

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# W6d

**Date:** September 18, 2020

**To:** Commissioners and Interested Parties

**From:** John Ainsworth, Executive Director  
Susan Hansch, Chief Deputy Director  
Christiane Parry, Public Education Program Manager  
Annie Kohut Frankel, Grants and Education Programs Coordinator

**Subject:** **Proposed Targeted WHALE TAIL® Grants for Fiscal Year 2020/2021 from the Commission's Public Education Program.** The Executive Director recommends that the Commission approve the following proposed targeted grants for Fiscal Year 2020/2021.

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## SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- A. Approve targeted grants for the following six projects (totaling \$265,794):
- 1) Youth Outside Foundation (up to \$30,000)
  - 2) Kids' Adopt-A-Beach School Program (\$22,294)
  - 3) Heal the Bay Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
  - 4) I Love A Clean San Diego Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
  - 5) Community Cleanup Small Grants (\$72,000)
  - 6) Tides Center (\$81,000)
- B. Approve a reserve to remain unallocated at this time and awarded later in the fiscal year (\$30,000)
- C. Approve the following actions:
- 1) Reallocate any unneeded targeted grant funds to the temporary reserve.
  - 2) Allocate temporary reserve funds to one or more of the above targeted grants if reserve is not otherwise needed and recommended funding levels turn out to be insufficient.

## I. MOTION AND RESOLUTION

### Motion:

I move that the Commission **approve** the funding allocations set forth in the staff recommendation.

### Staff Recommendation of Approval:

Staff recommends a **YES** vote on the foregoing motion. Passage of this motion will result in authorization of the Executive Director or his designee to enter into the appropriate agreements for disbursing the available funds. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present.

### Resolution to Approve the Permit:

The Commission hereby approves and authorizes the Executive Director or his designee to:

- a. enter into the appropriate contracts for six targeted projects;
- b. set aside a temporary reserve of \$30,000;
- c. reallocate any unneeded targeted grant funds currently being approved to the temporary reserve; and
- d. increase targeted grant amounts if necessary using temporary reserve funds.

## II. INTRODUCTION

The Commission's WHALE TAIL<sup>®</sup> Grants offered by the Public Education Program support projects that educate and involve the public in the protection of marine and coastal resources. These projects provide important benefits in advancing public understanding and support for the coast and ocean. Targeted grants are high priority projects that are linked to existing Commission programs and the goals identified in the Commission's Strategic Plan. Funding for this program comes from two sources: sales and renewals of the California WHALE TAIL<sup>®</sup> License Plate, and voluntary contributions to the Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund on the state tax return form.

### Staff Recommendation of Approval:

The WHALE TAIL<sup>®</sup> License Plate was established as a mechanism through which the public can contribute funds to coastal and marine education programs in California. As of June 30, 2020, 259,000 license plates have been sold. After the DMV deducts administrative fees, funds from WHALE TAIL<sup>®</sup> Plate sales and renewals are divided between the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account (CBCEA) and the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). An average of \$11.32 is deposited into the CBCEA for each new plate that is sold, and an average of \$20 per plate is deposited into the CBCEA from annual renewal fees. An equal amount per plate is deposited into the ELPF for all sequentially numbered WHALE TAIL<sup>®</sup> License Plates sold. Additional

## WHALE TAIL® Grants

fees that are charged for personalized plates also go into the ELPF. Altogether, from FY1997/98 through FY2019/20, WHALE TAIL® License Plate sales and renewal fees (plus miscellaneous other small fees) have contributed \$31 million to the CBCEA and \$79.2 million to the ELPF.

The CBCEA funds the Coastal Commission's Public Education programs and if funds are available, the State Coastal Conservancy. The ELPF funds a variety of environmental programs in state agencies such as the California Natural Resources Agency, California Conservation Corps, Cal Fire, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks, and many others.

