



CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

Staff Recommendation  
January 31, 2018

**California's Ocean Acidification Action Plan**

Jenn Phillips, Climate Policy Advisor

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$250,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to assist OPC in developing and releasing California's Ocean Acidification Action Plan as part of California's commitment to the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification by providing content support, facilitating scientific review, and developing outreach and communication materials.

**LOCATION:** Statewide

**STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S):** Climate Change, Science-Based Decision Making

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit A: Letter of Commitment from Governor Brown to International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification

Exhibit B: International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification Year in Review

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**FINDINGS AND RESOLUTION:**

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) adopt the following findings:

"Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibit(s), the Ocean Protection Council hereby finds that:

- 1) The proposed projects are consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the Ocean Protection Act.
- 2) The proposed projects are consistent with the Ocean Protection Council's grant program funding guidelines (Interim Standards and Protocols, August 2013).
- 3) The proposed project is not a 'legal project' that triggers the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21068 and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, section 15378."

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

“The California Ocean Protection Council hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$250,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to assist OPC in developing and releasing California’s Ocean Acidification Action Plan as part of California’s commitment to the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification by providing content support, facilitating scientific review, and developing outreach and communication materials.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, the California Ocean Science Trust shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director of the OPC detailed work plans, schedules, staff requirements, budgets, and the names of any contractors intended to be used to complete the projects, as well as discrete deliverables that can be produced in intervals to ensure the projects are on target for successful completion. All projects will be developed under a shared understanding of process, management and delivery.”

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

OPC, a founding and key member of the [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#) (OA Alliance), is developing a statewide Ocean Acidification Action Plan (Action Plan). OPC aims to be one of the first government members of the OA Alliance to develop an Action Plan, enabling California to continue to lead on this issue, be visionary and bold, and serve as a model for other jurisdictions that are looking to take discrete actions to address and better understand ocean acidification. The funding for this grant will enable the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to provide additional capacity and support to the OPC to ensure that the Action Plan is well scoped, vetted, and reflects the goals and ambitions of California at large on ocean acidification.

**Background:**

Given the global nature of ocean acidification, the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification was founded in 2016 to assist and motivate governments to take meaningful actions to address the problem. The Pacific Coast Collaborative (PCC) launched the OA Alliance, an international network of governments and organizations that together address ocean acidification and other threats from changing ocean conditions. Over the past year, the OA Alliance has invited membership from countries, states, provinces, counties, cities, tribes and First Nations. The OA Alliance has also welcomed universities, non-governmental organizations, industry associations, businesses and other parties to participate as affiliate members. The OA Alliance is working to organize individual efforts into a coherent movement to elevate the visibility and importance of ocean acidification in public discourse and policy development and is pushing for inclusion of strong ocean protection provisions in international climate agreements.

Together, the OA Alliance aims to:

- Advance scientific understanding of ocean acidification;

- Take meaningful actions to reduce causes of acidification;
- Protect the environment and coastal communities from impacts of a changing ocean;
- Expand public awareness and understanding of acidification; and
- Build sustained support for addressing this global problem.

In 2017, the OA Alliance has grown to 55 members, including 10 national governments, 5 states, 2 provinces, 4 tribal nations, and 3 cities, along with research institutions, businesses and NGOs (with Sweden, Fiji, Seychelles, Tokelau, Iceland, and New Zealand becoming our newest members) and had a key role at the [United Nations Oceans Conference](#) in New York, [Our Ocean](#) in Malta, and the United Nations Climate Change Conference, [COP23](#), in Bonn, Germany. Throughout 2018, the OA Alliance members will continue to collaborate and expand our membership to develop practicable, implementable steps to mitigate causes, to adapt to unavoidable change and to build resiliency in marine ecosystems and the coastal communities impacted by changing ocean conditions.

By joining the OA Alliance, member governments endorse a [Call to Action](#) which formally recognizes the urgent need to act on ocean acidification by investing in research and monitoring, exploring adaptation and mitigation strategies to changing ocean conditions, engaging in public outreach and education, and making deeper commitments to reduce carbon emissions to protect the economic and cultural resources at risk in coastal communities around the world. Moreover, the OA Alliance will work with partner governments, initiatives and organizations to ensure ocean acidification and other climate-related changes in ocean conditions are addressed in future climate agreements. And lastly, Government members commit to creating a customized Ocean Acidification Action Plan that addresses one or more of the five goals within the Call to Action. The OA Alliance has made international voluntary commitments with the United Nations and the Our Ocean Conference to develop 15 Ocean Acidification Action Plans by June 2019.

**California's Statewide Ocean Acidification Action Plan:**

OPC's efforts to develop an Action Plan are particularly timely given that the current COP Presidency, Fiji, launched its Ocean Pathway Partnership at COP23 this year. This campaign incorporates the global ocean into international climate negotiations, agreements and Nationally Determined Contributions<sup>1</sup> – and Ocean Acidification Action Plans can be a vehicle to illustrate ways in which we can mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on our oceans. Moreover, OPC is striving to release the Ocean Acidification Action Plan during this Administration to carry the momentum established on climate change and ocean protection to the next Administration.

