



Item 6a

Staff Recommendation
June 19, 2020

Tribal Marine Stewards Network Pilot Program

Michael Esgro, OPC Marine Ecosystems Program Manager & Tribal Liaison

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Staff recommends that OPC approve the disbursement of \$1,000,000 to the California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA) to support the development of a Tribal Marine Stewards Network pilot program.

LOCATION: Statewide

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): 2.1: Enhance Engagement with Tribes; 3.1: Protect and Restore Coastal and Marine Ecosystems

EXHIBITS:

Exhibit A: Letters of Support

FINDINGS AND RESOLUTION:

Staff recommends that OPC adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibit(s), OPC 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; and
- 2) The proposed projects are not ‘legal projects’ that trigger the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code section, section 15378.”

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

“OPC hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$1,000,000 to the California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA) to support the development of a Tribal Marine Stewards Network pilot program.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, CIEA 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:

Background

Indigenous peoples have inhabited the California coast since time immemorial. Despite a history of genocide, forced relocation, and systematic oppression, California’s Tribes remain the original stewards of California’s coast and ocean. Tribes continue to rely on the coast and ocean for food, medicine, ceremony, and other customary uses, responsibly using natural and cultural resources in accordance with traditional practice. Tribes have never ceded their inherent rights to harvest and gather from, or hold ceremony in, the marine environment. Nor have they surrendered their obligation to manage marine resources sustainably in support of a resilient ocean for all beings.

In 1999, California passed the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), which directed the state to redesign and expand its system of marine protected areas (MPAs) in order to more effectively conserve marine resources and protect ocean and coastal biodiversity. In 2012, California completed the implementation of a new science-based and stakeholder-driven MPA network that spans the state’s entire 1,100-mile coastline and protects 16% of state waters. The network consists of 124 individual MPAs that have varying levels of protection, including some reserves that prohibit all “take” within their boundaries; it is the largest network of its kind in North America and one of the largest in the world. Despite the fact that many of California’s MPAs are located in ancestral territories of Tribes, the MLPA initially failed to address Tribal rights and concerns. However, in recent years, significant progress has been made toward more meaningful Tribal engagement in MPA management. For example, California’s MPA Statewide Leadership Team now includes four regional Tribal representatives to ensure that Tribes are directly involved in the development of MPA policy.

Both Tribes and the State recognize the significant benefits of increased Tribal engagement in MPA management. Scientific research and monitoring is a focal area of MPA management that is of particular interest to Tribes. Successful indigenous monitoring programs have been implemented in many different parts of the world, from the [Coastal Guardian Watchmen](#)¹ in British Columbia to the [Indigenous Land and Sea](#)

¹ <https://coastalfirstnations.ca/our-environment/programs/coastal-guardian-watchmen-support/>

[Rangers](#)² in Queensland, Australia. These programs empower indigenous peoples to monitor, protect, and restore the cultural and natural resources of their territories. In California, Tribes have served as valuable partners in several state-funded ocean and coastal monitoring efforts to date. For example, a collaborative partnership of four north coast Tribes worked to gather indigenous traditional knowledge (ITK) through interviews and archival research during the MPA baseline monitoring period, significantly enhancing resource managers' understanding of ocean health in that region. More recently, the [Tribal Intertidal Digital Ecological Surveys \(TIDES\) project](#)³ has brought together academics, resource managers, and indigenous communities in a unique effort that combines ITK with advanced imaging and mapping techniques to plan for future changes associated with sea level rise. In addition, some coastal Tribes in California, such as the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, regularly conduct monitoring activities as components of their Tribal natural resource management programs.

California Tribes now seek to expand on these successes and build a statewide Tribal Marine Stewards Network, rooted in shared priorities between Tribes and the State. Such a Network would significantly advance California's efforts to support indigenous stewardship and adopt meaningful co-management measures.

