



Isabelle Gonzalez
2019 Winner
*Coastal Commission Art &
Poetry Contest*

Year in Review 2019

California Coastal Commission



A year in review

The California Coastal Commission made steady progress on protecting the coast in 2019, advancing key principles such as maximizing public access and protecting ecosystem health, while also rising to the challenging issues of equity, housing, climate change and sea level rise. With 46 years of implementation to its credit, the Coastal Act has proven to be a resilient and effective law, even as the challenges become more complex.

As always, the Coastal Commission carried out its visionary mandate in close collaboration with its state and federal agency partners, including the State Lands Commission, CalTrans, the Ocean Protection Council, the State Coastal Conservancy, State Parks, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the California Natural Resources Agency, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Along with our local government partners, these public agencies each play a unique role in ensuring coastal resources are protected and enhanced for the welfare of present and future generations. Despite chronic staffing shortages, the Commission continued to participate in numerous multi-agency committees, task forces, panels and working groups statewide.

The Commission's LCP planning, permitting, enforcement, public access, federal consistency, public education, and legislative programs all made noteworthy strides in 2019, as the Commission began consciously applying the principles of environmental justice across the agency. The Newsom administration took bold action to support public access, a dynamic cohort of new commissioners and alternates were appointed, and the Commission found new ways to engage the public.

As we turn the calendar to the start of a new decade, it's time once again to review our accomplishments, consider what we've learned, and take stock of the challenges and opportunities ahead.



Ron Powell

For *Auld Lang Syne*

The “Silver Wave” is beginning to feel like the “Silver Tsunami,” as many of the agency’s long-serving professional staff transition into well-deserved retirement. Of the Commission’s approximately 160 staff members, 52 are currently eligible for retirement. From July 1, 2013, through the end of December, 2019, the Commission has seen the retirement of 30 experienced staff. Some of these committed public servants began their careers with the agency before the

Coastal Act was passed. They chose the Commission out of a sense of passion for coastal and ocean protection. Their collective contribution is on permanent display along California’s 1,270 miles of shoreline. In 2019, the Commission said farewell to the following devoted staff members. We thank them for their service, and wish them all the best.



farewell

Rita Babaran—Legal Secretary

Legal Division, San Francisco Office, March 1989—December 2019

Ann Cheddar—Attorney

Legal Division, San Francisco Office, March 1991—October 2019

Mark Delaplaine—Program Manager

**Energy, Ocean Resources and Federal Consistency, San Francisco Office,
March 1976—December 2019**

Chuck Posner—District Supervisor

South Coast District, Long Beach Office, October 1988—January 2019

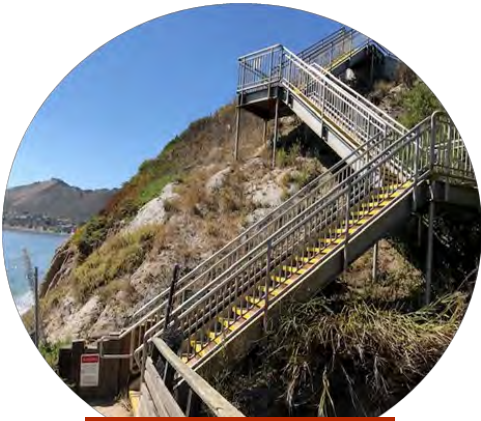
Barbara Rodriguez—Office Support

South Central Coast District, Ventura Office, February 1991—September 2019



Promoting Public Access For All

Protecting, enhancing, and promoting public access to California's 1,270 miles of coastline continued to be a top priority in 2019. Ensuring that all Californians have meaningful and equitable access to coastal resources requires comprehensive planning, creative problem-solving and bold action. Once again, the Commission demonstrated its commitment to this goal in multiple ways throughout the year.

**Sunset Cliffs**

Two new beach access ways were opened in the City of Pismo Beach due to permit conditions required by the Commission several years earlier.

The first is a bluff stairway in the Sunset Cliffs neighborhood, north of the Cliffs Hotel. The stairs are located on the north side of a steep arroyo, providing connection to an existing stairway just south of the drainage. Both stairways were required by a CCC permit condition issued to the Cliffs Hotel in 1983. The new stairway also provides connectivity to the City's Ebb Tide bluff top park to the south.

The second is a pedestrian bridge spanning a different arroyo, filling an important missing link in the California Coastal Trail (CCT) by connecting bluff top trails to the north and to the south. The bridge also expands access to Pismo State Beach via an existing stairway, also the result of a CCC permit condition.

**Bluff Top CCT**

The new pedestrian bridge connects bluff top trails and Pismo State Beach, filling an important gap in the CCT.

Pismo State Beach

The Coastal Trail also got a boost in the City of Santa Cruz when the City constructed a new 10-foot wide pedestrian and bike bridge over the San Lorenzo River, connecting miles of CCT to the east and west. This new trestle bridge provides ample room for users travelling in both directions,

**Before—4 ft. wide pathway****After—10 ft. wide pathway**

In the City of Malibu, at Las Flores Beach, a Commission enforcement action resulted in the removal of decades-old illegal encroachments into a public access way to the beach. Now the area is clear and ready for the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to obtain a permit to construct a public stairway. Elsewhere in Malibu, the **MRCA** opened two new coastal view overlooks in the Big Rock area along the city's eastern edge. The Dolphin View Coastal Overlook and Miramar Coastal Overlook are welcome public amenities for travelers and visitors in need of a scenic break.



Dolphin View Coastal Overlook



Miramar Coastal Overlook

One of the greatest opportunities of the decade for significantly expanding public access came as the result of a bill signed into law this year by Governor Newsom.

Assemblymember Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) introduced [AB 1680](#) to finally provide long-promised access to Hollister Ranch in Santa Barbara County. The bill directs the Commission to work with affected agencies to update the previously adopted 1982 Access Program, includes deadlines for the update completion and plan implementation and provides important new legal tools to advance the effort. Although the bill took effect January 1, 2020, significant progress has already been made, thanks to a Collaboration Agreement signed by the Directors of the State Lands Commission, State Parks, State Coastal Conservancy and the Commission in March 2019, stating their collective intent to develop and implement an updated Public Access Program. Since that time, the Coastal Conservancy has provided \$50,000 and hired a consultant to conduct a public outreach and engagement strategy, and State Parks added \$300,000 to provide the consultants funding for the strategy as well as drafting a public access program document. In July, staff from the State agencies, along with Santa Barbara County planning staff, conducted a field trip to all six beaches, the first visit for almost all the agency staffers. Public outreach to stakeholders for input began in November and will continue in the first quarter of 2020. Regular public briefings to the Commission will continue, and the initial recommendations will be forthcoming by the end of the year.



Hollister Ranch
Photo: State Lands Commission



Chuck Zamites

Adapting to Sea Level Rise:

The Planning Imperative

Scientific models and research increasingly point to a sobering fact: sea level rise is happening faster than projected, and will likely be greater than previously forecasted. This has major implications for the 400,000 Californians currently living in areas within 6 feet of sea level, as well as California's beaches, wildlife habitats, ecosystems and statewide and local economies.

Commissioners and staff made more than 50 legislative visits in Sacramento during the first few months of the 2019 session, to raise awareness about sea level rise and talk with coastal members and legislative leaders about the Commission's efforts to encourage adaptation planning.

Planning can be complicated, controversial and expensive. But it pales in comparison to the perils of denial and delay. Because local governments are on the front lines of sea level planning and emergency response, the state's critical partnership with coastal cities and counties has never been more important when it comes to LCP completions and updates.

That's why the Commission, at the request of local governments, hosted a round table discussion session with commissioners and local leaders from around the state in July, to propose ideas about how to make the process more efficient and effective, listen to various perspectives, and share observations and lessons learned. This led to the formation of the Sea Level Rise Working Group, consisting of 2 commissioners, and leaders from CSAC and League of Cities. In October, the Working Group had its first meeting, and agreed to hire a facilitator to lead the next four quarterly meetings in 2020.

At the same July meeting, the Commission approved the City of Morro Bay's proposal to relocate its [waste water treatment facility](#), a marquee adaptation achievement that was the culmination of over a decade of effort. The 1960s-era ocean-front facility is located just south of Morro Rock. The Commission had previously denied a permit to demolish and replace the aging facility in place in 2013, due to its extreme vulnerability to sea level rise hazards. Working with Commission staff and the citizens of Morro Bay, the city revised its approach, purchased a site east of Highway One, and developed a plan to build a new facility at this more inland location. The City's successful and forward-thinking approach is a model for critical infrastructure adaptation efforts in the future.



“Planning can be complicated, controversial, and expensive. But it pales in comparison to the perils of denial and delay.”


California King Tides Project 2018/2019 California King Tides Project 2018/2019 [f](#) [t](#) [e](#)

[Santa Cruz County North](#) [Monterey County South](#)

King Tides Santa Cruz County to Oregon Visit the California King Tides website to learn more [f](#) [t](#) [e](#)

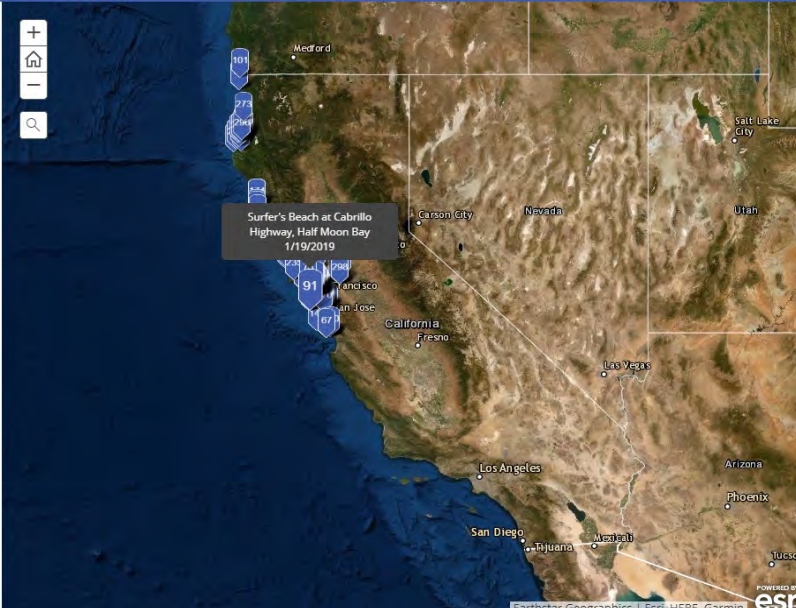
In December 2018 and January 2019, volunteers photographed California's highest high tides to better understand the impacts of future sea level rise. Zoom in on a location in the map or scroll through the photo gallery. Click on "More Info" for a larger photo. Photo captions provided by photo contributors. Visit california.kingtides.net to learn more.

91 Surfer's Beach at Cabrillo Highway, Half Moon Bay 1/19/2019 [<](#) [>](#) [X](#)



8:40am:
The weather was overcast in Half Moon Bay, but the temperature was mild. The dirt paths were muddy due to moisture being brought up from the tides. Many adults showed up in addition to my AP environmental science classmates. The w

[More info](#)



The California King Tides Project can now be found on an interactive online map.

Increasing the public's awareness about sea level rise is essential.

So starting in August, the Commission began holding monthly informational briefings on sea level rise at their regularly scheduled public meetings. The Commission now hears from local and statewide academics and other experts at every meeting on regional vulnerability issues and strategies for phased adaptation, as well as the broader impacts of sea level rise on insurance markets, economics, etc.

The [California King Tides Project](#) provides another opportunity to raise public awareness. This innovative project helps people visualize how sea level rise will impact their lives in the future by inviting them to take and share photos during the highest high tides of the year. As part of its new role as lead agency for the California King Tides Project, the Coastal Commission launched a new photo collection process, created an [online mapped display](#) of the 2018/2019 King Tides photos, managed the California King Tides social media presence, and recruited local organizations to hold public events. Thirty-two events took place during the two King Tides of the season on December 22 and 23, 2018 and January 20 and 21, 2019, and King Tides participants uploaded 800 photos to the website, up from 652 the year before.



