The WCGA provides a platform for Oregon, Washington, and California to work together to resolve pressing ocean issues such as climate change, polluted runoff, marine debris, invasive species, renewable ocean energy, and seafloor mapping. The three states are now implementing on-the-ground projects in these various areas.

The OPC's renewable ocean energy initiative provides a foundation for state agency action in this complex new field. Developing renewable ocean energy in California will require facilitation and coordination of local, state, and federal regulatory agencies. By working across agencies, the OPC can help resolve overlapping and sometimes conflicting regulatory authority. The ultimate measure of success will be creation of ocean energy projects that reduce California's reliance on fossil fuels, while still protecting ocean ecosystems.

California is a national leader in ocean policy and management. The OPC influences federal ocean policy in many ways. Through position letters, communicating regularly with federal ocean agencies, and by being at the forefront of new ocean management such as marine protected areas, the OPC has a strong influence on federal ocean policy. The new *National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, Coasts, and Great Lakes*, released in July 2010, creates a National Ocean Council to strengthen ocean governance and coordination. The National Ocean Council is essentially similar to the OPC.

### **Voice for Science in Ocean Policy**

Promoting and improving the use of science in ocean and coastal resource decision-making is one of the OPC's key goals. As a voice for science, the OPC has been successful on many fronts. The OPC applies its resources to answer specific science

questions to help resolve complex ocean policy issues. The OPC has elevated the role of science in governmental decisions, particularly through its collaboration with the California Ocean Science Trust (OST). The OPC relies on a team of scientific experts to help guide its actions and advance the relationship between academia and government – a difficult task, and one that benefits both sectors.

The OPC funds scientific studies and research directed at particular issues or questions. These studies have been credited with “informing the dialogue” in a number of important areas such as once-through cooling, low impact development, marine debris, sustainable fisheries, ocean wave energy, sea level rise, Marine Life Management Act implementation, and offshore oil and gas platform decommissioning.

In funding scientific studies, the OPC has worked to identify and fill science needs and critical data gaps of other state agencies. The OPC has tried to follow through on its science reports to ensure that the reports provide the targeted decision-making information needed by its partner agencies. For example, the OPC’s funding of feasibility studies on once-through cooling at power plants helped facilitate new State Water Resources Control Board regulations that will, in turn, lead to significant improvements in ocean water quality.

The OPC draws on the expertise of the California Ocean Science Trust to fulfill its scientific services. The OST is a non-profit corporation established pursuant to the California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act of 2000 (CORSA). The executive director of the OST serves as the Science Advisor to the OPC, bringing scientific thinking into the daily, and long-term, operations of the OPC. The OST Science Advisor ensures that projects brought before the OPC meet scientific standards and OPC funding guidelines,

provides stakeholder outreach, and recommends opportunities to collaborate on specific initiatives. The Science Advisor also provides technical advice to the OPC on Council agenda items.

The OPC Science Advisor provides a direct connection between the science community and state government. This connection serves to educate scientists about California’s ocean and coastal policy from a government perspective. The Science Advisor also works with marine scientists to help them translate important scientific findings into reports that can inform state policy. This science “translating role” is critical – providing a much-needed bridge between scientific findings and actionable policy.

A critical role for the OST is development, and ongoing management, of the OPC’s Science Advisory Team (SAT). This twenty-four member multidisciplinary science team draws on a wealth of scientific expertise. Just two years old, the SAT is refining its support role for the OPC. The goals of the SAT are to help inform marine policy, identify critical emerging science issues that should be of concern to the OPC and the state, and assist the OPC in conducting technical reviews of reports and proposals. The SAT provides a mechanism to bring the “best available scientific knowledge” to bear so as to address the state’s ocean and coastal resource problems.

The OPC helps advance the relationship between ocean academia and state government. Since its inception, the OPC has invited scientists to give presentations or participate in panels at OPC meetings. The topics have varied: climate change, desalination, marine debris, offshore oil and gas platform decommissioning, and wave ocean energy. Directly engaging scientific expertise in OPC meetings serves as an educational tool for all those attending the meetings: Council members, OPC staff, state agency staff, and other stakeholders.

