



Consent Item
Staff Recommendation
September 14, 2021

Science Advisory Team Secretariat Activities
Justine Kimball, PhD, Senior Program Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$490,000 to California Ocean Science Trust to continue supporting Science Advisory Team Secretariat Activities.

LOCATION: Statewide

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE(S): Science-based decision-making

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 project is consistent with the purposes of Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code, the Ocean Protection Act;
- 2) The proposed projects are consistent with OPC's Proposition 84 grant program funding guidelines and environmental license plate funding guidelines (Interim Standards and Protocols, August 2013); and
- 3) The proposed project is not a ‘legal project’ that triggers 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:

“The California Ocean Protection Council hereby approves the disbursement of up to \$490,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust to continue supporting Science Advisory Team Secretariat Activities.”

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

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council disburse up to \$490,000 to the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) to continue supporting the OPC Science Advisory Team (SAT) Secretariat Activities and deliver timely, pragmatic, and actionable scientific information and advice to inform Council decisions.

OST responds to needs for scientific information and advice that will advance progress towards OPC strategic goals, highlight emerging science and ensure that OPC staff and partners are kept abreast of new scientific advancements, and serve as Secretariat of the OPC-SAT, a multi-disciplinary team of researchers and scientists from across the state created by statute to support OPC in science-based actions and decisions.¹ Current funds for this role, which were approved by the Council in December 2019², will be expended by end of December 2021; additional funds are needed to continue this work and enhance science-based decision-making for the Council for the next two years.

Building off past success and a survey of SAT members, engagement with the SAT will be enhanced through a multifaceted approach. Core functions of the SAT will include Topic-based Standing Committees structured around Strategic Plan Goals and Expert Panels that can be mobilized on an as-needed basis. Additional modes of engagement will include an annual full-SAT meeting as well as University convenings.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Project Background:

Significant academic scholarship recognizes the challenge of establishing and maintaining interactions between government decision-makers and the scientific/technical community to foster science-based resource management decisions and investments. Moreover, although natural resource regulators and managers routinely make decisions under uncertain conditions, a changing climate is multiplying this uncertainty, lending urgency to the need for practical science information and advice that

¹ OPC Science Advisory Team webpage: <http://www.opc.ca.gov/science-advisory-team/>

²https://opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20190523/Item9a_OST_Science_Advisor_SAT_Secretariat_FINAL.pdf

can inform the development of durable adaptation strategies in ocean resource management and conservation.

Since 2008, OST has convened, governed, and managed the SAT with the aim of establishing a connection between the government and academic community. OST was created to encourage coordinated multi-agency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science – a purpose that is responsive to the challenges of integrating science into policy and management, and that closely corresponds with the Ocean Protection Council’s statutory responsibility to establish policies to coordinate the collecting and sharing of scientific data related to coast and ocean resources between agencies. In this context, the mission of the OST is to accelerate progress towards a healthy and productive ocean future for California by bridging the gap between cutting edge scientific research and sound ocean management.

The SAT has proven record of success providing valuable guidance and recommendations to OPC through various efforts involving both SAT members and external experts. Most recently, OST convened an Expert Panel on ocean acidification and hypoxia (OAH) monitoring which produced specific and actionable [guidance](#). This guidance was critical in supporting an OAH [funding package](#) aimed at standardizing and enhancing OAH relevant biological monitoring. Similar Work Group efforts have resulted in critical guidance to support [California’s Marine Protected Area \(MPA\) Network Decadal Management Review](#) and [understanding the MPA Network’s role in conferring climate resiliency](#). Also in 2021, a Working Group developed a [risk assessment framework](#) for microplastic pollution which will directly support the development of a Statewide Microplastics Strategy, as required in Senate Bill 1263. These SAT efforts have been instrumental in ensuring OPC policy and funding continues to be supported by the best available science.

Project Details and Scope of Work:

The proposed authorization would provide funding for OST to continue supporting SAT Secretariat Activities, for the next two years. The proposed funding will allow OST to:

- Serve as OPC-SAT Secretariat
 - Serve as co-Chair of the Science Advisory Team to provide effective governance and leadership of the SAT and Executive Committee.
 - Implement a new SAT Strategy to convene the SAT using a variety of approaches to best utilize the diverse expertise and experience of SAT members, including full SAT meetings, new Standing Committees, University convenings, and targeted Expert Panels as needed.
- Provide timely response to needs for scientific information and advice that will advance progress towards OPC strategic goals.

- Strengthen the role and functioning of the SAT as a conduit to the broader academic community. Design processes in collaboration with California’s Sea Grant programs to assess needs and opportunities for OPC investments to fill gaps and amplify usability and impact.

About the Grantee:

California Ocean Science Trust is a nonprofit public-benefit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and was established pursuant to the California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act of 2000 to encourage coordinated, multi-agency, multi-institution approaches to translating ocean science to management and policy applications. OST bridges the gap between cutting edge scientific research and sound ocean management, accelerating progress towards a healthy and productive ocean future for California. As a nonprofit partner to OPC, OST’s strength lies in nimble response to state priorities: leveraging resources and creating partnerships to foster innovative yet pragmatic approaches to difficult problems.

Project Timeline:

January 2022 – December 2023

PROJECT FINANCING:

Staff recommends that the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) authorize encumbrance of up to \$490,000 to California Ocean Science Trust to continue supporting Science Advisory Team Secretariat Activities.

Ocean Protection Council	\$490,000
TOTAL	\$490,000

The anticipated source of funds will be from the Ocean Protection Council’s Fiscal Year 2018/2019 appropriation of California Environmental License Plate Funds (ELPF). Using these funds to support this project is consistent with the California Ocean Protection Act, Section 35650(b), as well as OPC’s Strategic Plan and Grant Program Funding Guidelines as discussed in more detail 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 the purposes of the OPC including the transmission of the results of research and investigations to state agencies to provide information for policy decisions. (§65615(a)(5)). The proposed project is also consistent with trust-fund allowable projects, defined in Public Resources Code Section 35650(b)(2)(f) as projects which improve management, conservation, and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project implements Focal Area A: Science-based Decision-Making. Specifically, the Strategic Plan calls out Objective 3.1: "Promote and encourage the institutional support, capacity, and leadership role of the OPC SAT and harness the substantial scientific expertise within California and beyond to inform policy and management decisions."

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OPC'S GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the OPC's Grant Program Funding Guidelines for Environmental License Plate Funds, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. Directly relate to the ocean, coast, associated estuaries, or coastal-draining watersheds: *The SAT Secretariat role will ensure science is informing California policy and management to maintain a healthy, resilient, and productive ocean and coast for the benefit of current and future generations.*
2. Support of the public: *See Exhibit A.*
3. Greater-than-local interest: *This project is statewide in scope as the SAT Secretariat role provides advice on various issues across the state.*

Additional Criteria

4. Improvements to management approaches or techniques: *The provision of science and science communication services continue as a fairly novel approach by promoting coordination between scientists and state agencies and integrating science into decision-making.*
5. Resolution of more than one issue: *The SAT Secretariat role will identify science priorities and needs, provide relevant information to address management questions and integrate science into decision-making.*
6. Timeliness or Urgency: *Current funding, approved by the Council in 2019, will be expended by December 2021. To ensure that OPC continues to benefit from OST's administration of the SAT, a new authorization is needed from the Council.*
7. Coordination: *This work will involve and improve coordination among scientists, policy makers, and resource managers.*

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

The proposed project is not '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.