Environmental Justice

On March 8, 2019, after two years of outreach, planning and public hearings, the Commission unanimously adopted its first [Environmental Justice Policy](#), to guide its consideration of environmental justice (“EJ”) principles in permitting decisions pursuant to Coastal Act Section 30604. The result of extensive collaboration with EJ leaders and community groups, and three public hearings, the Commission’s EJ policy contains a strong policy statement, specific commitments in 9 issue areas, and a detailed implementation plan.



Members of the Coastal Commission's Environmental Justice team in front of the California African American Museum in Los Angeles prior to the Environmental Justice Policy's adoption in March.

Once adopted, the Commission wasted no time putting the new policy to work.

At the same meeting in March, Commissioners added special conditions to the [Santa Monica Civic Center](#) and Soccer Field project to require educational signs and programs referencing the history of marginalized communities and discriminatory land use planning practices in the area that deprived people of color of their homes.

Commissioners also added special conditions to the City of Santa Monica's [proposal to expand the Boardwalk](#) by requiring interpretive signs along the Boardwalk at Bay Street, directing visitors to the nearby Inkwell Beach Historical Monument, which memorializes the history of that beach as a popular public beach where African Americans frequently gathered in the early and mid-19th Century when they were excluded from other public beaches.

In May, the [Sun Soaked Music Festival](#) project was the first staff report to incorporate detailed EJ findings. Tickets to the proposed summertime weekend music festival on Alamitos Beach in the City of Long Beach cost between \$125 and \$450 per ticket, accompanied by 7 days of free community events. The stadium, stage, and associated facilities would have occupied more than 600,000 feet of public beach space and another 25,000 feet of public park land. The Commission approved the permit with a number of special conditions based on extensive EJ findings, including distribution of 5,000 free concert tickets. Additional conditions increased not only the ability of underserved community members to attend and enjoy the free events, but also contributed to other targeted public access programs that are implemented throughout the year. Although the concert itself was ultimately cancelled, the inclusive free events took place as enhanced by Commission actions.

In July, the Commission's annual review of the [Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area](#) (ODSVRA) included for the first time an analysis of the facility's disproportionate burdens on the adjacent town of Oceano, one of the most disadvantaged communities on the Central Coast. The impacts on the community from vehicle use contributed to the staff recommendation that, among other things, State Parks should begin the process of transitioning ODSVRA to non-motorized recreational uses. Although Commissioners did not vote to approve the recommendation, they did vote to revisit the issue in one year, giving State Parks additional time to [incorporate the Commission's recommended operational changes](#) into the draft Public Works Plan that State Parks is currently developing. plan with a long list of actions and goals to improve recruitment, hiring, retention and training. Several items have already been accomplished, including the creation of an onboarding packet for new staff, adding racial equity language to job postings and job descriptions, and receiving approval for two new staff positions to focus on EJ and tribal issues.

During the November Commission hearing, members of the public were able to deliver remote testimony, marking a historical first for the agency.



In November, the Commission heard emotional testimony from residents on the Monterey Peninsula regarding the potential impacts of the proposed [Cal Am desalination facility](#). For the first time in the Commission's history, some of that testimony was delivered to the Commission remotely, in multiple languages, via video conference link from a site near the project in the city of Marina. Citing the Commission's EJ Policy regarding the commitment to provide equitable access to the public decision-making process, the Commission made special provisions to accommodate the lower-income residents of Marina and Seaside who were unable to travel to the Commission meeting in Half Moon Bay. Although the project was continued, the EJ findings and the additional testimony provided an important perspective for the Commission to consider in its deliberations.

Meanwhile, approximately 20 Commission staff members completed their second year of training on race and equity principles in Sacramento, as part of a group of approximately 12 state agencies with the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#) (GARE). Because the Commission wanted to integrate the principles of environmental justice throughout the agency, the team focused on creating a racial equity action plan with a long list of actions and goals to improve recruitment, hiring, retention and training. Several items have already been accomplished, including the creation of an onboarding packet for new staff, adding racial equity language to job postings and job descriptions, and receiving approval for two new staff positions to focus on EJ and tribal issues.



Offshore Oil

Significant changes are in the works for oil and gas production off-shore of California. While the status of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management ("BOEM") 2019-2024 Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for federal waters offshore Northern, Central and Southern California remains in question, progress continues to be made on the shutdown and decommissioning of existing oil platforms within the Santa Barbara Channel. Pursuant to a Commission-issued coastal development permit, the California State Lands Commission recently completed permanently plugging oil wells off the beach in Goleta, and is actively closing wells on Platform Holly off the coast of Santa Barbara County and onshore and offshore at Rincon Island in Ventura County.

In federal waters, Chevron and Freeport McMoRan have begun the process of abandoning wells on five additional platforms offshore of Carpinteria and the Gaviota coast. The next step is the development of more comprehensive platform decommissioning proposals over the next several years, which will require Coastal Commission approval. Commission staff participated in quarterly meetings of the Interagency Platform Decommissioning Working Group with local, state and federal partners in 2019, and will continue to be actively engaged in the process.



Aquaculture

The Commission made significant progress in its efforts to resolve outstanding regulatory compliance issues involving California's shellfish aquaculture industry in 2019. Over the course of the year, the Commission approved ten new or amended permits for shellfish aquaculture operations in Tomales Bay, Morro Bay, Santa Barbara and Carlsbad. All ten were brought to the Commission on its consent calendar, indicating that all issues had been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, including the conservation community. Issuance of these permits and the subsequent adherence to their special conditions has resulted in the resolution of nine separate Coastal Act violations – several of which had been ongoing for nearly a decade. The Commission's efforts also helped address outstanding regulatory compliance issues between a number of aquaculture operations and the California Fish and Game Commission, Regional Water Quality Control Board and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Commission staff expects to conclude this compliance effort next year as it works to bring the four remaining unpermitted shellfish aquaculture operations to hearing in 2020, a major step towards completing the Commission's multi-year effort to resolve the California aquaculture industry's outstanding permitting issues.



A day on the bay: Morro Bay Oyster Company, San Luis Obispo County

Additionally, the Commission supported [SB 262 \(McGuire\)](#), a bill that was introduced at the request of shellfish producers and signed by Governor Newsom in September. It requires the Commission to prepare guidelines for aquaculture applicants to make the permitting process easier to understand and navigate, and to provide additional information that growers can use. Staff has already begun preliminary work on the guidelines which will be available by the end of 2020.