The OPC has hosted workshops to discuss scientific issues and obtain input on potential solutions. Workshop participants have been from all sectors: the scientific community, agencies, industry, and stakeholders. Because the OPC is a non-regulatory agency it provides a “neutral” venue for scientists, government officials, and stakeholders to address often complex and contentious issues.



Sanctuary Explorer Camp, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary  
Credit: Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association

### Effective Source of Funding for Ocean Protection

In just five years, the OPC provided over \$66 million in direct funding for 88 ocean program and research projects. The \$66 million was a start. The actual funding generated by the OPC for ocean projects has been much greater. The OPC leveraged its funds, and obtained another

\$43 million in matching funds specifically for OPC projects, bringing the total up to \$109 million. This total does not count additional resources that other state and federal agencies, and private funders, have invested in the ocean as a result of the OPC. For example, after the OPC provided seed funding for a project to remove derelict fishing gear off the coast, three other agencies stepped in and funded ongoing derelict gear removal. Taken as a whole, the OPC’s project funding will be returning dividends to the state for decades to come.

The OPC’s project funding has covered a wide spectrum. The OPC can direct funding to answer specific scientific questions, filling in critical gaps that other agencies cannot address. There are many examples of OPC research projects that address specific issues: once-through cooling studies, ocean acidification, sea level rise and toxins in plastics, to name a few.

Another category of OPC funded projects is much more significant, both in terms of the amount of dollars spent, and the direct and indirect benefits of these projects. These major research and monitoring projects would not have been realized without the OPC. The OPC’s large-scale funding efforts have been focused on projects that provide primary scientific data for multiple agencies, and multiple end-users. The OPC selects research projects to generate data that capture the “big picture” of ocean health and trends. The two OPC projects described below epitomize these project characteristics.

### Seafloor Mapping

Seafloor mapping is among the OPC’s single most important accomplishments, to-date. The OPC made seafloor mapping along California’s coast possible. Before the OPC, just a few scattered portions of the seafloor off California

had been mapped. Now, the state has detailed pictures of the California sea floor. To make seafloor mapping happen, the OPC brought together academics, federal and state agencies, and private companies. The OPC leveraged its \$18 million mapping investment, with another \$14.5 million of project funding, mostly from federal agencies.

The high degree of multiple state and federal agency cooperation, facilitated by the OPC, allowed seafloor mapping to be completed for far less than if each agency had continued to work on their own. Even at a reduced cost, large-scale primary data gathering and research efforts, such as seafloor mapping, are inherently costly and require a sustained funding effort. This sustained funding effort was made possible through the OPC's concerted efforts.

California's seafloor mapping provides, for the first time, a clear picture of our California seafloor and provides reoccurring benefits far in excess of the fixed up-front project costs. Mapping is essential to ensuring that the coastline is understood and effectively utilized. Seafloor maps help us understand the geography and habitats on the ocean floor. Seafloor mapping provides valuable and essential information for a number of ocean management agencies. The information provided in these maps has many uses, for example: (1) understanding and helping mitigate sea level rise, (2) forecasting storm impacts and coastal erosion, (3) understanding coastal earthquakes and tsunami potential, (4) improving navigational maps and maritime safety, (5) evaluating sites for renewable ocean energy and aquaculture, and (6) designating and monitoring marine reserves.

California's coastal seafloor mapping efforts are a noteworthy accomplishment, and place California at the forefront of marine mapping

nationally. California's seafloor mapping project, led by the OPC, serves as a model for the rest of the country. California's efforts showed the importance of mapping the entire coast, providing a comprehensive perspective on the seafloor. California's seafloor mapping project also demonstrated that it was technically possible to map large areas of seafloor in a single season – this had never been done before. California's experience created momentum for broader regional and national mapping efforts.

### Marine Protected Area Monitoring

The OPC's second largest investment to-date was to assist the state with ongoing efforts to establish a coast-wide network of marine protected areas (MPAs) by 2011. The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) of 1999 directed the state to redesign California's system of MPAs to function as a network. MPA's are similar to nature preserves, but in the ocean. MPAs have varying levels of restrictions on use. Some MPA's do not allow fishing or removal of resources, while limited fishing is allowed in others. MPAs include state marine reserves, state marine parks, and state marine conservation areas.



