

**CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL**

Staff Recommendation  
February 26, 2014

**MARINE PROTECTED AREA SIGNAGE**

File No.: C1000100  
Project Manager: *Amy Vierra*

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$350,000 to the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary Foundation to produce and install marine protected area interpretive panels and regulatory signs.

**LOCATION:** California Current

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOCAL AREA:** Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: Images of MPA signs

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

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

“The Ocean Protection Council hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed three hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) to the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary Foundation (MBSF) to produce and ensure installation of marine protected area (MPA) interpretive panels and regulatory signs.

This authorization is subject to:

1. Prior to disbursement of funds, MBSF shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director:
  - a. A work plan, including schedule and budget.
  - b. The names and qualifications of any contractors that the MBSF intends to employ to carry out the project.

Staff further recommends that the Ocean Protection Council adopt the following findings:

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

The proposed project is consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the California Ocean Protection Act.

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Council’s current strategic plan and grant program funding guidelines.”

## **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) disburse up to \$350,000 to the MBSF to produce and ensure installation of MPA interpretive and regulatory signs in order to increase public awareness of the MPAs and to increase compliance with the associated regulations.

Formed in 1995, the MBSF is a nonprofit public-benefit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Beginning in 2008 with support from private philanthropic organizations, the MBSF launched an MPA Education and Outreach program, supporting California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (CDFW) Marine Life Protection Act implementation. MBSF has played a crucial leadership role in developing templates for interpretive brochures and recreational fishing guides, and interpretive and regulatory panels and signs in close collaboration with CDFW. Interpretive panels (26) and regulatory signs (over 100), both designed with dynamic, interactive content via QR codes, have been produced and deployed throughout the Central and North Central coasts. Presently, MBSF is working with state, federal and local partners to assess sign priorities statewide, making the organization uniquely poised to quickly and cost-effectively utilize existing templates to fill the signage gaps identified throughout the state.

Through this grant, the MBSF will produce three major sets of deliverables:

1. A comprehensive list of locations where signage is needed;
2. Ninety to ninety-five large-scale interpretive panels<sup>1</sup> produced and installed;
3. One hundred smaller-scale regulatory/“You are Here” signs produced and installed.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

### **Project Background:**

California recently completed a redesign and improvement of the state’s system of MPAs, as mandated by the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). The redesigned system includes a network of 124 MPAs covering approximately 16 percent of state waters along California’s 1,100 miles of coastline from the Oregon border to Mexico. The MPA network was designed to achieve specific goals including to increase coherence and effectiveness in protecting the state’s

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Exhibit 1 for examples of all three types of signs.

marine life and habitats; marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage, as well as to improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems subject to minimal human disturbance. The prospects for the MPAs to meet these goals will depend on public understanding of, and compliance with, the regulations put into place to achieve them.

Public outreach and education is the most effective method to promote awareness and compliance with MPA regulations. One priority feature of an MPA outreach program is interpretive signage. Signs with information about MPAs are needed at major access or departure points near MPAs including boat launch sites and MPA shore boundaries. A comprehensive and coordinated MPA signage program is therefore necessary.

Since the establishment of California's MPA network, a series of standardized sign templates has been developed by outreach organizations and reviewed/approved by CDFW. These templates include "regulatory signs" that provide basic regulatory information such as MPA boundaries and take regulations, as well as "interpretive signs" that provide site-specific facts and images of the wildlife and areas protected by the MPAs, in addition to the MPA regulations.

To date, the contributing organizations have created and installed about 139 regulatory signs and 42 interpretive signs from north central California through Southern California. However, coverage is not comprehensive across the network; numerous MPAs along the coast, including all MPAs established in northern California, do not have permanent regulatory or interpretive signs. Additional signs are needed immediately to improve the coverage and enhance public awareness of, and compliance with, the newly established MPAs across the state. An inventory of current signs and an assessment of where additional signs should be placed is needed for long-term program management.

### **Project Details and Scope of Work:**

The grantee, the MBSF, will facilitate the design, production, and installation of MPA signs throughout the MPA network along all coastal regions to fill priority gaps in coverage, using regulatory and interpretive sign templates that have been approved by CDFW.

The project involves three tasks:

**Task 1:** Inventory existing sign locations and identify locations for new regulatory and interpretive signs

*Task 1a:* Identify locations of existing signs installed along the California coast including regulatory and interpretive signs previously installed by MBSF and partner NGOs, and regulatory signs created/installed by other agencies such as Bureau of Land Management, State Parks, and county park agencies;

*Task 1b:* Provide to OPC and CDFW a list of locations along the California coastline where regulatory and interpretive MPA signage needs have been identified. Identify recommended priority level based on needs assessment for MPA signage, to be developed in consultation with CDFW and funded through a

separate agreement.

**Task 2:** Develop and produce new regulatory and interpretive signs

Using the approved design templates, the MBSF will work with CDFW, OPC, and other partners to design and produce new regulatory and interpretive signs for the identified locations feasible within the grant budget. This will include the development of appropriate content and graphics for each sign location, including site-specific facts and images of the wildlife and areas protected by the MPAs. All signs will undergo OPC and CDFW review, revision, and approval prior to fabrication. Replacement signs will be fabricated to address vandalized or destroyed signs.

**Task 3:** Acquire necessary permits and install signs

The MBSF will acquire all necessary permits for sign installation, install the signs themselves, or ensure that partners install the signs at the locations identified in Task 1. The MBSF will verify installation at all sites.

**Site Description:**

Statewide, with greater emphasis on areas that are currently lacking MPA signage.