Healthy Habitats for Coastal Species



The Coastal Act is a powerful legal tool for protecting coastal habitats and the Special species that depend on them. In September, the Commission approved [Phase II of the Elkhorn Slough Tidal Marsh Restoration Project](#), which will rejuvenate 56 acres of intertidal salt marsh and habitat and provide a buffer between the restored marsh and adjacent agricultural fields in the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Past diking and drainage for agricultural uses has caused land subsidence, and construction of the Moss Landing Harbor has increased tidal inundation. The tidal marsh area will be restored by adding clean fill from adjacent land to raise the remnant marsh plain, allowing native wetland vegetation to reestablish. The surrounding area will be revegetated with native grasses and forbs.

Also in September the Commission approved the [Pacific Horizon Preserve Restoration Plan](#) to remove invasive plants and restore areas of erosion caused by unauthorized off-trail bike use on nearly 4 acres of the 151-acres preserve in Orange County. Fence repairs, signs, cameras and a 5-year authorization period for ongoing restoration of unauthorized trail modifications will hopefully deter further damage to restored areas.



Cristian Donos

Almost 200 acres of invasive *Spartina densiflora* (spartina) will be removed from Tuluwat Island in Humboldt Bay as partial mitigation for the [Eureka-Arcata 101 corridor project](#). Historically, Humboldt Bay contained over 10,000 acres of inter-tidal saltmarsh, but approximately 90% of the historic saltmarsh has been lost due to diking and agricultural conversion. Virtually all of the remaining native saltmarsh in Humboldt Bay has been invaded by spartina, a non-native cordgrass. Where spartina is present, it usually increases over time and causes the native estuarine habitat to disappear. Under the approved plan, Caltrans will direct the removal of 179 acres of spartina, thereby clearing the entire Tuluwat Island, as mitigation for substantial transportation safety improvements along the Highway 101 corridor between Arcata and Eureka. The plan is supported by the City of Eureka and the Wiyot Tribe, who have agreed to protect and hold title to the restored areas of the island, which is known as the “Center of the Wiyot Universe,” and restrict the restored areas from future development. Caltrans is providing a non-wasting endowment fund in the form of an interest-bearing account to fund the long term monitoring and removal of spartina in perpetuity.

In December, the Commission approved an [important habitat restoration](#) project at Crystal Cove State Park in Orange County, to support of the recovery of the western spadefoot toad and coastal cactus wren. The project will increase breeding, foraging and nesting opportunities for both species through the creation of eight seasonal pools and surrounding habitat restoration on more than 10 acres in the San Joaquin Hills within the State Park. Western spadefoot toads are a state Species of Greatest Conservation Need and currently under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for listing under the Endangered Species Act. New breeding sites and habitat restoration is essential to the long-term conservation of the coastal population of the western spadefoot toad.

Coastal cactus wrens are also threatened in California due to habitat fragmentation. The wren territories in the Laguna Beach region have not yet fully recovered from the 1993 Laguna fires. This project will restore more than 10 acres of critical habitat.



Scott Garner

Public Education:

Cultivating Awareness, Inspiring Stewardship

The Commission continued to connect Californians with their coast through education, recreation, and stewardship activities in 2019.

Coastal Cleanup Day By the Numbers

Cleanup events were very popular...

The 35th annual Coastal Cleanup Day in September attracted 74,410 volunteers who collected 917,726 pounds of debris from 1,872 miles of shoreline. Public Education staff worked with the Commission's mapping unit to produce a **story map** looking back on the 35 years of history of the cleanup and its accomplishments.



...and not just amongst coastal communities

The event took place in 55 counties at 953 cleanup locations, both on shorelines and in the water using kayaks, canoes, and dinghies. Tens of thousands more Californians participated in the year-round Adopt-A-Beach Program, and more than 5,000 students participated in the Schoolyard Cleanup Program, which links community and watershed health to ocean health through classroom and cleanup activities.

1,872
MILES OF
SHORELINE

74,410
VOLUNTEERS

55
COUNTIES

953
CLEANUP
LOCATIONS

917,726
LBS. OF DEBRIS

WHALE TAIL GRANTS

\$863k **29**
awarded projects

The Commission awarded \$863,000 in [Whale Tail® grants](#) to 29 different projects for educational activities including beach field trips, habitat restoration projects, watershed clean ups, educational videos, kayak trips, and marine science experiences, with an emphasis on reaching underserved communities. Examples of funded activities included: a Climate Action Project Symposium in Monterey, open to teachers statewide; Klamath River watershed experiences for Siskiyou County students; a sustainable aquaculture program for San Pedro high school students; a “plastic free oceans” job training program; and a “Surfing 101” program for urban San Francisco students. The Commission worked with Youth Outside to provide training in cultural relevancy, equity, and inclusion for Whale Tail® grantees.

Drivers purchased 5,300 [Whale Tail® License Plates](#) in fiscal year 2018-19. Sales revenue combined with renewal fees from existing plates resulted in close to \$5 million in revenue for environmental programs. Of this total, \$1.28 million went to the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account, which funds the Commission’s Public Education Programs, and \$3.68 million went to the Environmental License Plate Fund for a range of environmental conservation projects statewide. Since its launch in 1997, [Whale Tail® License Plates](#) sales and renewal fees have contributed \$30 million to the CBCEA and \$77 million to the ELPF.

Californians continue to support the coast through charitable donations at tax time. The [Protect Our Coast and Ocean fund](#) received over \$360,000 in donations from more than 27,000 individuals in 2019, who “checked the coast” on their state tax forms. These donations support marine education and stewardship through Whale Tail® Grants.

LICENSE PLATES

5,300
purchased

\$5m
revenue





Brown Girls Surf



Yes Nature to Neighborhood

Brown Girls Surf (L) and YES Nature to Neighborhoods (R) were amongst 29 Whale Tail Grant grantees this year.

To extend our reach even further, the Commission reached out to educators statewide to distribute new and existing curricula relating to topics including beach access and environmental policy, the properties of plastic, and climate change. Staff presented seven teacher workshops to support the use of Commission programs and resources, in Occidental, San Jose, and Anaheim.



