STATE OF CALIFORNIA – THE RESOURCES AGENCY

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CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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TO: CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSIONERS

FROM: JAMES W. BURNS, CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
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SUBJECT: <u>RECOMMENDED INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH SANTA CRUZ COUNTY</u> (for consideration at the Commission's July 1996 meeting.)

<u>STAFF RECOMMENDATION</u>   The staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to enter into an interagency agreement with the County of Santa Cruz, allocating $5,000 of a $150,000 grant from NOAA's Coastal Services Center, to develop a catalog of the County's Geographic Information System data layers. Specific responsibilities are described under "Scope of Work" below.

<u>STAFF SUMMARY</u>   Federal, State, and local agencies in the Monterey Bay region, as in other areas, have a good deal of scientific information about coastal resources, but a very limited ability to share that information with each other. This is partly because the agencies lack information about what data are available from other agencies. It is difficult to request data from other agencies if there is no catalog of what data they have available. For issues that are regional in scope -- such as cumulative impacts, shoreline access, and water pollution -- the inability to share data poses a major impediment to coordinated inter-agency management.

Unfortunately, individual agencies rarely have the resources or the mandate to catalog their data sets, a key step to making their information accessible to other agencies. As a result, the Commission and its State, Federal, and local partners are either duplicating data collection efforts needlessly, or are missing the benefit of using information already collected by other agencies in their day-to-day planning and management activities.

To address this problem, the Commission has received a 1-1/2 year, $150,000 grant from NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC) for a pilot project in the Monterey Bay area. The objective of the project is to develop a set of data exchange tools and protocols that allow coastal resource data to be shared among Federal, State, and local agencies. For the pilot region, the project will integrate data that currently resides on the computers of a dozen different 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. The goal is to provide a regional picture of resource constraints and opportunities 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   One of the deliverable items that NOAA's Coastal Services Center is expecting under the WATER grant is a catalog of the data sets that will be available in the Watershed Analytical Tool. Such a catalog is critical for people using the system. In order to determine if the available data sets are what they need for answering a particular question, users must know, for example, at what scale the information was mapped, what year the data were collected, how often it is updated, what geographic area is covered, etc.

The proposed Interagency Agreement with the County of Santa Cruz would provide funding for the County to develop a catalog of its GIS data layers. The County holds much of the good quality resource data in the northern Monterey Bay region, and this Agreement would be a critical step in making that data available to the Commission and other agencies in the region. The cost of making existing data sets available for use by the Commission and other agencies is far less than it would cost to develop our own data sets independently.

SCOPE OF WORK   Under the proposed interagency agreement, the County of Santa Cruz would develop a metadata catalog -- also called a "data dictionary" -- of the GIS data layers it will be sharing with the Commission as part of the WATER project. (Metadata is "data about data", i.e., information about the items that appear on a given map layer, when and how the data was collected, scales and accuracy, the projection used, who updates the information, how often it is updated, what the original sources are, what format it is available in, etc.). The catalog would follow a standard format developed by the California Geographic Information Association and recently adopted by the signatories of a regional data sharing agreement (known as the CAMPITS MOU). This format complies with Federal metadata standards established by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) pusuant to Executive Order 12906.

The term of the Interagency Agreement with Santa Cruz County would be from July 15, 1996 to June 30, 1997.