



CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

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October 15, 2009

Ms. Nancy Sutley
Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Chair, Interagency Task Force on Ocean Policy
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Ms. Sutley,

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) would like to extend its sincerest appreciation for the comments you and Dr. Lubchenco provided at our September 17 meeting in San Francisco regarding the work of the Interagency Task Force on Ocean Policy (Task Force). At the end of this meeting the OPC adopted a set of recommendations, which were presented to the Task Force at its public hearing that same afternoon. We appreciate the work you and your staff contributed to help us coordinate these two events. It provided an efficient way for stakeholders to participate at both the state and federal level and is exactly the kind of cooperation we hope the new national ocean policy will facilitate.

The OPC commends the Task Force on the Interim Report that was released on September 17, 2009. California has significantly benefited from existing productive state-federal partnerships, and we believe that a new comprehensive national ocean policy can take us to the next level. The interim report provides a significant step toward the development of a national ocean policy and a framework for successful implementation at all levels of government. Thank you for producing this forward looking document. We look forward to participating in the implementation of the approaches that you have included in the report. We have attached an outline of several topics that we request be addressed in the final report.

We value this opportunity to enhance partnerships and advance our shared interests in protecting and managing ocean and coastal resources, and to assist you as you develop this plan to address issues at the national, regional, state, and local levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Chrisman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Chrisman
California Ocean Protection Council Chair
Secretary for Natural Resources

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National Ocean Policy Recommendations

We strongly support the interim report's call to clarify and strengthen the critical roles of states and territories on ocean and coastal management, to promote ecosystem-based management decisions, to support the regional ocean partnerships throughout the country, and to address climate change adaptation. Thank you for your attention to these issues that we, and other stakeholders throughout the country, recommended be included in the document.

Ocean Policy Coordination Recommendations

We appreciate the recommendation to create the Governance Advisory Committee. We look forward to working with you and this committee to improve federal-state coordination on a range of issues.

Implementation Strategy Recommendations

We note that the interim report provides the National Ocean Council with specific duties and responsibilities related to coordinating program and budgets. We support this approach to planning, which is based on the National Priority Objectives rather than on current agency structures and duties. In addition, we also look forward to working with you to develop a marine spatial planning framework and to enhance research and data collection.

How We Do Business 4, Coordinate and Support: The report calls for the evaluation of existing or new funding sources and options to protect, maintain, and restore ocean resources. To achieve this objective the OPC believes that the federal government should follow the recommendations of both national ocean commissions and establish an ocean trust fund dedicated to providing financial support for federal agencies, regional partnerships, and state and local programs and ensure that it is adequately funded. In addition, when assessing statutory authorities and addressing legislative and regulatory changes, we recommend that you make the reauthorization of a strengthened Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) a top priority. This law has provided a successful partnership between coastal states and the federal government for over 35 years, and we are particularly supportive of the "federal consistency" provisions that must be part of the reauthorized statute.

Area of Special Emphasis 1, Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Acidification: We appreciate that the report recognizes climate change as one of the major issues facing our coasts and oceans. States are in desperate need of information and scientific models that will support decision-making, and we strongly support your recommendations to provide these products. We would, however, suggest that you be more explicit about how these data and products will be disseminated and tailored to specific regions. To address this, the OPC strongly supports creating a National Climate Services Center that can provide data and analytical tools related to sea level rise, ocean acidification, and other climate-related impacts. We believe that significant resources, both time and funding, could be saved by coordinating the development of these products nationwide.

Area of Special Emphasis 2, Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration: We fully support your recommendation to prioritize the coastal and Great Lakes ecosystem restoration projects. We look forward to working with you to discuss the long-term goals

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and collaboration mechanisms to implement this recommendation. California has developed habitat prioritization approaches, such as the highly successful Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, that harness the expertise and resources of federal, state, and local governments as well as the public and private sectors, that could serve as national models for setting and achieving restoration priorities. Specific goals in a national ocean policy will help coordinate and prioritize the development of appropriate restoration projects across federal agency budgets.

Area of Special Emphasis 3, Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land: In addition to the issues discussed in this section, the OPC recommends providing greater emphasis on eliminating marine debris. California has taken bold action to address marine debris – with a focus on reducing or eliminating packaging, plastics, chemicals, and other products before they can become ocean litter. This issue is well suited for consideration by the National Ocean Council since coordination among the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other agencies is needed to address the numerous products and introduction pathways that contribute to marine debris. An integrated federal program could provide the venue to focus on source reduction regulations, such as extended producer responsibilities, since these are more comprehensively implemented at the federal level. We also urge you to include a focus on contaminants of emerging concern when considering best management practices, conservation programs, and monitoring frameworks for water quality standards.

Area of Special Emphasis 5, Ocean and Coastal Lakes Observations and Infrastructure: The OPC supports the Task Force's call for a national system that integrates federal and non-federal ocean observing systems, sensors and data collection. One area of particular interest is securing ongoing support of a national HF radar system, which will cost approximately \$20 million per year. This system will improve real-time data for decision making, help save lives, and protect habitats. In addition, California has found that comprehensive high-resolution seafloor and coastal maps are a critical companion to real-time data and have proven to be critical tools for navigation safety and for environmental protection. High-resolution substrate and habitat data have provided the foundation for pioneering projects, such as the Marine Life Protection Act, which directs the state to create a network of marine protected areas along the entire California coast. Furthermore, pursuing regular data collection efforts allows managers to track changes over time, which is essential for adapting to climate change, restoring coastal habitats, and managing resources for sustainability.

New Proposed Objective, Fisheries Management: We were surprised by the lack of a discussion related to fisheries management in the interim report. We recommend this be included as a new Area of Special Interest with a focus on pursuing innovative or market-based management solutions. California is committed to preserving its fishing heritage and is providing grant funding to fishermen willing to examine new management approaches. NOAA is already showing strong leadership on this issue, which certainly deserves some mention in this document. Federal support and coordination among regions will benefit all states pursuing these types management reform. In addition, we recommend that cooperative fisheries research (using fishermen to help gather data) be highlighted as an important tool in the final report.