The Boating Clean and Green Online Quiz Program received the 2019 Digital Communication Award at the International Boating and Water Safety Summit (IBWSS). Sponsored by the National Safe Boating Council, National Water Safety Congress, and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, the IBWSS awards program recognizes creativity in communicating with the public about safe and responsible boating.

Visit www.coast4u.org for information on how to get involved, to view winning coastal art and photography, and to learn about the Whale Tail® License Plate, the Protect Our Coast and Ocean fund tax checkoff, and other ways to support the Commission's public education work.

An extended summary of the Commission's 2019 education activities can be found [here](#).



Wyatt Smith

Enforcement Highlights

Any law is only as strong as its record of compliance. Coastal Act enforcement is an essential component of coastal protection. The Commission's Enforcement Unit seeks to resolve Coastal Act violations through voluntary compliance, negotiated consent orders, restoration orders and contested unilateral orders. Because litigation is costly and time consuming, the Commission makes every attempt to resolve violations amicably. The single most effective way to encourage people to resolve violations quickly is the incentive for them to avoid administrative penalties.

In 2014, the Commission gained administrative penalty authority for violations involving public access.

In January, the Commission provided the Legislature with a [progress report](#) on the first 5 years of penalty implementation. The report shows that the new authority has proven extremely effective. Not only does the threat of fines motivate property owners to work cooperatively with the Commission to come to a mutually agreeable solution, the average rate of resolution for access cases has been reduced by over 90%. Of the 102 public access cases resolved during the reporting period, 96 were resolved voluntarily at the district level, and only 2 were contested in court. The other 4 were resolved through Commission consent orders. The report provides significant justification for expanding administrative penalty authority to the rest of the Commission's violation backlog.

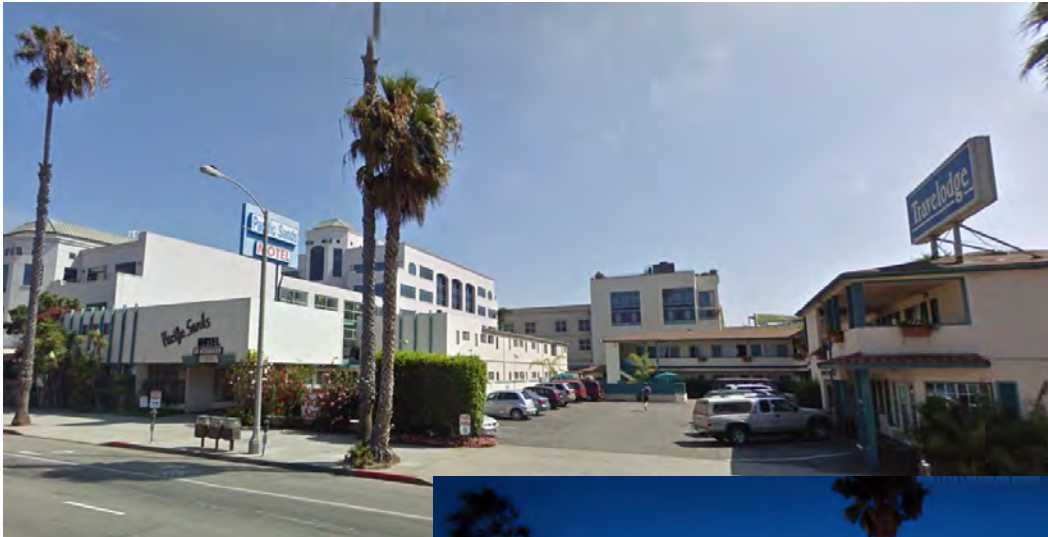
Mattos, Marin County

In April, the Commission approved Consent Cease and Desist and Restoration Orders directing an owner of a large agricultural property in Marin County to restore illegally filled wetlands in western Marin County.

The wetland violations included unpermitted fill, grading, installation of culverts, non-native seeding, and other development that displaced native vegetation and adversely affected several acres of habitat. Commission enforcement staff worked with the property owner to reach an administrative settlement of this violation including removing the material, installing temporary erosion control measures, conducting restorative grading, revegetating with native plants, and mitigating for the habitat losses until the impacted habitat is fully restored by recording a wetland and stream conservation easement. The property owner will also construct wildlife friendly fencing to exclude cattle from areas covered by the conservation easement, plant more than 2,000 willows along the banks of the Estero de San Antonio, pay a monetary settlement in the amount of \$225,000, and record an offer to dedicate (OTD) for fee title to a 1.08 acre portion of the property for habitat protection, conservation, open space, and passive recreation.



The property owner will plant more than 2,000 willows along the banks of the Estero de San Antonio



Before—Lower-cost motels



After— \$300+ a night Shore Hotel

Sunshine Enterprises LP– Santa Monica, Los Angeles County

In May, the Commission issued an enforcement order to the developer of the Shore Hotel in Santa Monica for illegally demolishing two lower cost motels and replacing them with a luxury boutique hotel renting for \$300 to \$800/night. Affordable accommodations are an essential means of providing public access and recreational opportunities for those who live farther from the coast. For many low and moderate income visitors, affordable accommodations are essential to being able to access the California coast at all.

The Commission's enforcement order required the hotel developer to pay a \$15,581,000 penalty to resolve its liability for the illegal activities. Funds will be distributed to projects that protect and enhance coastal resources, such as projects to construct new affordable accommodations. In addition, the enforcement order requires the hotel owner to obtain and comply with a coastal development permit for the new hotel, with mitigation for the loss of the demolished rooms, or to close the facility if it fails to get such a permit. In December, the Commission approved a coastal development permit for the Shore Hotel that requires the developer to rent 72 of the 164 rooms in the hotel at a moderately price in order to be affordable to a wide range of people. In addition, the developer must pay a \$2,300,000 mitigation fee, in addition to the \$15,581,000 penalty, to be used to construct affordable accommodation along the coast.



Public access will be restored and enhanced at the Ritz Hotel in half Moon Bay, and the company will institute an innovative plastics reduction program

Ritz-Carlton – Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County

At its June hearing, the Commission settled a major public access case with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Half Moon Bay, through a consent order with an administrative penalty. The order addressed unpermitted development that was inconsistent with a prior permit requiring a comprehensive public access program as part of the hotel development. It also addressed violations of an earlier [consent order](#). The violations were significant, because they made it much more difficult for the public to reach this stretch of coastline, which includes a segment of the California Coastal Trail and the beautiful Cañada Verde beach.