Black-and-Yellow Rockfish in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

Credit: Claire Fackler, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries

The MLPA’s comprehensive approach is intended to increase coherence and effectiveness in protecting the state’s marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage. In order to determine whether this new network of MPA’s is working to increase protection of marine life, habitat, and ecosystems, we must know what the baseline condition is to start with. The OPC has played a major role in this effort.

The OPC has authorized approximately \$20 million to-date to support the implementation of the MLPA, including baseline characterization efforts in four coastal regions. The OPC awarded \$2 million in funding to the OST to develop and implement the MPA Monitoring Enterprise. The Monitoring Enterprise provides a cost-effective science-based means to track changes in these new MPA’s over time. To-date, the Monitoring Enterprise has engaged the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), California Fish and Game Commission (FGC), scientists, and other partners to develop a monitoring plan for the North Central Coast. The Monitoring Enterprise is launching a similar process in the South Coast this year and will continue this process for all regions. Along with developing the monitoring plans, the Monitoring Enterprise is coordinating the baseline monitoring projects to provide an assessment of MPA’s in each region as the MPAs take effect. This effort will examine factors such as fish and invertebrate populations, ecosystem health, and socioeconomic impacts.

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The OPC has funded some significant and beneficial ocean projects in a short period of time. The benefit to cost ratio of this agency, nested within the State Coastal Conservancy, has been high. With less than a dozen staff and minimal overhead the OPC has supported a

wide-array of ocean and coastal projects that help us understand our ocean, and how to better utilize and protect its resources.

#### D. How Can the OPC Improve Its Activities?

The OPC fulfills a valuable role in the critical charge of maintaining and protecting California’s ocean and coastal resources. The recommendations that follow build on experience that the OPC has gained over its first five years. As the OPC moves forward, it has an opportunity to refine and reinforce its work, as defined by the California Ocean Protection Act.

There are five overarching themes, or operating principles, that underlie all of these OPC recommendations for improvement. These five themes should factor into future OPC activities and filter into OPC’s approach to solving ocean and coastal resource management problems:

- The OPC, with its partners, will develop a clear, strategic, vision for California’s ocean and coastal resource management and a focused plan for moving forward with a coordinated set of activities within that vision
- The OPC will exercise a strong intellectual leadership role and interact with other agencies in an open, understanding, and inclusive manner
- The OPC will promote accountability for itself, and for those that it is working with, and use metrics to measure performance
- The OPC will use transparency in its decision-making and its actions
- The OPC will help develop funding sources outside of state government to help support the many needs of California’s ocean and coastal management agencies.

## Advancing Policies

Going forward, the OPC can focus policy efforts in those areas with the greatest need, and in which the OPC can provide the greatest benefits. When the OPC does undertake a policy issue, the best outcomes will occur when it embraces a leadership role, follows through each issue to a logical conclusion, and promotes accountability for itself, and for its partner agencies.

The number of potential policy issues and ocean threats is substantial, and growing. The OPC must identify and prioritize the most relevant, and timely, issues to focus limited resources.

Moving forward, the OPC has an opportunity to exercise its leadership role in California ocean and coastal resource management and policy. Specific recommendations for the OPC in advancing policies are to:

- Prepare a biannual work plan that identifies specific policy issues that the OPC will pursue
- Create and support leadership, follow-through, and accountability through OPC actions.

## Providing Science for Governmental Decision-Making

As the OPC moves forward, it has an opportunity to more consistently and strategically apply scientific input to particular policy areas. The OPC is “at its best” when it provides independent, credible, and science-based reports that help inform the debate on ocean and coastal management policy issues.

As the SAT becomes more established, the OPC can better utilize the knowledge of these experts. Within a more focused approach to ocean issue areas, the OPC has an opportunity to channel much of its science-efforts on answering

science-related questions that surround emerging issues. The OPC may achieve this objective by working with the SAT, and/or funding focused research studies to address specific science or policy questions.

Specific recommendations to promote science reaffirm this important role of the OPC, and are as follows:

- Improve effectiveness of the Science Advisory Team by increasing participation of the SAT in OPC activities
- Expand OPC initiatives to provide credible scientific information and data on controversial policy issues.

## Funding Projects and Research

The OPC is ready to make a transition from its early, more opportunistic approach to funding, to a more strategic approach. Going forward, the OPC will focus its activities such that in any given year, project funding, scientific research, coordination efforts, and policy recommendations are all generally focused on key and specific issue areas. Funded projects would be part of a larger strategy, aligned with other OPC efforts, and supporting a common end goal. The OPC can become more consistent and open in its processes and increase accountability of fund recipients.

Under any future funding scenario, it is likely that there will be significantly fewer project funds than in the past. As a result, the OPC will be shifting much of its focus from project funding to policy development. However, the ability of the OPC to bring resources to bear on particular ocean research, policy, and management issues is still critical, and key in bringing other state agencies to the table. Thus, it is important that the OPC have some dedicated source of project funding revenue. As state resources continue to decline, the OPC must proactively identify, and

implement, a strategy to obtain additional private and federal funding. The OPC can serve as a conduit, to help target private sector and federal funding in support of California’s ocean and coastal management needs.

Specific recommendations on funding projects and research are as follows:

- Develop and follow a comprehensive OPC funding strategy
- Implement a transparent OPC project award and completion process
- Increase OPC efforts to obtain private and federal sector funding for ocean protection.

### **Coordinating Governmental Ocean Activities**

The purpose of coordinating and collaborating is to work together to solve problems that cannot be solved by one entity alone, and to obtain joint resources that might not be otherwise available. Of course, the OPC first must identify specific problems to resolve through coordinated efforts. These problems will become apparent through the strategic planning and biannual work plan processes.

Because this is the most difficult area to implement, and the one area with the greatest challenges, most different from SCC functions, the OPC needs to place extra focus on this area. The recommendations related to coordination provide a roadmap for the OPC as it transitions to a stronger focus on its coordinating role. The recommendations provide a vision for the OPC’s outlook and practices, and identify specific actions that the OPC can undertake to better fulfill its role as coordinators.

Going forward, the OPC should demonstrate clear support for a collaborative approach from the top level (including the Governor and Council members). In conducting this work, it is essential

that the OPC is responsive to the needs of other agencies and is a true partner in the process. In doing so, the OPC has an opportunity to improve government efficiency and effectiveness, and improve ocean-related policies and programs.

Today, a more experienced OPC is better positioned to manage, and benefit from, the input of other agency directors, in the form of the OPC Steering Committee. It is the OPC’s role to understand and synthesize the perspectives of each agency and the Steering Committee provides a platform for doing so.

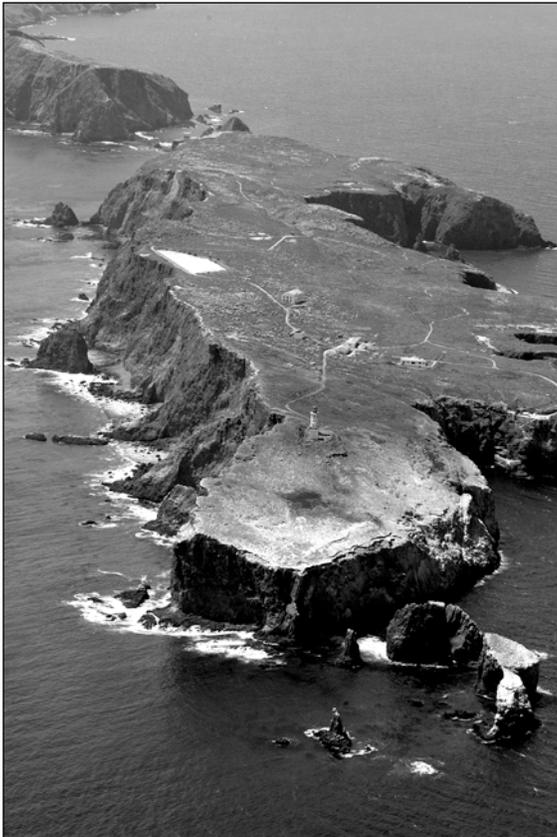
As the OPC moves into its next phase it has an opportunity to focus and align collaborative efforts with a strategic approach to ocean management in California. Coordination efforts will be most effective as part of a comprehensive approach that also includes scientific research, project funding, and policy recommendations.

Specific recommendations to support OPC’s role in coordinating California’s ocean and coastal management and policy are as follows:

- Create and support an OPC culture conducive to coordination and collaboration with other state agencies
- Reestablish the OPC Steering Committee (the Committee was reconvened in July, 2010)
- Implement a comprehensive collaborative approach for OPC issue areas identified in the strategic plan.

### **E. How Can the OPC Improve Its Operations?**

In five years, the OPC has evolved from a concept into a fledgling agency – one that is “making a difference” in ocean policy and management. Now, it is time for the next transition phase. The recommendations that follow address steps that the OPC can take to improve its operations.



Aerial view of the East end of Anacapa Island, of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary  
 Credit: Not Provided, National Marine Sanctuaries Media Library

These recommendations do not address the OPC's unique organizational structure, nested within the SCC, with multiple executive managers. The OPC is still a new, evolving organization, and it may be too early to consider large changes to its organizational structure. However, it is important to realize that while the OPC's unique structure and relationship within the SCC provides significant benefits, it also poses significant challenges. Going forward, the OPC will need to rely less on the SCC's core funding strengths, and will need to work harder to develop its own core policy strengths. The "new" OPC core strengths will need to emphasize policy leadership, coordination, collaboration, and science.

## Optimizing Staffing Functions and Council Participation

The OPC staff is enthusiastic, motivated, and dedicated to ocean protection. However, below the management level, the current staff structure offers essentially one OPC position, project manager. A shift in staff functionality can enhance the OPC's effectiveness. By emphasizing certain functional roles such as: management, business development, coordination, information, and analysis, the OPC can reduce internal duplication of efforts and improve the OPC's ability to efficiently and effectively communicate and coordinate work internally, as well as externally. The OPC could also pursue opportunities for joint staffing positions with other state agencies in order to further support collaboration and specific ocean policies.

As the OPC moves forward, the Council can be more engaged in OPC activities and decision-making. There is an opportunity for more active involvement of Council members, particularly the Secretaries, in their actions and directives after Council meetings.

Recommendations related to staffing functions and council participation are as follows:

- Revise staffing functions to more closely support the OPC's mission under COPA
- Increase involvement and participation of the Council in OPC activities.

## Developing the Second Five-Year Strategic Plan

In early 2011, the OPC will embark on developing its second strategic plan. This process creates an opportunity for the OPC to refine its vision and craft a new strategic plan that will provide more clarity as it transitions into its second five years of operation. To be most effective, this

process could be conducted in close partnership with other state ocean and coastal management agencies. During its strategic planning process, the OPC will develop criteria to help narrow the list of potential activities to those for which the OPC can make the greatest difference.

Within its strategic plan, the OPC has an opportunity to utilize a collaborative process and lay out a five-year plan to address key ocean issues. Within each issue, the plan should build, over time, on a coherent strategy. The strategic plan issues may be broad – for example, climate change adaptation – while the focus in any given year may be more specific within a category, such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, or supporting local climate change adaptation plans. Given the complexity of many ocean policy and management issues, most OPC activities will be multi-year efforts.

The strategic plan should guide the OPC in implementing comprehensive packages that include: coordination efforts, project funding, scientific research, and ultimately, policy recommendations. Within its strategic planning process, the OPC should “leave room” to address emerging and critical issues that may arise over the next five years, but cannot be predicted in the planning process. It is important for the OPC to continue to have flexibility to address new or emerging issues, when required.

With a clearer definition of specific goals and objectives for each key issue that the OPC will be addressing, the OPC will be able to develop internal performance metrics to monitor and communicate its success within each of the new strategic plan action areas. These performance metrics should be specific to the problem that the OPC, and its partners, are working to solve, and be developed during the strategic planning process.

