

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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**M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: Coastal Commission and Interested Parties Date: October 9, 2014  
FROM: Commission Staff  
SUBJECT: Addendum for Periodic Performance Evaluation: Executive Director  
Hearing Date: Thursday, October 9, 2014

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This Addendum is submitted to provide recent correspondence relative to this matter.

Correspondence from Susan Forster, dated October 5, 2014

Correspondence from Environmental Organizations, dated October 2, 2014

Correspondence from Penny Elia, dated October 1, 2014

October 5, 2014

Honorable Steve Kinsey, Chair  
Honorable Jana Zimmer, Vice Chair  
California Coastal Commission  
45 Fremont St., Suite 2000  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Chair Kinsey and Vice Chair Zimmer,

It's my understanding that a performance review is scheduled during the upcoming Newport Beach hearing for Dr. Charles Lester, the Commission's Executive Director, and I thought it might be worthwhile to share the impact he had on me a few years ago at my first Commission hearing. As a member of the public with no prior experience with Coastal Commission policies and procedures, I was immediately struck by his grasp of the issues and his ability to address the questions that came his way.

At the time I didn't realize he was the Executive Director. When I entered the chamber he'd just finished his report and the questions had begun, primarily from commissioners who were looking for more information or clarification. Their questions were as helpful as Dr. Lester's answers. I learned a lot that day. His ability to make complex environmental issues clear and understandable impressed me—and more significantly, gave me hope that I might be able to learn enough to present meaningful public comments on issues that deeply mattered to me.

I was primarily interested in South Orange County issues (Sunset Ridge Park and the more recent Banning Ranch CDP application) and as I attended hearings that focused on those projects—and struggled not to fall off a very steep learning curve—I continued to be impressed by Dr. Lester's wealth of knowledge and the calm manner that he brought to Coastal Commission deliberations. Eventually I decided he must have an encyclopedic database in his head, along with an uncanny ability to access it. Apparently we all have that database, but we can't all get to it.

Perhaps the most valuable lessons I learned were about the Commission's purpose and its important work over the years. It also became apparent to me that we Californians owe our coastal commissioners a debt of gratitude for their efforts to balance the drive to develop California's coastline with the Commission's mandate to protect and preserve the coast in its natural, beautiful and wild state. We also owe a great debt to Dr. Lester and his staff, who bring their areas of expertise, their years of experience and a collective wisdom to bear as they analyze the projects that come before the Commission, many of them very challenging.

Progress of this kind can only happen through mutual respect and a collaborative spirit within the Commission itself. I'm grateful for all of the accomplishments under Dr. Lester's leadership and I hope he receives the excellent review he deserves.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Forster  
Newport Beach



Via email to: SKinsey@marincounty.org, zimmerccc@gmail.com

October 2, 2014

California Coastal Commission

Re: Performance of the California Coastal Commission

Dear Chairman Steve Kinsey and Vice-chair Jana Zimmer:

Our organizations wish to thank you for the joint leadership that the California Coastal Commission (CCC), and your senior staff (especially your Executive Director, Charles Lester), have provided over approximately the past year. We urge you to continue this partnership and leadership to address the many challenges in the years ahead. Your mutually successful efforts have addressed major environmental and social justice issues reflecting the goals of the Coastal Act and your Strategic Plan objectives.

Your achievements have included:

- Securing several years of additional funding for new CCC staff to partner with local governments to update Local Coastal Plans (LCPs),
- Securing the CCC authority to issue fines for Coastal Act Access violations,
- Designing and implementing a comprehensive local government grant program to assist coastal communities to conduct local planning for LCP updates,
- Producing a Draft **Sea Level Guidance Document** to address the planning challenges to coastal communities from Sea Level Rise,
- Leadership on critical coastal access issues including statewide work with the State Parks Department and site specific issues to ensure the public's right of coastal access, (e.g. Martins Beach),
- Completion or updating of key LCPs (e.g. Santa Monica Mountains and Marin County),
- Efforts to address the issue of offshore fracking,
- A successful public workshop to address Coastal Agricultural Issues,
- Efforts to protect and provide lower coast overnight visitor serving facilities and to work with the State Parks Department to address the issue of coastal parking costs and revenues.

Please keep up the good work, in collaboration with your excellent senior staff.

Respectfully,

Stefanie Sekich-Quinn  
California Policy Manager  
**Surfrider Foundation**

Jeffrey Williams  
Co-Director,  
**Black Surfers Collective**

Susan Jordan,  
Director,  
**California Coastal Protection Network**

Marce Gutiérrez  
Founder/Director,  
**Azul**

Karen Garrison  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**

Kathryn Phillips  
**Sierra Club**

George H. Leonard, PhD  
Chief Scientist,  
**Ocean Conservancy**

Nathan Weaver  
Oceans Advocate,  
**Environment California**

Zachary Plopper  
Coastal and Marine Director,  
**WILDCOAST**

Lennie Roberts  
San Mateo County Legislative Advocate,  
**Committee for Green Foothills**

Mel Nutter  
**League for Coastal Protection**

Sarah Abramson Sikich  
**Heal the Bay**

Amy Trainer  
Executive Director,  
**Environmental Action Committee of West  
Marin**

October 1, 2014

Dear Chair Kinsey and Vice Chair Zimmer:

It is my understanding that next week you will have a closed session to discuss the Performance of your Executive Director, Dr. Lester. As a citizen who has attended many Commission hearings, I want to suggest that you include the following factors as part of your evaluation.

Ultimately you are evaluating the Executive Director in relationship to his ability to accomplish the goals and tasks in the Commission's Strategic Plan. His accomplishments include:

1. Securing of funds for the next several years for new CCC staff to partner with local governments to update LCPs. This was a huge accomplishment.
2. It should be acknowledged as a major achievement, his ability to rapidly hire the newly funded staff at a breakneck pace and work to integrate them into the staff.
3. Securing approval on LCP updates for Marin County and Santa Monica Mountains.
4. Secure the CCC authority to issue fines for Coastal Act Access Violations. This is the first major legislative change to the Coastal Act in years. It should be a cause for celebration.
5. Conduct a comprehensive grant program to assist local governments with updates to their LCPs. The Commission was appropriately engaged in first reviewing and approving the criteria and then reviewing the proposed awards as determined by the professional staff.
6. Leadership on critical coastal access issues including the challenge of statewide work with State Parks on complex issues of balancing the revenue needs of State Parks with the Coastal Act goal of providing access to all Californians, including lower income citizens.
7. Produce a Draft Sea Level Guidance Document to address the planning challenges to coastal communities from Sea Level Rise.
8. Efforts to protect and provide lower cost overnight visitor serving facilities in the face of great adversity. As a Laguna Beach resident that sees the lower overnight visitor serving accommodations diminishing every year, I can only imagine how much harder staff has to work and how many hours they invest in making this happen.
9. Resolve of several major enforcement issues via consent orders. Again, these are the types of resolutions that require days, weeks, months of negotiating.
10. Efforts to address the issue of offshore fracking.

This is just a partial list of what the ED and staff has tackled over the last year, in addition to their already cumbersome workload of preparing a comprehensive agenda for each month with extremely detailed staff reports that require untold hours of meetings and negotiating with all concerned parties – applicants, appellants, and of course the host of coastal advocates, lobbyists and attorneys that add to this mix.

I urge you to encourage the Commissioners to consider ALL the positives your ED and staff have accomplished over the past year. It would be most welcome for the public to know that the Commissioners respect the great work that has been accomplished by your hard working professional staff.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my observations and thoughts with you. I look forward to a positive hearing next month.

Best –

Penny Elia  
Save Hobo Aliso Task Force  
Sierra Club