



Item 6

ACTION ITEM

TO: California Ocean Protection Council
FROM: Holly Wyer, Program Manager
DATE: April 24, 2018
RE: Adoption of the California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy

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

“The California Ocean Protection Council hereby adopts the California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy: Addressing Marine Debris from Source to Sea (Exhibit A) and directs staff to implement the Ocean Protection Council Priorities to help state and local governments address ocean litter pollution in state waterways.”

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): Science-Based Decision-Making, Coastal and Ocean Impacts from Land-Based Sources

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A: California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy: Addressing Marine Debris from Source to Sea

SUMMARY:

The *California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy: Addressing Marine Debris from Source to Sea* (Strategy) updates the State’s ocean litter priorities and includes actions that will enable government agencies, industry, academia, nonprofits, and tribes to collaborate on meaningful contributions to reducing ocean litter in California. The Strategy is organized into two sections:

- 1) OPC Priorities, and Stakeholder-Identified Goals, Objectives, and Action Items
- 2) Literature Synthesis on Ocean Litter

The OPC Priorities section clearly articulates the work OPC will take on over the next six years to address ocean litter and focuses addressing land-based ocean litter, microplastics and microfibers, and fishing and aquaculture gear, as described in more detail below.

BACKGROUND:

Ocean litter is a pervasive problem at local, regional, and global scales with a wide range of

consequences to human health, the environment, and the economy. Immediate, collaborative action to reduce and prevent ocean litter will ensure that California communities, environments, and economies remain productive and vibrant. OPC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Marine Debris Program partnered to update OPC's 2008 *An Implementation Strategy for the California Ocean Protection Council Resolution to Reduce and Prevent Ocean Litter*. Both OPC and NOAA Marine Debris Program provided funding to California Sea Grant to facilitate the stakeholder process and draft the Strategy, and staff from both agencies participated throughout the update process. The 2018 Strategy will provide structure and guidance for OPC and California stakeholders to efficiently address this pressing issue over the next six years.

The 2008 Strategy

The 2008 Strategy served as a powerful and effective document to promote action on addressing ocean litter. Since 2008, many of the actions described in the document have either been accomplished or are in progress. For example, the single-use plastic carryout bag ban was ratified by California voters in 2016 and the State Water Resources Control Board's Trash Amendments were adopted in 2015. While we have made great strides in addressing ocean litter in California, our understanding of the issue has changed considerably in the last decade. For example, the investigation of microplastics' presence in aquatic ecosystems and impacts on marine life has increased dramatically over the last ten years. This 2018 update expands the previous Strategy to include projects of a variety of scales and scopes so that entities including government agencies, industry, academia, nonprofits, and tribes can collaborate on meaningful contributions to reducing ocean litter in California.

Strategy Update Process

In 2016, OPC and the NOAA Marine Debris Program initiated a partnership with California Sea Grant to update the OPC 2008 Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Ocean Litter. Nationally, the NOAA Marine Debris Program is developing marine debris action plans to engage stakeholder communities in states and regions across the country. State participation in the marine debris action plans varies widely around the country, and California is taking a leadership role by developing OPC Priorities and adopting the 2018 Strategy as the state's marine debris action plan.

In addition to OPC and NOAA Marine Debris Program staff, the Strategy planning team also included the California Coastal Commission and Surfrider Foundation. Representatives from organizations active in conservation, research, waste reduction, and education, as well as representatives from the plastics industry, fishing, aquaculture, tribes, local governments, and State and Federal agencies were invited to participate in two workshops in 2017, one in May and one in November. The content of the Strategy was generated from a wide range of stakeholder input, gathered during these workshops and two rounds of public comment between May 2017 and February 2018.

