

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219  
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-5200  
FAX (415) 904-5400

**RECORD PACKET COPY****W18a**

September 22, 2004

**TO:** Commissioners and Other Interested Parties

**FROM:** Peter Douglas, Executive Director  
Susan Hansch, Chief Deputy Director  
Christiane Parry, Public Education Program Manager  
Sylvie B. Lee, Program Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** Contract with Marketing Firm (for Coastal Commission meeting on October 13, 2004)

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to enter into a one-year contract with the Macias Consulting Group for up to \$60,000, to market the Whale Tail License Plate. The marketing campaign would be conducted in partnership with the California Tahoe Conservancy and its Lake Tahoe License Plate.

**Motion:** *I move that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with Macias Consulting Group for up to \$60,000 to market the Whale Tail License Plate.*

**Background**

The California Coastal Commission's Whale Tail License Plate was established as a mechanism through which the public can contribute funds to coastal and marine education programs in California. For each new plate that is sold, approximately \$15.00 is deposited in the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account (CBCEA). Annual renewal fees deposit \$20.00 per plate into the account. Additional funds are deposited in the Environmental License Plate Fund, which funds environmental programs in other state agencies.

The Coastal Commission's Public Education Program is dependent on Whale Tail License Plate revenue from the CBCEA in order to conduct its core activities including California Coastal Cleanup Day; the Whale Tail License Plate Grants Program for schools, nonprofits, and local governments; and the year-round Adopt-A-Beach Program.

In 2002, the staff conducted a competitive bidding process to identify a contractor to carry out a marketing campaign for the Whale Tail License Plates, and selected the Macias Consulting Group (MCG) based on its qualifications and experience. MCG brought extensive marketing

experience to the campaign, including expertise in marketing products through auto dealers for AAA. Based in Sacramento, MCG also has experience consulting to government and is a certified small business. MCG was awarded a contract from the CCC for \$120,000 for the time period of June 2002 through the end of October 2004. Building on the "Ecoplates" partnership previously established with the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC), the CTC at the same time entered into a separate contract with the firm for an additional \$120,000 to promote the Lake Tahoe License Plate.

### **Current marketing campaign**

From 2002 to the present, the campaign has marketed both the Whale Tail and Lake Tahoe License Plates and has consisted of three components: a point-of-purchase (POP) campaign; a new advertising campaign; and promotion, updating, and enhancement of the Ecoplates.com website. As of summer 2004, point-of-purchase displays with self-mailer brochures had been distributed at 80 auto dealers, AAA offices, DMV offices, and REI stores in northern and southern California. Advertising space was purchased in 13 newspapers and magazines in the more highly populated coastal counties as well as the Sacramento and Tahoe regions. A direct marketing campaign consisted of sending letters and self-mailers to 80,000 households with demographics determined to belong to people most likely to purchase an Ecoplate. Artwork and slogans were specially designed for the self-mailer brochures, POP displays, and print advertisements. Finally, the Ecoplates.com website, which gives information about the two license plates and allows buyers to purchase directly online, was redesigned and expanded.

### **Proposal**

The staff proposes to enter into a new contract with the Macias Consulting Group for one year. CCC would pay MCG up to \$60,000 to continue marketing activities including purchasing more advertising space in magazines and newspapers, continuing the point-of-purchase campaign, and monitoring and evaluating results. The Tahoe Conservancy is also in the process of awarding MCG additional funding for a similar amount.

The \$60,000 for this project would be allocated from Whale Tail License Plate funds in the Commission's 2004/2005 budget. State law provides that no more than 25 percent of the revenue from specialty license plate sales be spent on administrative, marketing, and promotional activities related to encouraging sales of the plate. The \$60,000 allocated for this contract, combined with other anticipated marketing and promotional expenses, totals approximately \$95,000, or less than eight percent of the FY 2004/2005 license plate revenue budget.

This contract would be executed pending approval by the Department of General Services, which is currently reviewing a non-competitive bid justification from the CCC to contract with MCG rather than reopen the bid process. Maintaining MCG as a consultant would allow the marketing campaign to continue where it left off and save the entire amount of the contract for conducting concrete marketing programs, rather than require a new consultant to begin a campaign from the ground up and spend time and funds on becoming familiar with previous participants and activities.