**PROJECT GRANTEE:**

Formed in 1995, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation is an independent, nonprofit public-benefit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Starting in 2011, MBSF also began operations in Southern California as the Channel Islands Sanctuary Foundation. The MBSF focuses its efforts on education, research and resource protection initiatives for conserving and protecting the extraordinary environment and resources of the marine sanctuaries in central and southern California, coastal and undersea equivalents to our nation's parks, forests and wilderness areas.

The role of the MBSF is to 1) provide a fiscal sponsorship and management vehicle to augment the federal activities and 2) generate funds for MBSF- initiated projects. The projects are designed to facilitate collaboration with other organizations doing work related to coastal and ocean science, education and conservation. Beginning in 2008 with support from private philanthropic organizations, the MBSF launched an MPA Education and Outreach program, supporting CDFW in their efforts to implement the MLPA.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

<b>Ocean Protection Council</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>

Staff anticipates using funds from the FY 2013-2014 from the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). ELPF funds may be expended, upon appropriation by the Legislature, pursuant to the Ocean Protection Act (Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code) in furtherance of the program's statutory purposes (Public Resources Code § 21190.5). Since the funds were originally appropriated to CDFW, staff at OPC and CDFW have executed an interagency agreement that authorizes OPC to encumber the funds consistent with this and OPC's existing authority pursuant to Public Resources Code § 35500 *et seq.*

**CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act (division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code) in the following respects:

Public Resources Code § 35615(a)(1) directs the OPC to coordinate the activities of state agencies that are related to the protection and conservation of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems to improve the effectiveness of state efforts to protect ocean resources within existing fiscal limitations.

**CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The project implements **Focal Area D (Sustainable Fisheries and Marine Ecosystems)**, Issue 8: Leveraging Investments and Realizing Benefits of the State's Marine Protected Areas. The Strategic Plan calls for the OPC to support effective implementation of MPAs consistent with the MLPA through strategic partnerships and to coordinate MLPA implementation with other ocean management agencies to improve management effectiveness.

**CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the OPC's Grant Program Funding Guidelines. .

**Required Criteria**

1. **Directly relate to the ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds:** The proposed project will improve the public's understanding of and compliance with the MPAs.
2. **Have demonstrable support from the public:** The proposed authorization is supported by numerous governmental, academic, and NGO entities. See letters of support in Exhibit 2.
3. **Be of greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is statewide in scope.

**Additional Criteria**

1. **Innovation:** The project is innovative in that it harnesses the strengths and resources from a variety of entities including the OPC, CDFW, and the MBSF to produce the MPA signs in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.
2. **Improvements to management approaches or techniques:** One of the purposes of the MPA signs is to improve the public's compliance with MPA regulations. As such, the signs will result in improved management approaches in that CDFW wardens will not

have to spend as much time and effort simply educating the public about MPA boundaries and regulations.

3. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The MPAs, themselves, are a tool to address more than one issue. The MPAs use a more ecosystem-based management approach than traditional single-species management. In addition, the MPAs will aid in the understanding of how other phenomena, such as changing sea-surface temperatures or pH, are affecting marine resources.
4. **Coordination:** The proposed project is a direct collaboration between state and private entities. The MBSF, through the execution of this grant, will be engaging many different partners who wish to help improve the public's understanding of the MPAs.

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

The proposed authorization is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15378(b)(4). The OPC expects CDFW and the MBSF to use this funding to determine where signage is needed and best sited, and therefore, expects that as CDFW and the MBSF make decisions, CDFW and other responsible permitting agencies with legal jurisdiction over the installation shall consider whether CEQA exemptions such as those found in CEQA Guideline sections 15303, 15304 and 15307 are applicable.

Exhibit 1: Examples of the three types of MPA signs proposed to be produced under grant to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation

1. Interpretive Panel (Education/ General Public theme; used at State Parks, visitors centers, etc.)

# Conserving California's Coastal Treasures

## Marine Protected Areas Safeguard Our Ocean's Bounty

A statewide network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) safeguards California's rich coastal resources. The Bodega Head MPAs include kelp forests, offshore pinnacles, rocky reefs and tidepools. Sonoma Coast State Park stretches along 17 miles of coastal bluffs and beaches. By protecting land and sea, the flow of life between marine, freshwater and land habitats is conserved. This scenic area offers many opportunities for recreation and research.



**MPA Regulations**

- Bodega Head State Marine Reserve (SMR)**  
Take of all living marine resources is prohibited.
- Bodega Head State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)**  
Take of all living marine resources is prohibited except the recreational take of pelagic finfish\* by trolling, Dungeness crab by trap and market squid by hand-held dip net. Commercial take of pelagic finfish\* with troll fishing gear or seine, Dungeness crab by trap and market squid by round haul net allowed.

\*As defined by California Department of Fish and Game regulations



Spud Point Marina



Thousands of people enjoy boating, hiking and picnicking along the rugged Sonoma coast every year.



Scientists study kelp forests within MPAs. They are home to hundreds of marine species.



Water birds such as this western grebe can benefit from feeding within MPAs.



Watch the water to spot marine mammals such as this white-sided dolphin.



California sea lions

**California leads the nation and the world with its network of MPAs.**

These MPAs—

- Have varying levels of protection
- Conserve marine habitats and diversity
- Allow marine life to thrive
- Make great places for education, research, and fun

**MPAs—Good for the Ocean; Good for You!**



To report violations call **1-888-DFG-CALTIP**  
Visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa) for detailed maps and regulations

2. Regulatory, No Fishing Icon





3. "You Are Here" Sign