Project Tasks

This project will establish a Tribal Marine Stewards Network pilot program composed of four partner Tribes (Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Resighini Rancheria, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians, and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band), supported by two nongovernmental organizations (CIEA and Ecotrust) and focused on MPA monitoring. The Tribal Marine Stewards Network will work closely with OPC, CDFW, and other partners to accomplish the following tasks:

Identify shared priorities and build Tribal capacity. CIEA will organize and convene an initial project planning retreat at which Tribes will share current monitoring activities, discuss areas of common interest, and review the state's [MPA Monitoring Action Plan](#)⁴ to identify shared priorities between Tribes and the State (e.g. species of Tribal cultural importance that are also targeted for long-term monitoring by OPC and CDFW). To build Tribal capacity for monitoring work, Tribes will hire project staff and identify Tribal community members interested in implementing monitoring projects. Tribes will also work to identify a fifth Tribe, ideally in Southern California, that is interested in participating in the Tribal Marine Stewards Network.

Conduct research and monitoring activities. Based on priorities identified at the project planning retreat, the Tribal Marine Stewards Network will develop a monitoring workplan and procure resources (e.g. data sheets or electronic data entry forms, tablets, transect

² <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/conservation/community/land-sea-rangers>

³ <https://dornsife.usc.edu/uscseagrant/opc-sio-smith-tides/>

⁴ <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=161748&inline>

tapes, quadrats) to be shared among project partners. CIEA and Ecotrust will facilitate at least three workshops for Tribal community members, to be conducted by Tribal resource management professionals, Tribal scientists, and/or academic researchers. These trainings will provide opportunities for Tribal community members to be trained in relevant data collection and analysis methods; after trainings are complete, Tribes will begin on-the-ground research and monitoring work. Examples of potential projects include: monitoring of culturally important species or locations in rocky intertidal and shallow subtidal/kelp forest habitats, monitoring of human uses (beach use, vessel traffic, compliance with MPA regulations, etc.), marine historical eco-archaeology, water quality sampling, and collection of ITK through community participation or archival research.

Engage with the broader Tribal community and conduct outreach. The Tribal Marine Stewards Network will document its monitoring activities and share updates with Tribal leadership as well as the broader Tribal community. This will be accomplished through newsletters, websites, social media campaigns, and other communications tools as appropriate. In addition, each of the four partner Tribes will be responsible for developing one outreach activity that will allow members of that Tribe to access, engage with, learn about, and/or gather data about coastal and marine environments.

Collect, store, and share data and knowledge. In collaboration with Ecotrust, the Tribal Marine Stewards Network will adapt an existing technological platform for the collection and storage of ITK for use by partner Tribes. The Network will also work to enhance the technical and digital infrastructure of partner Tribes. As part of this task, the Network will ensure that all Tribal data and knowledge is shared with the State, project partners, and/or the public in ways that are culturally appropriate. This will include the development of protocols that will allow Tribes to protect sensitive information.

Create a plan for scaling up. At the conclusion of this project, The Tribal Marine Stewards Network will collaborate with the State to develop a “Lessons Learned” document. This document will include recommendations for scaling up the pilot program to 1) include more Tribes and 2) address broader priorities in ocean conservation such as sustainable fisheries and climate resilience. This document will also include a development plan that identifies sustainable funding sources for the Tribal Marine Stewards Network, ensuring its sustainability into the future.

The development of a Tribal Marine Stewards Network will enhance the capacity of California’s coastal Tribes to monitor and manage their ancestral lands and waters. Simultaneously, this project will provide the State with critical information needed to inform adaptive management of the MPA network, helping to ensure a successful management review of the network in 2022.

Site Description

This project will take place at or near MPAs in the ancestral territories of three North Coast Tribes (Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Resighini Rancheria, and the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians) and one Central Coast Tribe (the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band). To increase the geographic scope of this pilot effort, Tribes will also work to identify a fifth coastal Tribe, ideally in Southern California, that is interested in participating in the Tribal Marine Stewards Network.

About the Grantee

CIEA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting Tribal sovereignty and traditional food security, building Tribal capacity, and increasing Tribal engagement with state and regional decisionmaking. CIEA will serve as the backbone entity for the Tribal Marine Stewards Network and will provide subgrants to four partner Tribes: Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Resighini Rancheria, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians, and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. Ecotrust, a nongovernmental organization that has successfully partnered with Native American and Alaska Native Tribes to support their engagement in marine resource management, will support the Tribal Marine Stewards Network by providing technical assistance and conducting outreach.