Given this ambitious timeline, funding for this grant will enable OST to provide additional capacity and support to the OPC to create a bold, yet pragmatic, Action Plan. OST will, in close partnership with OPC and key subgrantees and subject matter experts, provide the following services associated with the

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<sup>1</sup> Nationally Determined Contributions are commitments made by countries to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. They are submitted every five years as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

development of the Action Plan:

- Scope with partners across California and the OA Alliance community as well as compile key resources drawing on existing efforts (such as the OA Alliance's [OA Action Plan Toolkit](#)) in order to develop a robust and geographically relevant Action Plan;
- Assist the OPC in drafting the Action Plan to ensure it meets the intended use and is applicable to the intended audiences;
- Assist in gathering input throughout the Action Plan development process and work directly with the recently established Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Science Task Force per [Assembly Bill 2139](#) to ensure the Action Plan is scientifically feasible and credible;
- Develop outreach materials for California's Ocean Acidification Action Plan, pending its approval by the Council later in calendar year 2018.

This proposed work will provide a suite of options and set a course forward to allow a diversity of managers and decision-makers to assess the vulnerability of coastal communities, ecosystems, and economies to ocean acidification in the state of California, and employ the most expedient tools and mechanisms to mitigate and adapt to the changes in our ocean's chemistry and its associated impacts. This project will support decision-makers and the community at large to develop and implement flexible approaches for a range of future options, to make the best choices for today and in the future.

**Project Timeline:** February 2018 – September 2018

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize encumbrance of up to \$250,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to assist OPC in developing and releasing California's Ocean Acidification Action Plan as part of California's commitment to the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification by providing content support, facilitating scientific review, and developing outreach and communication materials. The proposed project may not require expenditure of the full \$250,000.

Ocean Protection Council	\$250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>

The anticipated source of funds will be from the Ocean Protection appropriation of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of funds for purposes consistent with Section 35650 of the Public Resources Code, establishing the California Ocean Protection Trust Fund (Pub. Res. Code § 75060(g)). Under Section 35650(b), Ocean Protection Trust Fund monies may be expended for projects authorized by the OPC that are identified as appropriate Trust Fund purposes, as specified. The project is consistent with the Trust Fund purposes as discussed in the following section.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, because it is consistent with trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2) as projects which:

- Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems;
- Provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources;
- Provide funding for adaptive management, planning coordination, monitoring, research, and other necessary activities to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change on California's ocean ecosystem.

This proposed project has the potential to improve the management of coastal waters and ecosystems through providing the best available science and more appropriate scalable actions to allow decision-makers to both assess the vulnerability of coastal communities, ecosystems, and economies to ocean acidification statewide and to implement effective adaptive management planning. As stated, the strength of the OA Alliance comes from taking concrete action on ocean acidification from a local to international level, and California's Ocean Acidification Action Plan will lay out that strategy over near to longer-term for the State and ensure we are held accountable to make this global challenge more tractable.

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

This project implements Focal Area A: Science-based decision making and Focal Area B: Climate change. Specifically, this project will improve decision-making by aggregating the key actions that can be taken to address and respond to ocean acidification across different disciplines and scales, as well as compile a list of current and ongoing activities that could be leveraged and enhanced. This will assist decision-makers as they develop approaches for addressing ocean acidification that are based on the best available science.

**CONSISTENCY WITH PROPOSITION 84 (The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006; Public Resources Code §75060(g))**

This project is consistent with the purposes outlined in Proposition 84, specifically it includes the development of scientific data needed to adaptively manage the state's marine resources and reserves and the development and implementation of projects to conserve marine wildlife. This project funds the California Ocean Science Trust to support OPC in developing and broadly releasing the California Ocean Acidification Action Plan that reflects the latest scientific understanding and management options to respond to ocean acidification. This information will allow coastal planners and managers to adaptively manage the state's coastal resources.

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

The proposed project is consistent with the OPC's interim Grant Program Funding Guidelines for Proposition 84 funds, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. Directly relate to the ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds: *This project directly relates to the coast because it will provide a synthesis of the different types of actions to take on ocean acidification that are supported by the best available science.*
2. Support of the public: *See Exhibit A.*
3. Greater-than-local interest: *This is a statewide Action Plan on Ocean Acidification that will be applicable to a diversity of entities and aims to be a model for other governments that are members of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification.*

Additional Criteria

4. Improvements to management approaches or techniques: *The proposed work will improve management approaches or techniques by providing the current, best available science to inform coastal and ocean management and planning decisions.*
5. Timeliness or Urgency: *Given the voluntary commitments the OA Alliance has made at international fora and California's desire to be one of the initial Governments to release an Ocean Acidification Action Plan, this project will be completed by September 2018.*
6. Coordination: *While state agencies and local governments differ in their mandates and decision-making processes, the document will provide information and recommendations to enhance consistency across agencies, that are supported by non-governmental entities, in their development of approaches to address ocean acidification. It will also aggregate existing and proposed activities that can be referred to, leveraged and enhanced to continue the strong leadership the state of California has exhibited on ocean acidification recently.*

**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.