

CALIFORNIA OCEAN
PROTECTION COUNCIL

Staff Recommendation
February 8, 2007

**Ocean Protection Council - Sea Grant Partnership
for Ocean and Coastal Research**

Developed By: Rebecca Pollock

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Consideration of a second grant cycle of scientific research projects supporting OPC priorities to be administered by California Sea Grant and USC Sea Grant, and possible 1) determination that it is a high priority, and 2) authorization for the council Secretary to take actions needed to provide up to \$1,000,000 for its implementation

OCEAN or COASTAL LOCATION: Statewide

AGENCY OR ENTITY RECOMMENDING PROJECT: State Coastal Conservancy, California Resources Agency, California Sea Grant, and University of Southern California Sea Grant

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [September 2005 staff recommendation for the Ocean Protection Council and Sea Grant Partnership for Ocean and Coastal Research \(2006-2008 grant cycle\)](#)
- Exhibit 2: [November 2006 memo requesting Ocean Protection Council concurrence on projects selected for funding \(2006-2008 grant cycle\)](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Letters of support](#)

RESOLUTION:

“The Ocean Protection Council finds pursuant to Sections 35600 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code that the Ocean Protection Council – Sea Grant Partnership for Ocean and Coastal Research, as herein described, is of high priority for ocean conservation and authorizes the Secretary to take actions necessary for its implementation, including the allocation of up to \$1,000,000 through an agreement with the California Sea Grant College Program and University of Southern California Sea Grant Program (collectively “Sea Grant”) for the purposes of this partnership.”

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

One of the Ocean Protection Council's primary objectives is to provide high-quality research to support management of ocean and coastal resources. In September 2005, the council approved a grant of \$1,000,000 to the state's two Sea Grant programs, as recommended in the council's adopted Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy. The Strategy suggests that the council establish a firm commitment to fund research activities that support effective ocean management. Research is necessary in order to fill existing gaps in knowledge that hinder effective policy and decision-making, and is particularly critical as California moves towards ecosystem-based management.

To continue this commitment, staff recommends that the council authorize a second grant cycle of scientific research projects, continuing the partnership for ocean and coastal research with the state's two Sea Grant programs. The proposed \$1,000,000 grant to Sea Grant would provide a second round of funding for administering the solicitation, review, and grant award process for scientific research proposals in 2007. As was required for the previous round, the list of research projects recommended by Sea Grant for funding would be presented to the council for the council's concurrence prior to awarding grants.

As authorized at the council's September 2005 meeting, the California Sea Grant College Program and University of Southern California Sea Grant Program entered an agreement with the Coastal Conservancy to coordinate the request for proposals, the peer review process, and post-award grant administration of scientific research projects supporting the council's priorities. Projects were selected on the basis of a competitive review process and address a wide range of marine-related issues. Continuing the council's partnership with Sea Grant will support data collection, synthesis, and dissemination of information that is essential to coastal and ocean resource management with a second round of scientific research projects. Staff recommends the council continue to support this successful relationship and authorize funding for a second grant cycle supporting additional research.

The council's funding guidelines for research proposals submitted in response to Sea Grant's 2006 call for proposals are attached as Exhibit 2. In accordance with the California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach (IRO) Strategy, the overarching priority for research funded under these guidelines is ecosystem-based management (EBM), and all projects funded during the first grant cycle have a direct application to implementing EBM. In addition, projects funded in 2006 were encouraged to include cross-boundary collaborations.

The 2007 OPC priorities stem from the IRO Strategy and the OPC five-year strategic plan, "A Vision for Our Ocean and Coast," and relate directly to the Joint Subcommittee on Science and Technology's National Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy. Proposals will be required to illustrate a strong connection to management by specifying outreach mechanisms to integrate results with state management needs. The solicitation for research projects will encourage proposals that support the overarching priority of understanding and improving the health of California's ocean and coastal ecosystems. Specifically, projects will be considered that:

- Develop ecosystem models and assessments to understand and predict the impact of natural and anthropogenic processes, including climate variability and climate change, on ocean and coastal ecosystems and human communities. Priority will be given to proposals that:

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- examine existing data sets or integrate data from the Southern California Coastal Ocean Observing System (SCCOOS) or Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System (CeNCOOS)
 - utilize or apply new seafloor and habitat maps
 - identify interspecies and habitat/species relationships
 - develop appropriate indicators and metrics for adaptive management
 - examine status and trends through synoptic and long-term assessments
 - identify sources and processes of ocean pollution that impact the health of humans and the marine environment
 - integrate research and monitoring across disciplines and programs optimizing the approach to ecosystem based management
- Develop biophysical-socioeconomic models and assessments to evaluate the impact of multiple human uses on ecosystems and understand human-use patterns that may influence resource stability and sustainability

