

CALIFORNIA OCEAN
PROTECTION COUNCIL

Staff Recommendation
February 8, 2007

**California Ocean Science Trust:
Building Scientific
Capacity and Coordination**

Developed By: **Laura Engeman**

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Designation of the Executive Director of the California Ocean Science Trust (CalOST) as science adviser to the Ocean Protection Council (OPC); consideration of actions CalOST may take to coordinate and disseminate ocean science and technology information among state agencies and the OPC; and possible: 1) determination that these actions are a high priority for ocean conservation and 2) authorization for the Secretary to take actions needed to provide up to \$200,000 for their completion.

OCEAN or COASTAL LOCATION: Statewide

AGENCY OR ENTITY RECOMMENDING PROJECT: Ocean Protection Council,
California Ocean Science Trust

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION

“The Ocean Protection Council hereby designates the Executive Director of the California Ocean Science Trust (CalOST) to act as science adviser to the council; finds pursuant to Sections 35600 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code that CalOST’s potential role in coordinating and disseminating information regarding scientific issues facing the Ocean Protection Council and other California state agencies is a high priority for ocean conservation; and authorizes the Secretary to take actions necessary to provide \$200,000 to CalOST for such purposes.”

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Staff is recommending that the Council formally designate the Executive Director of the Ocean Science Trust to serve as its science advisor, and find that actions CalOST proposes to take to coordinate and disseminate scientific information that can inform decisions facing the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) and other state managers, is a high priority for ocean conservation. CalOST would collect and disseminate ocean data from various sources, create either standing or

ad hoc science advisory groups, release scientific consensus statements regarding current ocean management issues, and recommend the incorporation of cutting edge scientific information into potential OPC actions.

The California Ocean Science Trust was established by the Secretary of Resources pursuant to the California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act (Public Resources Code §§36990-36995, effective January 1, 2000). CalOST was created to encourage coordinated, multi-agency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science—a purpose that closely corresponds with the Ocean Protection Council’s statutory responsibility to “establish policies to coordinate the collection and sharing of scientific data related to coast and ocean resources between agencies.”

To help coordinate data among the OPC, state agencies, and other organizations, CalOST will provide avenues for academic researchers to share their research as it relates to management issues facing California. CalOST will also develop ad hoc or standing teams of scientists to investigate specific questions relating to ocean and coastal resources issues of relevance to the OPC’s work. These teams may, depending on the issue, release reports detailing the state of the science or publish consensus statements about debated issues. In addition, CalOST, working with the scientific community, will help to recommend yearly scientific priorities that can be adopted by the OPC and guide potential funding opportunities. As Science Advisor to the OPC, CalOST’s Executive Director will be in a unique position both to bring current scientific information to the OPC and other agencies, and to respond to OPC policy directives with the assistance of one or more scientific advisory teams or committees.

Project Background

The California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act established the California Ocean Science Trust to fund and develop new funding sources for marine research in California that would help to fulfill the missions of the state's ocean resource management agencies. CalOST is a unique entity able to combine public resources with those from the private sector and nonprofit organizations to promote new marine research, education, and management approaches within California. Its primary objectives are to:

- Encourage coordinated, multi-agency, and multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science
- Encourage new technologies that reduce the cost, increase the amount, or improve the quality of ocean resource management information
- Encourage ocean resource management graduate education programs in public and private universities and colleges
- Seek funds for California ocean resource science projects, emphasizing the development of new funding sources
- Fund California ocean resource science projects that help fulfill the missions of the state's ocean resource management agencies
- Promote more effective coordination of California ocean resource science useful to management agencies

In undertaking these actions, CalOST will be an important partner to the OPC. A guiding principle of the OPC is “improving the protection, conservation, restoration, and management, of

coastal and ocean ecosystems through enhanced scientific understanding.” The OPC Five-Year Strategic Plan defines several ambition goals including improving scientific understanding of our coastal and ocean ecosystems. Only by providing new ways of collecting and disseminating data, by ensuring future actions are based on sound science, and by bringing the best scientists together to analyze complex management issues, will the OPC achieve these goals. The proposed funding for this project would enable CalOST to synchronize its actions in this capacity with those of the OPC and other state agencies. Specifically, a standing committee could be created that would serve the purpose of the OPC Science Advisory Team as called for in the OPC strategic plan.

PROJECT FINANCING

Funding Sources:

Coastal Conservancy	<u>\$200,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$200,000

Funding for the proposed project would come from an appropriation to the Coastal Conservancy from the Environmental License Plate Fund. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21190.5, these funds may be expended upon appropriation by the Legislature for purpose of the California Ocean Protection Act. A grant of funds to CalOST will help to achieve goals of the Ocean Protection Act with regard to improving scientific knowledge of ocean policy and coordination among scientists and resource managers, as well as to use California’s private and charitable resources more effectively in developing ocean protection and conservation strategies. The Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy, acting as secretary to the OPC, is directed under section 35625 of the Ocean Protection Act to administer grants and expenditures authorized by the council.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC STRATEGIC PLAN:

I. Priority Goals and Objectives

A. Governance

Objective 2: Maximize the effectiveness of state agency efforts to protect and conserve ocean and coastal resources. *The California Ocean Science Trust will collect, synthesize, and prioritize scientific research and findings to better inform Council decisions. The CalOST will also host working groups and forums to promote collaboration among the science community and between the science community and relevant state agencies.*

B. Research and Monitoring

Objective 1: Improve scientific understanding of our ocean and coastal ecosystems. *The CalOST will promote the actions outlined in the California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy to expand and improve access to ocean and coastal scientific information.*