“Upon appropriation by the legislature, the money in the account (CBCEA) shall be allocated by the Controller as follows: (A) First to the California Coastal Commission for expenditure for the Adopt-A-Beach program, the Beach Cleanup Day program, coastal public education programs, and grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations for the costs of operating and maintaining public beaches related to these programs.” (B) Second, from funds remaining after the allocation required under subparagraph (A), to the State Coastal Conservancy for coastal natural resource restoration and enhancement projects and for other projects consistent with the provisions of Division 21 (commencing with Section 31000) of the Public Resources Code (as amended in 2004 in Budget Trailer Bill SB 1107).

In the early years that the WHALE TAIL® License Plate was on the market, sales were robust. More recently, WHALE TAIL® Plate sales have leveled off and declined since 2015 by an average of approximately 9% per year. Possible reasons for the trend include increased competition from other specialty plates in recent years, and the length of time the WHALE TAIL® Plate has been on the market. The Coastal Commission staff is working to address this funding reduction through marketing efforts to increase plate sales.

### **Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund**

The Protect our Coast and Oceans “check box” on the California state tax return form was created pursuant to legislation authored in 2013 by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi and renewed in 2017 by State Senator Josh Newman. Per Article 5.1 (Sections 18745-18748) that was added to Chapter 3 of the Revenue and Taxation Code:

“All money designated under the Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund space on a tax return ... shall be allocated as follows:

(a) To the Franchise Tax Board and the Controller for reimbursement of all costs incurred by the Franchise Tax Board and the Controller in connection with their duties under this article.

(b) (1) To the California Coastal Commission to support eligible programs awarded grants under the selection criteria established by the California Coastal Commission for the Whale Tail Grants Program, and for direct program-related expenses.”

In January 2014, California taxpayers began making voluntary contributions to the Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund while completing their state tax returns. As of June 30, 2020, \$2,026,520 has been donated to this fund

### **Public Education Grantmaking Budget and Timetable**

After targeted grants are awarded, competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants are usually solicited in the fall. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted implementation of many of the 2019/2020 grant projects, many of which had their scopes amended and extended for an additional year. The pandemic has made it difficult to plan for the education and stewardship activities funded through competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants. This uncertainty and the opportunity to have an especially robust 2021 competitive grants cycle led staff to postpone this year's competitive grant solicitation. A pause in competitive grants also allows time to evaluate and improve the process for grant applicants as explained in the Youth Outside Foundation targeted grant.

The funds available for Whale Tail grants in FY2020/21 include: \$220,000 from the CBCEA and \$250,000 from the Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund, for a total of \$470,000. The staff proposes to devote \$265,294 for grants to targeted projects; these are high priority projects that are linked to existing Commission programs and the goals identified in the Commission's Strategic Plan.

The staff further proposes to allocate \$30,000 to a temporary reserve, with the remaining \$174,706 to not be spent at this time, and to be allocated to the grantmaking budget next year.

### **III. APPROVAL OF TARGETED GRANTS FOR SIX PROJECTS**

The staff recommends six projects for immediate funding. These projects are consistent with the legislative requirements and with the criteria applied to the competitive grants program. The grants will be subject to the same reporting requirements and rules as set forth for the WHALE TAIL® competitive grants.

The projects proposed for grant funding comprise ongoing educational efforts, stewardship activities to curb plastic pollution, restoration of coastal habitat, and evaluation of the competitive grants process to improve accessibility and equity for applicants.

The staff is requesting approval of grants for the following projects:

- 1) WHALE TAIL® Competitive Grants Equity Evaluation for Applicants, Youth Outside Foundation (up to \$30,000)
- 2) Kid's Adopt-A-Beach School Program (\$22,294)  
These funds augment last year's grants for this program. Grantees started their projects, but their efforts were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The grantees will adapt the school assembly, beach cleanup and aerial art project to a new, distance learning program to be implemented during the 2020/2021 school

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year. Funds would be awarded to Friends of the Dunes, Marine Science Institute, Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education, Orange County Coastkeeper, I Love A Clean San Diego, and National Fisheries Conservation Center.

- 3) Heal the Bay Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
- 4) I Love A Clean San Diego Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
- 5) Community Cleanup Small Grants (\$72,000)  
Funds to be awarded to Urban Tilth, Lake Merritt Institute, Pacific Beach Coalition, Save Our Shores, Pacoima Beautiful, and Orange County Coastkeeper for efforts to reduce pollution through cleanups and anti-dumping efforts.
- 6) Tides Center Marine Education Project (\$81,000)

The staff also recommends that the grants listed above be funded from the following sources:

### **WHALE TAIL License Plate, (CBCEA) for a total of \$193,794**

- Youth Outside \$30,000
- Adopt-A-Beach School Programs \$22,294
- Heal the Bay \$30,000
- I Love A Clean San Diego \$30,000
- Tides Center \$81,000

### **Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund for a total of \$72,000**

- Community Cleanup Small Grants \$72,000

## **1. Up to \$30,000 FOR YOUTH OUTSIDE FOUNDATION**

Youth Outside is a nonprofit organization that funds outdoor trips for Bay Area youth, leads training programs that foster culturally relevant education programs, and advises on efforts to enhance equity in philanthropy.

**Program History.** Since FY2017/18, the Coastal Commission has granted funds to Youth Outside to hold trainings on pursuing equity and inclusion in environmental education for WHALE TAIL® Grant recipients, including stipends for participating organizations.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes up to \$30,000 for Youth Outside to evaluate and improve the equity of the competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants application process. Youth Outside will assess program processes, outreach, and accessibility for applicants.

## **2. \$22,294 FOR KIDS ADOPT-A-BEACH SCHOOL PROGRAM**

This program targets low-income schools from coastal and inland communities and historically involves upwards of 8,000 children a year. The program was started in Los Angeles County in 1993 by the Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education with the support of the Coastal Commission, and has expanded into five additional

locations, coordinated by separate partner grantees: San Diego (I Love a Clean San Diego), Orange County (Orange County Coastkeeper), Kern County (Community Action Partnership of Kern), San Francisco (Marine Science Institute), and Humboldt Bay (Friends of the Dunes). The assembly involves a presentation and discussion of the dangers of debris in the world's oceans, recycling, litter reduction, and the storm drain system. Teachers are provided with additional related activities to conduct with their classes. In years past, students enjoyed a field trip coinciding with World Oceans Day on June 8, to play at the beach, participate in a beach cleanup, and create an aerial art display by standing in formation to spell out an ocean conservation message which is photographed from above. (Art coordination is funded through a grant to the National Fisheries Conservation Center.) The 2019/2020 programming was halted due to COVID-19 and will be re-envisioned for a distance-learning environment during the 2020/2021 schoolyear.

**Program History.** The Commission took this Los Angeles-based program statewide by expanding to the San Francisco Bay area in 1998, to San Diego in 1999, to Humboldt County in 2002, to Orange County in 2003. The Commission launched a central valley component to the program in 2001. From 2001 to 2018, students from Fresno County traveled to Monterey Bay, and from 2003 to 2008, students from, Tulare County traveled to the coast in San Luis Obispo County. In 2019, students from Kern County traveled to San Luis Obispo County. In 2020, assemblies were suspended and beach events were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Proposal.** For FY2020/21, the staff proposes a total of \$22,294 to augment the grants made last year to create and implement a distance-learning Kids Adopt-A-Beach school program in San Diego, Orange County, San Francisco, Kern County, and Humboldt Bay, including a newly-designed participatory digital art project. Grants would be made as follows:

Friends of the Dunes, \$1,731  
 Marine Science Institute, \$1,969  
 Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education, \$6,848  
 Orange County Coastkeeper, \$1,822  
 I Love A Clean San Diego, \$5,481  
 National Fisheries Conservation Center, \$4,443

### 3. \$30,000 FOR HEAL THE BAY'S ADOPT-A-BEACH PROGRAM

Heal the Bay serves as the coordinator for both the Adopt-A-Beach Program and Coastal Cleanup Day for Los Angeles County. As the coordinator of the Adopt-A-Beach program, the organization arranges cleanups for hundreds of groups of Adopt-A-Beach volunteers committed to cleaning a beach three times and provides them with supplies. Heal the Bay also hosts monthly zero-waste "Nothin' But Sand" public cleanup events and maintains an interactive database where cleanup volunteers enter data on their trash collected and the public can run reports and view and graph the data.

For safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, Heal the Bay has postponed large group events and is focused on promoting individual and household cleanups and opportunities for online learning. They will offer free virtual educational presentations about ocean pollution and neighborhood and beach safety and will provide educational engagement opportunities for young students such as the interactive series “Knowledge Drops”, where subject experts offer fun lessons about the marine environment. These webinars are held weekly and target 3rd – 8th grade students, but all ages are welcome and encouraged to attend.

**Program History.** Heal the Bay received three competitive Adopt-A-Beach grants in FY1998/99 through FY2000/01. Since FY2002/03, the Commission has supported Heal the Bay’s extensive Adopt-A-Beach Program through the targeted grants program. Heal the Bay’s Adopt-A-Beach Program reaches 30,000 people a year and fits the goal of the targeted grants by carrying out activities associated with Commission programs.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes providing a \$30,000 grant for Heal the Bay to continue its extensive Adopt-A-Beach Program as described above.

#### **4. \$30,000 FOR I LOVE A CLEAN SAN DIEGO’S ADOPT-A-BEACH PROGRAM**

As the coordinator for San Diego County’s Adopt-A-Beach Program, I Love A Clean San Diego (ILACSD) offers a number of enhanced features such as acknowledging adopting volunteers by placing placards with their group names at 83 adopted locations; delivering interpretive presentations to cleanup volunteers; coordinating cleanups at inland canyons with waterways that drain to the coast; conducting outreach to the Spanish-speaking community; hosting an interactive litter-tracking database; and hosting a volunteer database. Group volunteer cleanups will remain suspended until local regulations permit for gatherings. A gradual reopening plan will be formulated to permit households to volunteer at a nearby location, with the final stage opening up the program to all volunteers once it is safe and permitted to do so.

New activities during this grant period will include: developing a comprehensive reopening plan to ensure safety and accessibility, transferring program scheduling and data reporting into a new database system, and updating the presentations to be suitable for a virtual platform as well as a volunteer-led option.

**Program History.** In FY2002/03, ILACSD received a competitive WHALE TAIL® Grant to enhance its Adopt-A-Beach program and the Coastal Commission has supported them with targeted grants in the years since. ILACSD’s Adopt-A-Beach Program manages over 100 coastal and inland cleanup locations throughout San Diego County and fits the goal of the targeted grants by carrying out activities associated with Commission programs.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes providing a \$30,000 grant for I Love A Clean San Diego to continue its extensive Adopt-A-Beach Program as described above.

## 5. \$72,000 FOR COMMUNITY CLEANUP SMALL GRANTS

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, large volunteer cleanup events are not taking place, local maintenance staff are stressed, and public lands are seeing increased visitation and trash issues, including discarded PPE. Targeted grants of approximately \$12,000 each to the following organizations will allow them to increase their efforts at addressing local litter and dumping issues in urban areas of California and institute or increase data collection to build knowledge of the problem, all while maintaining practices that are safe for their communities during COVID-19.

- a) Urban Tilth will design and coordinate a project to decrease illegal dumping and littering along the Richmond Greenway and along Wildcat Creek in North Richmond. This will include monthly cleanup days, several community days of service, four free dumpster days, and a multilingual, multi-faceted anti-dumping and anti-littering campaign.
- b) Lake Merritt Institute continues a successful, long running volunteer program that annually removes more than 20,000 pounds of trash from Lake Merritt, a large tidal lagoon and popular recreation spot near downtown Oakland. This grant will support Lake cleanups four days per week (two days with a small group of trained, dedicated volunteers, and two days with staff only) and incorporate data collection as part the cleanups.
- c) Pacific Beach Coalition is building a Street to Beach program in Pacifica and greater San Mateo County, supporting and supplying families and quarantine pods to clean their local neighborhoods. They will train volunteers to collect data, and they will implement a public education campaign about alternatives to frequently littered products.
- d) Save Our Shores will conduct 35 small, safe cleanups across Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties focusing primarily on State Park beaches that do not have maintenance staff available to deal with the increased visitation and trash impacts to their parks. They will train and coordinate volunteers to track, record, and report data on what they collect.
- e) Pacoima Beautiful will conduct four community cleanups including targeting local hotspots as well as recreation destinations for the community. Their youth team will organize and conduct a beach cleanup and a waterway/picnic area cleanup in the Angeles Forest, with watershed education as part of the experience.
- f) OC Coastkeeper will coordinate and activate small emergency cleanup teams made up of experienced volunteers to safely clean and collect data on polluted creeks, channels and beaches. This grant will also support once per month cleanup supply distribution outside grocery stores to encourage individual and family cleanups and data collection. In addition, OC Coastkeeper will offer once per month webinars on plastic pollution and related issues and 24 online presentations for K-12 teachers and their students in Orange County.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes six grants totaling up to \$72,000 for local cleanup and anti-dumping efforts.



**6. \$81,000 FOR THE TIDES CENTER/MARINE EDUCATION PROJECT**

The Marine Education Project (MEP) is a project of the nonprofit Tides Center in partnership with the Commission’s Public Education Program. The mission of MEP is to preserve and restore the biodiversity and health of California’s coastal and marine ecosystems through scientifically supported community involvement, education, and action. The MEP programs that would receive WHALE TAIL® funding are Project Grow and the statewide Education and Outreach Project.

**Program History.** Coastal Commission funding has supported in varying amounts Project Grow since 2000/01 and statewide education and outreach, including school-based marine education, since 2003/04.

**Proposal.** \$49,000 from this grant will support Project Grow, which promotes coastal stewardship by mobilizing community volunteers to restore habitat at Upper Newport Bay and beyond. Program volunteers remove non-native plants, collect seeds and propagate seedlings in an onsite native plant nursery, plant native plants, and monitor and maintain restored areas. Approximately 1,200 volunteers participate in the program per year (when safety restrictions due to COVID-19 allow). This year will produce on-line trainings and educational content, which will be used to prepare and deploy small groups of socially-distanced volunteers, including college student interns and high school students from Title 1 schools. The funds would support a portion of the Program Manager’s position, the majority of which is currently funded by the Metropolitan Water District and other grants.

\$32,000 would partially fund Marine Education Project staffing in support of statewide public education activities, including development of new curricular materials, California Coastal Cleanup Day coordination, and programming to support environmental justice. Additional support for Marine Education Project staffing would come from Coastal Cleanup Day sponsorships and donations.

**IV. APPROVAL OF \$30,000 TEMPORARY RESERVE**

In order to keep some funding available for unforeseen needs and other potential targeted grant projects, staff recommends that the Commission set aside a temporary reserve to be allocated at a later date.

**Program History.** Commissioners have approved setting aside temporary reserves since FY2001/02. During some years reserve funds have been used for a targeted grant project, during other years they have been divided between funding a targeted grant and adding the balance to the competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants budget, and during the remaining years the entire balance ended up not being needed for anything specific and was added to the amount available for competitive grants later in the fiscal year.

**Proposal.** Staff recommends maintaining funds in a temporary reserve to keep some grant funding available for potential opportunities and needs that may arise. Staff will return to the Commissioners before the end of the fiscal year to request allocating these funds. If not needed this fiscal year, the temporary reserve funds will revert to the CBCEA and be available for future grants.

## **V. APPROVAL OF ABILITY TO REALLOCATE UNNEEDED FUNDS**

1. In the event that one of the above targeted grantees *does not need all the funds* currently being allocated, Commissioners direct the staff to reallocate the remaining money to the following competitive grants budget or add it to the \$30,000 reserve described above.
2. In the event that one or more of the above targeted grantees needs *more funds* than are currently being allocated to successfully complete a project, and not all of the funds in the temporary reserve are needed for another purpose, Commissioners direct the Executive Director to increase the targeted grant awards using funds from the \$30,000 reserve.

The motion can be found on page 2 of this staff report.