California's Sea Grant Programs

Sea Grant is a natural partner for this endeavor because it has an established, highly respected process for evaluating, prioritizing and administering research grants related to coastal and ocean resources. Nationally, the Sea Grant College Network consists of 30 university-based programs funded primarily by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and dedicated to the understanding, conservation, and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. The California Sea Grant College Program is the largest of the 30 Sea Grant programs, and works along the entire state coastline and coastal watersheds. It is administered by the University of California and is based at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego. Its top priority issues include marine fisheries, water quality and sediment, ecosystem-based management, invasive species, aquaculture, marine protected areas, human health, and habitat restoration. The University of Southern California Sea Grant Program focuses primarily on the state's southern coastal metropolitan region, with particular emphasis on topics related to the urban ocean. Its priorities include protecting water quality, improving port and marine transportation operations, ensuring shoreline stability and preventing coastal hazards, and promoting the sustainable development of coastal areas.

The two programs review projects and administer grant awards according to the same national standard, and therefore undergo the same review process, which would facilitate the council's interactions with both programs. Sea Grant's credible review process and compatible mission can effectively review and select research projects that address the priorities of the council with minimal overhead.

Existing Relationship and Shared Priorities

The proposed project benefits from an existing relationship between the Resources Agency and Sea Grant. The Resources Agency Sea Grant Advisory Panel (RASGAP) was formed through legislation to enable the state to have a role in the review of scientific proposals submitted to Sea Grant. RASGAP reviews project proposals to determine their benefit to the management of the state's ocean and coastal resources. It is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Ocean and

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Coastal Policy and consists of representatives from state government, state legislature, state universities, and industry.

Because of shared priorities and the existing relationship between Sea Grant and the council, coordinating council research projects with the Sea Grant review process is practical and cost effective. An additional benefit of continuing this partnership for a second cycle of research grants is the ability to make joint decisions on supporting research that achieves common objectives of the council and Sea Grant. This is particularly critical as Sea Grant works with the states of California, Oregon, and Washington on developing a regional research plan to support regional ecosystem based management.

Soliciting, Awarding and Administering OPC Research Grants

If funded, the second grant cycle would be implemented in the same manner as the first, which was successful in soliciting and awarding research projects. The general parameters of the review process would be as follows:

- (a) The annual release of the Sea Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) will be organized to include the RFP for council research projects and will include OPC guidelines for research priorities. From submission of preliminary proposals to the decision on final funding for projects, the review process will take approximately six months.
- (b) Proposals submitted for OPC funds will be reviewed by the same committees and complete the same process as Sea Grant proposals. This thorough process begins with the screening of preliminary proposals and involves two review committees (one scientific/technical committee and one focused on state priorities), ad hoc peer reviews, dialogue with proposal authors, written comments accompanying each decision, and a mechanism for handling appeals.
- (c) The council will have a team of participants in all stages of the review process, including final ranking. Projects submitted to Sea Grant will be reviewed for consistency with research priorities according to the Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy.
- (d) Projects selected through this review process will be presented to the council for final endorsement of grant awards.
- (e) Sea Grant will provide all post-award grant administration, including reporting and financial accounting by charging up to 12% in administrative costs on the grants awarded.

Scientific research addressing council priorities will close gaps in knowledge that hinder appropriate management and protection efforts. The selection of scientifically sound research projects is critical. Implementing a strong, proven review process will allow the council to select and fund such projects. This time-intensive process can be most efficiently carried out through the partnership proposed with Sea Grant.

PROJECT FINANCING

Funding Sources:

Ocean Protection Council to California Sea Grant College Program	\$800,000
Ocean Protection Council to USC Sea Grant Program	\$200,000

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Grant Awardees' Funding Match	<u>\$440,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$1,440,000

Staff anticipates using \$1,000,000 of the Ocean Protection Council's tidelands oil funds, appropriated to the Secretary of Resources in the FY 04/05 budget for projects authorized pursuant to the Ocean Protection Act. The Resources Agency has entered into an interagency agreement with the Conservancy to administer these funds on behalf of the Council and recommend projects for funding.

The agreement with Sea Grant will place a cap on university overhead for proposed projects. Further, Council research proposals funded through this partnership require a 50% match, which would expand the return on investment of Council funds.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL'S FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN: The proposed project is consistent with Section II-B of the council's Strategic Plan, Research and Monitoring, Objective 1: Improve scientific understanding of our ocean and coastal ecosystems. It is defined under Section B Objective 1b in Appendix A: "Work with the California Sea Grant Programs to review and award grants that meet the OPC guidelines and priorities."

The proposed project is also consistent with action item number four of the Ocean Action Plan, in that it supports research initiatives in the Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy.