

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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TO: CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSIONERS

FROM: JAMES W. BURNS, CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR *James W Burns*
 GABRIELA GOLDFARB, FEDERAL PROGRAMS MANAGER

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDED INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (for consideration at the Commission's April 1996 meeting.)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION The staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to enter into an interagency agreement with the Regents of the University of California, allocating \$44,000 of a \$150,000 grant from NOAA's Coastal Services Center to develop interagency data exchange tools and protocols in California's Central Coast region. Specific responsibilities are described under "Scope of Work" below.

STAFF SUMMARY Federal, State, and local agencies in the Monterey Bay region, as in other areas, have a great deal of scientific information about coastal resources, but a very limited ability to share that information with each other. This is primarily because the agencies use different computers, and the data is stored in formats and languages that are incompatible between agencies. For issues that are regional in scope -- such as cumulative impacts, shoreline access, and polluted runoff -- this inability to share data poses a major impediment to coordinated inter-agency management.

Without a common understanding of problems that straddle jurisdictions, solutions tend to be piece-meal, uncoordinated, and often work at cross-purposes. For example, flood control projects in one jurisdiction may exacerbate flooding problems in another jurisdiction down-stream; coastal water quality problems may originate far up the watershed in a different jurisdiction than the one responsible for providing safe swimming beaches. Unfortunately, individual agencies have neither the resources nor the mandate to take on the task of translating their information into a form that can be read by the computers at other agencies.

To address this problem, the Commission has received a 1-1/2 year, \$150,000 grant from NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC). The objective of the grant is to develop a set of data exchange tools and protocols that will allow coastal resource data to be shared among Federal, State, and local agencies. To test the system, a regional resource database will be assembled for the watersheds of Monterey Bay from data that currently resides on the computers of a dozen Federal, State, and local agencies in the region.

The product, called the Watershed Analytical Tool for Environmental Review (WATER), will integrate geographic information system (GIS) data layers, satellite images, aerial

photographs and tabular data (such as water quality readings) from previously incompatible sources, and will make this information available over the Internet's World Wide Web. For the first time, a regional picture of resource constraints and opportunities will be accessible not only to management agencies, but to schools, universities, individual property owners -- anyone with a computer and a modem.

By coordinating this project, the Commission will be enhancing its local assistance and public education efforts at the same time it gains access to a large body of scientific information about coastal resources -- information that is currently unavailable to the Commission, and which would otherwise be very costly for the Commission to develop on its own. This benefit is particularly significant given that we lag behind most State agencies and many local governments in our development of information systems and coastal resource data.

In addition, the project implements recommendations stemming from the Commission's Regional Cumulative Assessment Project (ReCAP) pilot study in the Monterey Bay area. ReCAP found that the ability of the Commission and other agencies to manage the cumulative impacts of development on coastal resources was constrained by the lack of access to existing data kept by different agencies, and by the resulting difficulties in regional planning and impact management across jurisdictional boundaries.

STAFF ANALYSIS NOAA's Coastal Services Center awarded the project funding based in part on the quality of the scientists and technical consultants identified in the application, including the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Environmental Design Research (CEDR). Without approval of this agreement with the Regents of the University of California, the Commission would have to find another suitable agent to perform the tasks called for in the grant. The project's grant funds cannot be used for any other purposes, and the Commission does not have the staff resources, the expertise, or the equipment to perform these tasks in-house.

The Center for Environmental Design Research was chosen for the project because of their extensive experience in data translation, rectification (making sure geographic information from various sources lines up properly) and integration, as well as their knowledge of Internet-accessible geographic information systems. They provided much of the technical support in geographic data integration for the San Francisco Estuary Project.

SCOPE OF WORK Under the proposed interagency agreement, the University of California's Center for Environmental Design Research would perform a significant portion of the technical work for the project. They would be responsible for: developing the data translation and rectification engines that would enable data sharing across jurisdictions in the Monterey Bay area; assisting in the assembly and integration of geographic data layers and satellite images from various sources to form the Watershed Analytical Tool; and developing the graphical user interface for making WATER accessible over the Internet. The term of the interagency agreement would be from May 1, 1996 to June 30, 1997.