

CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

Staff Recommendation

February 29, 2008

**The University of California Marine Council Graduate Student Fellowships**

File No.: 07-113-01

Project Manager: *Valerie Termini*

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Consideration and possible Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorization to disburse up to \$60,000 to the University of California Marine Council (UCMC) to fund two graduate fellowships. These fellowships will support graduate students researching significant coastal and marine issues facing California; with the ultimate goal of enhancing the state's ability to effectively manage these resources.

**LOCATION:** Statewide

**STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE:** *Research and Monitoring*

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [UCMC call for proposals](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

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

“The council hereby approves the disbursement of an amount not to exceed sixty thousand (\$60,000) to the University of California, Office of the President, to support the University of California Marine Council (UCMC) graduate fellowship program.”

Staff further recommends that the council adopt the following findings:

“Based on the staff report and attached exhibits, the Ocean Protection Council hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the California Ocean Protection Act.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the council's project funding guidelines.”

## **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

**Project Description:** Staff requests that the OPC authorize the expenditure of up to \$60,000 to the University of California, Office of the President, to support the UCMC graduate fellowship program. The goal of the UCMC fellowship program is to link scientific research and policy development. This is accomplished by connecting university natural and social scientists with state resource managers and policy makers to ensure that research informs long-term policies and improves ocean and coastal resource protection. The proposed funds would cover the costs of two one-year fellowships, awarded as part of the program.

The 2008 UCMC fellowship program is an opportunity for the OPC to promote young scientists who conduct research relevant to the field of ocean and coastal management. The UCMC has designated four research priority areas that are also consistent with the OPC strategic plan. These are: 1) coastal water and sediment quality, 2) fisheries and marine ecosystems, 3) coastal hazards and shoreline processes, and 4) climate change impacts.

Expanding scientific knowledge and understanding in these areas can significantly enhance the state's ability to effectively manage coastal and ocean resources. Perhaps more importantly, the UCMC fellowship will help build capacity within the ocean sciences--supporting researchers early in their careers who are examining issues relevant to managers. The fellowship will give researchers the opportunity to develop skills to communicate scientific findings to managers and policymakers; initiating connections between scientists and managers today will help ensure that their research continues to inform long-term policies and will ultimately improve ocean and coastal resource protection. In addition, this disbursement serves as one component of a broader strategy by the OPC to fund research projects that improve the understanding and management of the state's ocean and coastal resources.

Fellows will be chosen through a rigorous screening process. Each proposal will be reviewed by three outside reviewers as well as two members of the UCMC. These reviews will determine whether the proposed project is scientifically sound, meets the UCMC priorities listed above, and whether the research findings will have potential applications for resource managers, legislators and/or policy makers. Once the UCMC selects a group of exemplary candidates, OPC staff will select the two fellows whose work best addresses current OPC priorities and strategic goals.

At the end of the fellowship program, UCMC intends to hold a conference for interested scientists, state agency personnel, and legislative staff to discuss the fellows' findings and associated resource management implications.

## **PROJECT GRANTEE:**

The UCMC was established within the Office of the President to coordinate marine policy, research, education and public service, and promote responsible stewardship of the state's marine resources throughout the University of California system.

In 2000, the UCMC developed a California Coastal Environmental Quality Initiative, (CEQI) that was funded by the state legislature at \$1.5 million annually. The initiative is administered

jointly by the UCMC and the Office of the President, in close coordination with the California Resources Agency. The initiative's objective is to address California's coastal issues in ways that will increase scientific understanding of natural processes and human-induced changes, and aid legislators, policy makers and managers in making decisions that ensure the long-term sustained health of California's ocean. As part of the initiative, the UCMC fellowships serve to promote the UCMC objectives of responsible stewardship of the state's marine resources.