Project Timeline

- June 2020: grant awarded
- June 2020 – October 2020: Confirm project leads and participants. Convene kickoff call with all project partners. Start to prepare for project planning retreat.
- October 2020 – October 2021: Identify shared priorities and build Tribal capacity. Hold initial project planning retreat. Hold training workshops.
- March 2021 – May 2022: Conduct on-the-ground research and monitoring activities (data collection and analysis).
- March 2021 – June 2022: Engage with the broader Tribal community and conduct outreach.
- February 2021 – July 2022: Collect, store, and share data and knowledge. Create a plan for scaling up the program to include more Tribes and address broader priorities in ocean conservation.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Staff recommends that OPC authorize encumbrance of up to \$1,000,000 to the California Indian Environmental Alliance to conduct the project summarized above.

Ocean Protection Council	\$1,000,000
TOTAL	\$1,000,000

The anticipated source of funds will be OPC’s FY 2020/2021 appropriation for MPA monitoring. As directed by the MPA Statewide Leadership Team workplan, OPC has worked with CDFW and other partners statewide to implement a partnership-based monitoring program to assess MPA network performance. This project significantly elevates the role of California’s Tribes and Tribal Governments in that monitoring program.

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:

(A) Eliminate or reduce threats to coastal and ocean ecosystems, habitats, and species: *This program will include long-term monitoring of critical ecosystems, habitats, and species, helping to track and reduce threats such as overharvest, pollution, invasive species, and climate impacts. This program will also help to ensure that existing MPA protections are being effectively implemented in ancestral Tribal territories.*

(B) Improve the management of fisheries: *This program will include monitoring of fisheries species that are high priorities for both Tribes and the State, such as abalone.*

(C) Foster sustainable fisheries: *Expected ecological benefits from MPA networks include benefits to fished populations. In addition, monitoring data derived from this program will support sustainable co-management of fisheries resources between Tribes and the State.*

(D) Improve coastal water quality: *This program may include water quality monitoring, strengthening the nexus between water quality protection and MPA protection.*

(E) Allow for increased public access to, and enjoyment of, ocean and coastal resources, of those resources: *This program will include a significant outreach and education component directly aimed at increasing Tribal community access to ocean and coastal resources.*

(F) Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems: *This program will support ongoing State efforts toward meaningful co-*

management arrangements with California Tribes and Tribal Governments. Information from this program will also directly inform the adaptive management of the MPA network.

(G) Provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources: *This long-term monitoring program will generate scientific and cultural data and knowledge that will directly inform the development of co-management arrangements between Tribes and the State. This program will also provide ecological, environmental, and human use data that will inform adaptive management of the State's MPA network.*

(H) Protect, conserve, and restore coastal waters and ocean ecosystems: *Scientific research and monitoring is a key component of California's MPA management program, which is aimed at providing protection, conservation, and restoration benefits for ocean and coastal species and habitats.*

(I) Address coastal water contamination from biological pathogens: *This program may include water quality monitoring, strengthening the nexus between water quality protection and MPA protection.*

(J) 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 long-term monitoring program will generate scientific and cultural data and knowledge that will directly inform the development of co-management arrangements between Tribes and the State. This program will also provide ecological, environmental, and human use data that will inform adaptive management of the State's MPA network.*

By directly engaging OPC and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as Tribally-focused agencies such as the Native American Heritage Commission and the Governor's Tribal Advisor, this project will promote the coordination of state programs and activities that protect ocean resources.

CONSISTENCY WITH OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project supports Objective 2.1: Enhance Engagement with Tribes. Specifically, this project contributes to three key action items under that Objective:

- Develop and fund implementation of a Tribal MPA monitoring program based on priorities shared between the state and California's Tribes.
- By 2020, develop and implement a trusted pathway for the consideration of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge/Traditional Ecological Knowledge in ocean and coastal management decisions.
- Support coastal and ocean access for Tribes to enhance connections to their ancestral lands and waters.

This project also supports Objective 3.1: Protect and Restore Coastal and Marine Ecosystems. Specifically, this project contributes to one key action item under that Objective:

- Fund and manage statewide ecological and socioeconomic monitoring of the MPA network, in preparation for the ten-year MPA management review in 2022.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (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.