The original permit required the property owners to provide a bluff top scenic overlook, a paved pedestrian access path along the length of the property, public restrooms and viewing decks, a vertical access way to an adjacent beach, public parking in two locations, and signs clearly indicating public use of all access routes, public parking, and public restrooms. However, shortly after the Ritz-Carlton opened in 2001, Commission staff began receiving reports from the public that they were denying the public use of public parking spaces in the hotel garage. After numerous attempts by Commission staff to resolve the violations informally, staff brought the matter to a formal hearing before the Commission in 2004. Following that public hearing, the Commission issued a Consent [Cease and Desist Order](#). But the Commission continued to receive complaints about the inability of the public to access the public parking spaces, use of public coastal access parking spaces by the hotel valet service, and the lack of signs regarding public access opportunities available at the Ritz-Carlton.

Through this 2019 Consent Order, the Ritz agreed to implement a new management strategy for the public coastal access parking spaces, increase the number of public parking spaces available at the nearby Cañada Verde parking lot, improve coastal access signs at both the garage parking lot and the Cañada Verde parking lot, and pay penalties of \$1,600,000. A portion of this money will be directed to the Peninsula Open Space Trust, where it will assist in the purchase of a property just north of the hotel property, which will provide improved public coastal access, including a segment of the California Coastal Trail. The remainder of the money will be deposited into the Violation Remediation Account held by the State Coastal Conservancy. Any future violations of the consent order will be assessed at \$25,000 per violation per day. Finally, the Ritz agreed to conduct a plastics use and waste reduction audit to reduce single-use plastics use at the hotel, after which they will propose and implement a plastics reduction plan. easement, provide a new lateral access easement in front of the entire width of the beach, and pay a \$500,000 penalty. A portion will go to the Violation Remediation Account, and a portion to the public agency that will maintain and operate the access easement.



Malibu's newest public access point will be ADA accessible, and include benches, shade structures and beach access direct from Pacific Coast Highway.



Malibu Outrigger Homeowners Association & Sterling Family Trust – Los Angeles County

In October, the Commission approved two Consent Cease and Desist Orders and one Consent Administrative Penalty directing two adjacent property owners to remove unpermitted concrete and rock riprap from two beach-front properties along Carbon Beach in Malibu, and to create and open a public access way to the beach between the parcels. Almost all of the unpermitted development was blocking a dedicated public access easement, which prevented the public from reaching this stretch of Carbon Beach.

Commission enforcement staff worked together with the property owners to reach an administrative settlement of this violation. The consent orders and penalty require the property owner to remove the impediments, double the width of the existing easement to 20 feet, pay for and construct an ADA-compliant public access way with benches and shade structures on the newly created 20-foot easement, provide a new lateral access easement in front of the entire width of the beach, and pay a \$500,000 penalty. A portion will go to the Violation Remediation Account, and a portion to the public agency that will maintain and operate the access easement.



Advances in Local Coastal Planning

Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) are the local blueprints for Coastal Act policies, implementing statewide planning policy in a locally specific context. The Coastal Commission works closely with all 76 local governments in the coastal zone to manage the planning and development across 126 planning segments. Sixty-two (62) counties and cities are now issuing permits under a Commission-approved, certified LCP.

This unique state/local partnership allows local governments to tailor state policies to fit local conditions, and allows the state ongoing oversight of local implementation.

However, incomplete or out-of-date LCPs lead to conflict and delays in development approvals, and ultimately, less effective resource protection and less resilient communities. Many LCPs are significantly out-of-date, and lack critical policies to address sea level rise.

In November, the Commission awarded a [sixth grant round](#) totaling \$1.5 million to 12 local governments. This brings the total number of local planning grants awarded since 2013 to 60, totaling more than \$8 million. The 2019 grant round was the latest award supported by funding appropriated by the Legislature from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). Grant guidelines include a requirement for jurisdictions to assess sea level rise vulnerability and develop climate change adaptation policies and ordinances.

The state's previous investments in the Commission's LCP grant program continued to pay off in 2020. In August the Commission approved the City of Santa Barbara's comprehensive [LCP update](#) addressing a number of Coastal Act policies, including a detailed policy framework to address coastal hazards, as well as maps of existing land use designations, shoreline hazards screening areas and the location of the City's coastal bluff edge. It also expands public access opportunities and protects creeks and sensitive habitats. The update was supported by \$408,000 in grant funding from the Commission, and represents an important step forward in the City's ability to mitigate the local impacts of sea level rise.

And in November, the Commission approved the [City of Pacific Grove's first fully certified LCP](#), making that city the most recent coastal jurisdiction to assume coastal development permit authority. Supported by substantial grant awards from the Commission, the City spent several years comprehensively updating its Land Use Plan, previously certified in 1989, and submitted its first Implementation Plan, the final component for a fully certified LCP. The plan addresses coastal hazards and sea level rise issues in the unique context of Pacific Grove's mostly publicly-owned shoreline that consists of a continuous public park and recreational trail. It also includes policies related to the long-term planning and study necessary to address future unknowns with regard to hazards, while at the same time minimizing risks and preserving the unique public recreational access amenity that is the Pacific Grove shoreline.



Fabian Uribe



Federal Actions

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) published the findings of its 2017-2018 federal evaluation by the Office for Coastal Management (OCM). The evaluation concluded that California is meeting its requirements under the Coastal Zone Management Act. The report also highlights the accomplishments of the program as a whole, including key accomplishments of the Coastal Commission related to LCP coordination and work with local governments on sea level rise planning, multi-agency coordination (i.e. Caltrans transportation efforts) and on public access enforcement efforts with the addition of administrative penalty authority. In addition, the report offers recommendations for further program improvements. The 2017-2018 findings are the culmination of a multi-year effort to look at the federally approved California Coastal Management Program over a ten-year period (2008 – 2018) and will be used by the Commission for future funding requests and policy initiatives. This decennial review is required under Section 312 of the Coastal Zone Management Act. Under the evaluation, NOAA examined the operation and management of the Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), assessed their accomplishments and needs, and conducted a site visit to California to meet with agency staff, stakeholders and the public.