**PROJECT HISTORY:**

In 2007, UCMC invited graduate students to submit proposals in four research areas of interest to the State of California. UCMC funded nine students and the OPC supported two additional fellowships – the two OPC fellows began work early this year. The research projects selected for OPC in 2007 address climate change and invasive species and the possible impacts of these factors on the marine environment and food web distributions.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Ocean Protection Council	\$60,000
UCMC	<u>\$180,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$240,000</b>

Staff recommends the OPC approve the use of up to \$60,000 of the Environmental License Plate Funds, appropriated to the OPC in the FY 07/08 budget for research, surveys, and investigations pertaining to the protection or restoration of ocean, beach, or related coastal and watershed resources. The Environmental License Plate Fund may be used pursuant to Section 21190.5 of the Public Resources Code for such purposes.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:**

Under the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA), the OPC is charged with establishing policies to coordinate the collection and sharing of scientific data related to coastal and ocean resources between agencies. Specifically, Section 35650 (b)(2)(F) authorizes the OPC to give grants to projects that will, among other things, “provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources.”

The UCMC fellowship project will meet the directives of COPA by funding research projects that will be used to inform ocean and coastal management decisions and help preserve these resources for the long term.

**CONSISTENCY WITH OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

The UCMC fellowship project supports the OPC's Five-Year Strategic Plan by furthering Section II-B, Research and Monitoring, Objective 1: Improve scientific understanding of our ocean and coastal ecosystems. Section B, Objective 1a in Appendix A specifically directs the OPC to “make research a part of OPC's funding strategy.”

The UCMC fellowship project will help meet this objective because it provides support to researchers examining scientific issues relevant to coastal and ocean resource managers. Not only will these fellows produce results to inform current decisions, the program encourages scientists to make their results relevant and digestible to the manager community throughout their careers.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH OPC'S PROJECT FUNDING GUIDELINES:**

The UCMC fellowship project is consistent with the OPC's Project Funding Guidelines adopted June 14, 2007, in the following respects:

#### **Funding Priorities**

1. **Improve the scientific understanding of our ocean resources:** Research conducted by the funded fellows will increase our understanding of ocean and coastal resources, with the ultimate goal of improved resource management.
2. **Improve ocean and coastal water quality:** Improving our knowledge of ocean and coastal ecosystems will help inform management decisions affecting water quality. Fellows may provide research and data about water quality issues that helps resource managers in both conservation and restoration activities.
3. **Promote ocean and coastal awareness and stewardship:** By supporting these innovative fellowships, the OPC is creating a new generation of scientific researchers who are concerned with resource management and recognize the need for improved ocean and coastal awareness among policy makers and the general public.

#### **Required Criteria**

1. **Directly relate to the ocean and coast:** The proposed project directly relates to studying California's ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds.
2. **Support of the public:** The proposed project has public support demonstrated by the fact that the collaborative research will lead to improved management decisions affecting our ocean and coastal environment. Given California's economic reliance on healthy ocean and coastal environments, research that improves management of the ocean ecosystem will provide benefits for the public at large. For example, the total gross domestic product, GDP of California's ocean-dependent economy in 2000 was approximately \$42.9 billion and provided about 408,000 jobs.
3. **Greater-than-local interest:** The UCMC fellowship is of statewide interest because projects will ultimately lead to a better understanding of our ocean and coastal ecosystems.

#### **Additional Criteria**

1. **Resolution of more than one issue:** Proposed research projects will provide resources managers with necessary scientific data to promote informed management decisions.
2. **Leverage:** UCMC will provide \$160,000 for project support.

3. **Timeliness or urgency:** The UCMC submission deadline for fellowship proposals was February 1, 2008. Final fellow selection will be announced March 15, 2008. The selected fellows will begin work in the summer of 2008. The award lasts for one year.
4. **Innovation:** UCMC is a unique intercampus collaboration with the goal of linking scientific research to state coastal and ocean resource management needs. The UCMC 2008 fellowship program will directly encourage research in four areas where the state currently lacks information to inform policy development. In addition, the fellowship will promote information sharing and collaboration between the academic community and state agencies.
5. **Coordination:** The UCMC fellowship is a unique collaboration between the University of California, the OPC and other state resource managers. The OPC and the University of California play a critical role in building bridges between scientific research and responsive policy development, as well as public education. Links are necessary between university natural and social scientists, state resource managers and policy makers to ensure that research informs long-term policies that lead to the recovery or sustainability of the state's coastal resources. Research findings derived from the students participating in the fellowship program will address questions needed to help state resource managers improve their decision making. UCMC provides fellows with the opportunity to share their research with managers, as well as each other, in ways that can stimulate future coordinated projects.

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15306 because the project involves only data collection, research and resource evaluation activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval by the OPC.