



Staff Recommendation
June 19, 2020

Communications Strategy for 2022 Adaptive Management Review

Tova Handelman, Senior Marine Protected Areas Program Manager

Matthew Warham, Marine Protected Areas Sea Grant Fellow

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Staff recommends that OPC authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract(s) on the Council's behalf for up to \$500,000. Such funds shall be awarded to contractor(s) selected through a competitive process consistent with State contracting requirements. The selected contractor(s) will be obligated to develop a comprehensive communications plan for the State of California that will help it raise awareness of California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Program's first decadal management review of the MPA network slated to occur in or around December 2022.

LOCATION: Statewide

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): 3.1: Protect and Restore Coastal and Marine Ecosystems

EXHIBITS:

Exhibit A: Letters of Support

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), 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 Executive Director to execute a contract(s) on the Council’s behalf for up to \$500,000 to develop a comprehensive communications plan for the State of California to raise awareness of California’s MPA Management Program and disseminate information about the first decadal management review of the MPA network occurring in December 2022.

This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds, the contractor(s) 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 subcontractors 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 with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Fish and Game Commission.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As California prepares for the first decadal management review of its MPA network in December 2022, a comprehensive communications strategy is necessary to establish clear messaging and engage communities in the review process.

The [Statewide MPA Monitoring Program](#)¹ guides the monitoring of ecosystems and human uses in MPAs and is organized into three core components: science, evaluation, and communication. Each component plays a critical role in informing adaptive management decisions about the MPA network. To date, the State has made significant investments in scientific monitoring of the MPA network, and the forthcoming evaluation of the data from those efforts will play a meaningful role in the management review. This communications project recommended for approval will provide the essential framework and capacity needed for OPC and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to transparently and effectively disseminate information about the management review and create a long-term communications plan for the State’s MPA Management Program.

Clear communications about what ocean stakeholders can expect from the inaugural management review of the MPA network is central to its success. The contractor(s) selected through a Request for Proposals will work collaboratively with OPC, CDFW, and the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC) to develop a thorough communications plan that the State can use to: ensure unified messaging around the review process and its scientific findings; engage ocean stakeholders, legislators, and decision-makers in the review process; disseminate information on the State’s efforts in MPA management, outreach, and science to date; create brand recognition for the MPA network; and develop an MPA communications plan for state agencies to follow after the review is completed.

1

http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/_media_library/2018/05/statewide_mpa_monitoring_program_overview_-_final_17.pdf

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Background

MPA management is guided by the [2016 Master Plan for Marine Protected Areas](#)² (Master Plan). The Master Plan establishes a decadal, network-wide management review cycle for MPAs and directs FGC to conduct the decadal reviews according to the following parameters:

“The formal 10-year management review will emphasize ecological, socioeconomic, and governance aspects of the network... [the review] may include, but not be limited to, a scientific evaluation, public scoping meetings, and panel discussions to determine the status, function, and possible changes to the network. The scientific evaluations that inform the formal 10-year management review will encompass multiple elements, including a scientific assessment of ecological and socioeconomic MPA monitoring results, together with other data streams such as MPA enforcement data.”

FGC will conduct the first decadal management review in December 2022 where, in collaboration with OPC, CDFW will present key findings and management recommendations. It is critical for the success of the review that ocean stakeholders, legislators, and decision-makers are aware of the State’s MPA management efforts to date. Upon OPC approval, a Request for Proposals will be released to solicit contractor applications to develop a communications plan (“the Plan”).

The primary goals of the Plan are to:

- 1) Raise awareness of California’s MPA network and Statewide Management Program;
- 2) Develop brand recognition for the MPA network;
- 3) Increase understanding of OPC’s, CDFW’s, and FGC’s roles in MPA policy, management, and regulation;
- 4) Ensure unified messaging regarding the decadal management review, disseminate scientific findings, and successfully engage the public and key decision-makers in the review process.

The Plan will incorporate communications strategies for two key audiences:

- 1) California ocean users such as Native American tribes; commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen; ocean businesses; recreational ocean visitors, including local residents and tourists, and ocean conservation groups;
- 2) California legislators and decision-makers, including tribal council members and leaders as well as commissioners, council members, and leaders of federal, state, and city agencies.