Chuck Graham

Compromise at Surf Beach: An improved beach management plan balances public access with the needs of the threatened snowy plover

In December, the Commission concurred with a [Federal Consistency Determination](#) that will expand public beach access at Surf Beach in Santa Barbara County, while still protecting the snowy plover. This had particular significance for residents of Lompoc, who have very limited beach access due to their proximity to Vandenberg Air Force Base, along with seasonal beach closures at Surf Beach to protect nesting plovers for much of the summer. Because this raised both public access and EJ issues, Commission staff led a multi-agency effort over the summer with the Air Force, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, City of Lompoc, County of Santa Barbara, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to consider options to modify Vandenberg's Beach Management Plan to improve public access during the summer season while maintaining protective measures for plovers. As a result, the Air Force and the Service agreed to implement an experimental program, which began in late August 2019, to discontinue the automatic closure of Surf Beach. The Air Force will continue to implement public education docent programs, conduct law enforcement patrols and issue citations for violations of plover protection measures, and retains the authority to close the beach to the public should the experiment result in unacceptable adverse effects to snowy plovers or plover habitat. This solution was a positive example of how EJ concepts can be applied consistent with the public access and environmentally sensitive habitat policies of the Coastal Act.

Transportation

The Commission views interagency coordination as an integral part of improving the efficiency of government and achieving better outcomes in our work to protect California's coast and ocean. The Commission has built a particularly strong relationship over the years with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) aimed at promoting important public access and transportation projects consistent with Coastal Act and LCP policies. Through multi-year interagency agreements, Commission staff has worked with Caltrans Headquarters as well as Caltrans' six coastal District Offices to continue to provide a safe, sustainable, and resilient transportation system.

This coordination provided the foundation for the approval of multiple major transportation infrastructure projects in 2019. In August, the Commission approved the [Eureka-Arcata Route 101 Corridor Improvement Project](#), which will provide critical public safety improvements to Highway 101 along Humboldt Bay while also establishing a phased approach for adapting the highway to sea level rise. The Commission also approved [Phase 1/Stage 4 of the San Diego County North Coast Corridor Public Works Plan and Transportation and Resource Enhancement Plan](#). This approval represents the latest installment in a comprehensive program of transportation, community, and natural resource enhancements within the Interstate 5 corridor in northern San Diego County.



Kenric Martinez

The Commission continues to pursue opportunities to further enrich coordination with Caltrans and other agency partners.

In 2019, the Commission joined other state and federal resource agencies as a signatory to Caltrans' [Statewide Advance Mitigation Initiative](#). The Commission's participation in the initiative will enhance coordination between the Commission, Caltrans, and other agency partners in mitigating the coastal resource impacts of transportation projects more effectively and efficiently. Over the past year the Commission also participated in the AB 1282 Transportation Permitting Task Force, a multi-agency work group dedicated to improving the process by which transportation projects are designed and permitted. In December, the Task Force finalized and submitted to the Governor's Office for review its final report recommending process improvements that will optimize the permitting process while also enhancing environmental outcomes.



Paul Wade

Interagency Collaboration

In addition to CalTrans, Commission staff serves on a wide variety of working groups, including task forces, advisory committees, leadership teams and review panels. Participation in these groups improves outcomes and is essential for good governance, but also requires a significant amount of time and resources.

The following list showcases many of the groups the Commission led or participated on in 2019:

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

- California Coastal Sediment Management Working (CSMW) Group
- Central Coast Highway 1 Climate Resiliency Steering Committee
- State Agency Sea Level Rise Leadership Team
- CalTrans Integrated Planning Team (IPT) Sea Level Rise Working Group
- Climate Change Action Coordination Team
- West Coast Governors Alliance Action Coordination Team
- Coastal and Ocean Working Group of the Climate Action Team (CO-CAT)
- Safeguarding California Climate Action Team (SafeCAT)
- Public Trust Coordination Group

COASTAL HAZARDS AND SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT

- California Geological Survey Tsunami Policy Working Group
- California Geological Survey Tsunami Technical Advisory Panel
- Sand TAC for San Francisco BCDC
- Southern California Dredged Material Management Team
- Southern Monterey Bay Opportunistic Beach Nourishment Program TAC

COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT, STATE AND FEDERAL

- Coastal States Organization Ex-Officio Representatives
- Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Advisory Committee
- USC Sea Grant Advisory Board
- West Coast Regional Coastal Zone Programs and National Estuarine Research Reserve Managers Work Group

ECOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Arena Gulch Adaptive Management Working Group
- Beach Ecology Coalition
- Board of Forestry Cal VTP Implementation Working Group
- California Natural Resources Agency Sea Grant Advisory Panel
- California Natural Resources Agency Statewide Monitoring Coordination Group
- California Wetlands Monitoring Group
- CalTrans Advanced Mitigation Program Interagency Team
- Contaminated Sediments Task Force
- Fish Passage Advisory Councils (FishPACs) for Northern California, Bay Area, Central Coast, and Southern Steelhead
- Goleta Slough Management Committee
- Integrated Watershed Restoration Program TAC
- Interagency Review Teams for wetland mitigation banking
- Loma Alta Slough Wetlands Enhancement TAC
- Los Cerritos Wetlands TAC
- Ormond Beach Restoration Committee
- Pescadero Marsh TAC

ECOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES CONT'D

- Scotts Creek TAC
- Seabird Protection Network
- Southern California Wetlands Recovery Group
- U.S.F.W.S. Oregon Silverspot Butterfly Working Group
- Wetlands Recovery Project Wetlands Managers Group

JOINT ENFORCEMENT

- Santa Monica Mountains Enforcement Task Force
- Mendocino County Environmental Crimes Task Force
- Del Norte Environmental Crimes Task Force
- Humboldt County Environmental Crimes Task Force
- Humboldt County Code Compliance Working Group