Scope and Contents of the Strategy

The Strategy includes OPC Priorities and stakeholder-identified Goals, Objectives, and Action Items to address ocean litter. The OPC Priorities were developed to clearly articulate the work OPC will take on over the next six years to address ocean litter. The priorities are framed in the context of OPC's mandate

and focused around developing and implementing policy, coordinating among state agencies, providing funding for catalytic and innovative projects, and providing the best available science for government decision-making. The OPC Priorities were developed by OPC staff and refined by multiple rounds of stakeholder feedback both at the second workshop and through public comment. These Priorities are meant to support and enhance many of the Goals, Objectives, and Action Items developed by California stakeholders. OPC Priorities are structured into three goals:

1. **OPC Goal 1 – Land-based Ocean Litter:** Protect marine ecosystems and the communities that rely on them by promoting policies to prevent litter from reaching the ocean.
2. **OPC Goal 2 – Microplastics and Microfibers:** Increase understanding of the scale and impact of microplastics and microfibers on the marine environment and develop solutions to address them.
3. **OPC Goal 3 – Fishing and Aquaculture Gear:** Reduce debris from fishing and aquaculture-related activities in the ocean.

In contrast to the OPC Priorities, the Stakeholder Goals, Objectives and Action Items were developed and revised by a wide range of stakeholders including grassroots organizations, fishermen, scientists, wastewater treatment managers, and the plastics industry. Stakeholders were engaged through two workshops and through public comment periods on the draft document. The first workshop provided an opportunity to brainstorm action items, and the second workshop provided an opportunity to refine the Goals, Objectives, and Action Items in the first draft of the Strategy.

The stakeholder section of the Strategy is structured around six Goals, five of which are dedicated to land-based litter, and one of which is dedicated to ocean-based debris. Nested under each of these Goals are Objectives, which outline approaches for achieving the Goals and Action Items, which are concrete and measurable tasks that stakeholders can implement to contribute to an Objective and prevent or reduce ocean litter. These Goals, Objectives, and Actions were developed through the workshop process described above. Broadly broken into land- and ocean-based litter categories, the six stakeholder Goals of this Strategy are as follows:

Land-based Ocean Litter

1. **Goal 1:** Reduce the use of common ocean litter items through mandates and incentives targeting public institutions and businesses.
2. **Goal 2:** Reduce the prevalence of common ocean litter items through changes in product production, design, and management.
3. **Goal 3:** Improve waste management and interception of litter on land before it enters the ocean.
4. **Goal 4:** Conduct and communicate research on existing and emerging issues related to land-based ocean litter.
5. **Goal 5:** Generate behavior change by educating and engaging communities and individuals to reduce ocean litter.

Ocean-based Marine Debris

6. **Goal 6:** Reduce the sources of ocean-based ocean litter and maximize the efficiency of ocean-based ocean litter cleanup.

The Strategy as a whole prioritizes source reduction, as agencies and experts agree that source reduction is the most effective tactic to address ocean litter. The Strategy focuses primarily on land-based litter, because the majority of litter found on Coastal Cleanup Day is land-based.

Most of the Strategy's stakeholder Action Items are accompanied by a list of lead and/or partner organizations that have volunteered to implement the Action Items. Given the many dynamic and influential ocean litter stakeholders in California, the Strategy provides an opportunity for organizations to take a leadership role on Action Items that align with their respective goals and mandates. Additional organizations may contribute to actions over the lifetime of the Strategy. OPC and NOAA Marine Debris Program are committed to providing overall leadership and coordination of tracking Strategy implementation progress, facilitating communication between partner organizations, and sharing updates among interested stakeholders.

Implementation Process

The Strategy is intended to be a roadmap for action over the next six years. OPC staff and NOAA Marine Debris Program staff will organize and facilitate in-person meetings every two years to provide progress updates and reevaluate the Strategy's Goals and Objectives, as necessary. OPC staff and NOAA Marine Debris Program staff will also organize and facilitate a webinar or conference call approximately every six months to allow stakeholders and OPC staff to provide status updates on their actions and discuss lessons learned. Stakeholders will form working groups around each Action Item, and will be responsible for devising implementation plans with rough timelines and metrics for each Action Item by the first six-month check-in webinar (which is anticipated for late 2018).

CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION ACT:

The proposed action is consistent with the Ocean Protection Act (Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code). Section 35615, specifically directs the Council to coordinate the activities of state agencies that are related to the protection and conservation of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

These projects implement Focal Area D: Coastal and ocean impacts from land-based sources, and Focal Area A: Science-based decision making. Specifically, supporting collaborative efforts and effective partnerships that measurable reduce existing and new marine debris and identifying high priority management information needs.