² <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Master-Plan>

The selected contractor(s) will work in close coordination with OPC, CDFW, and FGC to select pathways for reaching these audiences, develop key messages, implement short-term communications products and activities, and establish a long-term plan for communications activities and evaluation strategy to assess the effectiveness of the activities to be carried out by the agencies after the contract period ends. The contractor(s) will adhere to the agencies' communications principles and policies, and assure products are in compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Communications Plan Objectives

OPC, CDFW, and FGC seek to achieve the following overarching objectives through the Plan:

- Develop brand identity for California's MPA network;
- Create communications strategies to develop and disseminate unified messaging on all components of MPA management including scientific results of MPA monitoring programs and MPA policies, regulations, and other information about California's MPA network and the decadal management review occurring in 2022 to build awareness of, long term support for, and trust in the state's efforts in the decadal MPA management review process and findings;
- Design and produce digital and physical products such as infographics, icons, presentations, and collateral to highlight MPA regulations, research, science, and socioeconomic factors;
- In close coordination with the California Natural Resources Agency's (CNRA) communications director and information systems staff, CDFW's Marine Region Outreach Project, and CDFW's Office of Communications, Education, and Outreach, redesign OPC and CDFW's MPA web pages, and associated OPC and CDFW Marine Region web pages, to make MPA information, maps, and regulations easy to find, increase visibility, and improve search ranking;
- Highlight California Native American tribes' long history of ocean use and connection to ocean resources;
- Promote awareness of OPC's, CDFW's, and FGC's roles in MPA network policy, management, enforcement, and regulation;
- Encourage public stewardship of California's MPA network;
- Schedule, advertise, and facilitate meetings, workshops, and webinars as necessary to engage ocean stakeholders and decision-makers in the management review process;
- Identify external resources and capacity of partners that can be leveraged to accomplish communication goals;
- Advise OPC, CDFW, and FGC on campaign objectives for future outreach and communications goals and activities beyond 2022;

- Establish an evaluation and learning process for the agencies to assess the effectiveness of the communications strategies and products.
- Provide recommendations to OPC, CDFW, and FGC on communications protocol and framework for future reviews;
- Summarize the process and lessons learned after the 2022 decadal management review.

Project Timeline: Upon approval – March 2023

- *June 2020*: release Request for Proposals
- *August 2020*: select contractor(s)
- *December 2020*: finalize communication strategy in partnership with OPC, CDFW, and FGC
- *January 2021- December 2022*: implement communication efforts as directed by the communication strategy
- *December 2022*: FGC conducts decadal management review
- *January – March 2023*: communicate results of the management review, develop communications plan for state agencies to follow after the review is completed

PROJECT FINANCING:

Staff recommends that OPC authorize encumbrance of up to \$500,000 to the selected contractor(s) to conduct the projects summarized above.

General Funds FY 2020/2021	\$500,000
TOTAL	\$500,000

The anticipated source of funds will be OPC's FY 2020/2021 appropriation of General Funds. In 2015, the California state legislature allocated a \$2.5 million annual General Fund appropriation to the Secretary for Natural Resources to support the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program. The communications project summarized above is consistent with the goals of the state's MPA monitoring program, specifically with the objectives of sharing results and engaging communities.

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:

(F) Improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems: *This project will allow the State to directly engage with ocean stakeholders and key decision-makers to inform the adaptive management of the MPA network and improve coordination and collaboration between state agencies.*

(G) Provide monitoring and scientific data to improve state efforts to protect and conserve ocean resources: *This project will communicate important scientific findings to the public and also provide the state with critical data on outreach efficacy to improve future communications efforts led by the State.*

By directly engaging OPC, CDFW, FGC, legislators, tribal leaders and decision-makers, and ocean stakeholders, this project will promote the coordination of state programs and activities that protect ocean resources.

CONSISTENCY WITH OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project implements Objective 3.1: Protect and Restore Coastal and Marine Ecosystems. Specifically, by supporting one of the core components of the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program, this project will address two key action items under Objective 3.1: 1) Fund and manage statewide ecological and socioeconomic monitoring of the MPA network in preparation for the ten-year MPA management review in 2022, and 2) With partners, identify and fund cost-effective strategies to continue MPA monitoring beyond 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, community outreach, and methods 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.