Specific recommendations for the OPC related to strategic planning are as follows:

- Develop a clear vision for California’s ocean and coastal resources
- Develop criteria to guide selection of OPC issue areas for the strategic plan
- Select approximately five key strategic plan issue areas for the OPC to focus on over the next five years
- Identify specific strategic plan performance metrics to monitor OPC’s success.

### **Improving Communication and Outreach**

The recommendations related to communications and outreach build on several of the previous recommendations to provide increased transparency in OPC decision-making, and to let others know how the OPC is doing. In its first five years, OPC focused resources on projects, and did not fully develop processes to communicate to more than just its closest stakeholders. In the long-term, this strategy is not sustainable. Key decision-makers need to understand what the OPC does, and how the OPC provides benefits to the state.

As the OPC continues to mature as an organization, it is important that it develops an ongoing communication strategy. By broadening the scope of those that it communicates with, the OPC can build a larger constituency. This, in turn, will allow the OPC to effectively work with more entities in the future. Within an expanded communication program, the OPC should clearly explain its vision, objectives, and expected actions, so that there are clear expectations as to the OPC’s role.

The OPC frequently reaches out to stakeholders to obtain input. Going forward, the OPC can continue to expand these opportunities to obtain public input, by implementing a consistent plan for public comment on OPC activities.

Specific recommendations related to communication and outreach are as follows:

- Increase OPC outreach and communication through a sustained communication strategy
- Increase opportunities for public comment and input on OPC activities.

## F. What is the OPC's Vision Going Forward?

### Enhancing Organizational Viability

The transition from the Schwarzenegger administration, to a new Governor, in 2011, represents an important landmark for the OPC: the first gubernatorial transition for the OPC organization. The OPC can enhance its organizational viability by better demonstrating successes. OPC activities, such as seafloor mapping, have not only provided invaluable data to inform a wide range of ocean management decisions, but have done so at a significant cost-savings to the State of California. Similarly, by supporting scientific research, and obtaining the best available scientific data, the OPC's activities result in better ocean management decisions.

To the extent that OPC activities can reduce the cost of regulatory compliance or enforcement (such as improving coordination between agencies, or reducing permit costs), the OPC can save both the state and public money. By providing project funding and coordinating efforts to solve problems, the OPC can fill roles that resource-constrained agencies cannot. These types of OPC benefits should be documented and communicated, particularly to three key state entities (the Governor, the Department of Finance, and the Legislature) that control the OPC's fate. The OPC must facilitate the development of a common overall vision of how state and federal agencies can work together to

solve pressing ocean issues. The OPC should also work to avoid duplication of efforts, including project funding, in its selection of issue areas, thus ensuring that OPC activities fill incremental but critical roles.

This OPC outreach effort will be particularly important when it comes to the transition period for the new governor and legislature. The Council will likely have several new members, and it will be critical for OPC managers to meet with these members to communicate the value of participating in the OPC, and making our Pacific Ocean a priority California natural resource.

### Creating a Strong and Unified Vision for California Ocean Policy

The next step for the OPC is to bring all its different tools together – leadership, coordination, policy, science, and funding – into a comprehensive package. The OPC cannot do this alone – by definition, it must work closely with other ocean and coastal management agencies in the state and nation to create an overall vision for California's ocean policy. The OPC can facilitate this process.



Students looking out from Inspiration Point, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary  
Claire Fackler, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries

As the OPC matures, its focus will shift from one of opportunism and experimentation to a more planned and strategic approach to solving ocean problems in this state. The focus will shift from project funding to a renewed emphasis on coordinated actions to address specific problems – sea level rise, fisheries, land-based pollution, emerging ocean industries, and others. In an era of declining funding, the OPC must carefully target its limited resources to address the state’s most pressing ocean issues, and at the same time work to secure supplemental private and federal funding.

The next generation OPC will seek new partnering opportunities with other states and the federal government. California should continue to set a high standard for ocean policy, and work with new entities, such as the recently formed National Ocean Council. California, with the OPC’s leadership, has an opportunity to become a visionary leader, setting the stage on ocean policy for decades to come.