ENERGY AND OCEAN RESOURCES

- California's Critical Coastal Areas Program (Joint Lead Agency)
- CDFW Aquaculture Development Committee
- California Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force
- Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Group
- Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Regional Working Group
- Diablo Canyon Independent Peer Review Panel
- Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
- Interagency Oil & Gas Platform Decommissioning Working Group
- Joint Strategic Advisory Committee for Ca Coastal Ocean Observing System
- MBNMS Advisory Council
- OSPR Technical Advisory Committee
- Ports of San Diego, Long Beach, LA, Hueneme, SF and Humboldt Harbor Safety Committees
- Southern California Coastal Ocean Observing System
- Statewide Advisory Committee on Cooling Water Intake Structures
- Statewide Marine Protected Area Leadership Team

PROJECT-SPECIFIC WORKING GROUPS

- Broad Beach Restoration Project TAC
- ODSVRA Technical Review Team
- ODSVRA TRT Scientific Subcommittee
- Senior Technical Advisory Committee for BCDC
- Surfers Beach Technical Advisory Group

PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

- AB 1282 Transportation Permitting Taskforce
- Barriers to Coastal Access Working Group
- Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council
- California Coastal Trail Working Group
- Caltrans IPT Public Access Working Group
- Lower-Cost Visitor-Serving Working Group

PUBLIC EDUCATION

- California Environmental Education Interagency Network
- Pacific Oil Spill Prevention Education Team

WATER QUALITY

- California Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (Joint Lead Agency)
- California's Critical Coastal Areas Program Interagency Working Group
- Marina Interagency Coordinating Marinas and Recreational Boating Inter-agency Coordination
- Marinas and Recreational Boating Interagency Coordination Committee
- Ocean Protection Council Marine Debris Steering Committee
- West Coast Marine Debris Alliance
- US EPA's Regional Response Team Region 9 Applied Response Technology Workgroup



Simon Xu

Looking Ahead to

In early December 2019, the Commission released the long-anticipated first Public Review Draft of the agency's Five-Year Strategic Plan Update. Many of the actions under the 2013 – 2018 Strategic Plan have been accomplished or are well underway. This update is the opportunity to refresh the document that will be the Commission's roadmap for accomplishing agency priorities over the next 5 years to reflect new priorities and emerging issues. Considerable time and effort went into developing the draft over a 15-month period, including extensive outreach and deliberation by the Commission's Executive Management Team. The Commission benefitted from early input from the public and local governments through 148 comments received through the public portal, emails, and letters. All programs and units within the Commission provided input as well, and the Commission provided an internal web portal to allow for individual, anonymous staff input. The Draft Strategic Plan will be available for public review through February 14, 2020. Staff anticipates adoption by the Commission in April or May of 2020.

Major Projects

Staff anticipates five or six desalination proposals will come before to the Commission in 2020, including new facilities proposed by Cal-Am on the Monterey Peninsula, Poseidon in Huntington Beach, South Coast Water District at Doheny Beach (Orange County), and the Cambria Community Services District (San Luis Obispo County), as well as modifications to existing facilities on Catalina Island, the Poseidon facility in Carlsbad, and the City of Santa Barbara's facility.

BOEM is also pursuing leasing in federal waters for offshore wind development. In October 2018, BOEM issued a Call for Information and Nominations requesting information and expressions of interest for three offshore Call Areas in Northern and Central California. The Call closed at the end of January 2019, and staff anticipates BOEM will submit a federal consistency determination on potential lease areas in mid-2021.

Other significant project proposals likely to go before the Commission in 2020 include: 5 golf courses, a resort lodge and 70 luxury rental homes on Vandenberg Air Force Base; a Pt. Reyes National Seashore General Management Plan Amendment for beef and dairy ranch operations and management of Tule elk; a Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge program to eradicate invasive house mice; a Bureau of Land Management public access plan for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies lands in Santa Cruz County; the Federal Highway Administration North Santa Cruz County Rail Trail project; the Westminster/East Garden Grove Flood Risk Management Project in Orange County; and a five year NPDES General Permit for Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms.

Office Moves Ahead

The Commission has a major office move to complete in 2020. Now that the South Coast Office in Long Beach move is complete, the San Francisco Headquarters/North Central District Office will be relocating to a nearby location. Office moves always require a significant effort on the part of all affected staff, but relocating the agency headquarters presents additional challenges. The Commission is putting plans in place to minimize disruption for the public; however, there will be some impact on staff production and some days of required office closure.

Planning for Sea Level Rise and Climate Change

To help Californians better understand the scope of the threat posed by sea level rise and climate change, the Commission has partnered with the Ocean Protection Council, the State Lands Commission, State Parks, the State Coastal Conservancy and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission to coordinate a major public outreach campaign and a comprehensive communications plan. Commissioners are also engaging directly to reach new audiences on the subject of sea level rise, including through social media, podcasts, video productions and academic articles.

The Commission will continue to provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions that are grappling with how to develop rational planning policies around this issue. One tool will be the Residential Adaptation Guidelines to assist local governments in developing sea level rise adaptation policies and ordinances in their local coastal programs, which the Commission will be considering for adoption in 2020. The Commission is also partnering with the League of Cities and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) to plan another local government workshop in 2020, as a follow-up to the 2019 workshop.

Public Access Program

In 2020, the Commission will be embarking on an exciting opportunity to finally open some degree of public access at Hollister Ranch in Santa Barbara County. Working with the State Coastal Conservancy, State Parks, the State Lands Commission, the County of Santa Barbara, the Hollister Ranch Owners Association and the public, the Commission will be undertaking a public process to update the Hollister Ranch Public Access program, adopted nearly 40 years ago, but never implemented, despite a long-standing legal mandate to do so.

Staff Retention

In addition to losing the valuable institutional memory of retiring staff, we are also losing a lot of talent to local governments, other public agencies and private companies because of the state's comparatively low wages. The turnover rate continues to have serious impacts on the ability to meet workload demands and maintain morale. Commission management looks forward to working with Commissioners in 2020 to explore every avenue to increase salaries, so that we can retain and mentor younger staff for future management positions. This is a perennial problem. However, the commission staff is a group of incredibly dedicated, mission-driven public servants who will continue to provide excellent high level work products in our ongoing pursuit to protect our state's precious coastal resources.

All of the Commission's actions and related reports may be viewed at the Commission's [website](#). A video archive of each entire meeting is also available at the [Cal-Span](#) website.



Todd Teetzel