

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219  
VOICE (415) 904-5200  
FAX (415) 904-5400  
TDD (415) 597-5885



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**DATE:** July 20, 2018

**TO:** Coastal Commission and Interested Public

**FROM:** John Ainsworth, Executive Director  
Susan Hansch, Chief Deputy Director  
Madaline Cavalieri, Statewide Planning Manager  
Ashley Reineman, Coastal Program Analyst

**SUBJECT:** RESOLUTION BY THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION  
COMMITTING TO MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING CALIFORNIA'S  
BEACHES, SHORELINE AND RELATED COASTAL HABITATS IN THE  
FACE OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

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## I. BACKGROUND

At the May 2018 Coastal and Ocean Climate Action Team (CO-CAT) meeting the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) presented their planned role in coordinating the ocean and coastal-related content of Governor Brown's upcoming [Global Climate Action Summit](#) taking place in San Francisco this September. The Summit will underscore the need for urgent climate action to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change, showcase what cities, states, businesses and other civil society actors are doing, and call on governments to do more. The Summit's discussions will spur climate action in key areas, including Land and Ocean Stewardship, and will call on participants to make new commitments that will increase climate resilience and reduce emissions. As a result, the OPC put out a request to state agencies to develop their own commitments to enhance climate resilience along California's coasts. Leading the way, the OPC plans to pass a resolution at their July 25, 2018 meeting committing to a vision for California's coastal future to protect and enhance coastal habitats for present and future generations. This vision is reflected in the attached Resolution before the Commission today. The OPC and CCC's resolutions, along with commitments from other California state agencies, local governments, and non-profits, will collectively feed broader discussions during the Summit's coastal and ocean sessions.

## II. NEW SCIENCE AND A CALL TO ACTION

Sea level is rising and our understanding of how much, where, and when is also increasing. The OPC recently released two reports that, taken together, update our understanding of sea level rise science and best practices for planning for and addressing anticipated impacts. The first of these reports, *Rising Seas in California: An Update on Sea-Level Rise Science* (April 2017), synthesizes recent evolving research on sea level rise science, and forms the foundation for the second report: the *State of California Sea Level-Rise Guidance: 2018 Update* (March 2018). This second report is an update to the OPC's State Sea Level Rise Guidance, first released in 2010, updated in 2013 following the release of the National Research Council's 2012 science report, and now updated again to respond to the evolving state of sea level rise science. These reports continue to provide higher level recommendations for how to plan for and address sea level rise impacts, and both the 2010 and 2013 reports contained important recommendations that the Commission adopted as a part of its own 2015 Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance. The Commission's Guidance continues to serve as a foundation for the agency's adaptation leadership in California, and the OPC Guidance and the CCC Guidance align with and complement each other.

The updated OPC Guidance sets forth new recommended sea level rise projections to be used in planning efforts throughout the State. Notably these projections include an extreme case scenario based on recent studies regarding the possibility of rapid ice sheet loss. This is called the H++ scenario, and it includes the projection curve that results in ~10ft. of sea level rise by 2100. This information, coupled with a new report released by The State Coastal Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy that finds over half of California's coastal habitats (beaches, rocky intertidal, coastal marshes, and tidal flats) are highly vulnerable to five feet of sea level rise, demonstrate a necessary and urgent call to action for the State.

Loss of beaches, shorelines and related coastal habitats from the effects of sea level rise and shoreline development will further impact California residents and visitors' ability to access and recreate along the coast. In addition, average temperatures are rising, leading to increased demand for beach recreation areas that provide free or low cost opportunities to recreate and exercise in cooler temperatures and cleaner air. These impacts will be disproportionately felt by people who cannot afford to live in close proximity to the ocean to access and recreate along the coast, including those from disadvantaged and otherwise vulnerable communities. The work of the Commission and local governments to address climate change and sea level rise vulnerability into Local Coastal Programs through proactive, science-based adaptation policies continues to be a primary opportunity to increase California's coastal resilience. Grants from Rounds 1-4 of the Local Coastal Grant Program, in addition to the forthcoming Round 5 grants, will continue to produce measurable outcomes towards maintaining and enhancing valuable coastal habitat as sea levels rise. The Resolution before the Commission promotes these and other leadership efforts to address climate change and sea level rise in California's coastal management, and emphasizes its important role in protecting, enhancing, and mitigating for climate change impacts to California's iconic beaches, shorelines and related coastal habitats.

## **II. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following motion:

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** I move that the Commission adopt the attached *Resolution by the California Coastal Commission Committing to Maintaining and Enhancing California's Beaches, Shoreline and Related Coastal Habitats in the Face of Global Climate Change and Sea Level Rise*.

## **III. EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1 – *Resolution by the California Coastal Commission Committing to Maintaining and Enhancing California's Beaches, Shoreline and Related Coastal Habitats in the Face of Global Climate Change and Sea Level Rise*.