

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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February 7, 2020

TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

FROM: John Ainsworth, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, February 2020

Staff Appointments

I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Alison Dettmer to the long vacant Senior Deputy Director position. Alison has a proven record of excellent leadership as Director of the Ocean, Energy & Federal Consistency Division and the North Coast District. Over her long career she has led and worked on some of the most difficult and controversial regulatory and planning matters that have come before the Commission. She is a skilled communicator, passionate about coastal and ocean protection and has been a trusted advisor to me. More importantly, she is a caring and compassionate human being. As Senior Deputy Director Alison will provide much needed executive management support on a number of important initiatives and agency priorities. I want to thank Alison for accepting this important position at one of the most challenging times in this agency's history.

I am also pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Kate Huckelbridge to fill the Deputy Director position for the Energy, Ocean Resources and Federal Consistency Division. Dr. Huckelbridge has been working as an environmental scientist/senior environmental scientist in the division since 2009 and has been the lead on a variety of complicated, controversial and diverse energy, habitat restoration and mitigation projects.

Finally, I am happy to announce the appointment of Larry Simon to the Coastal Program Manager position for the Federal Consistency Unit formally held by Mark Delaplaine. Larry has been working in the Federal Consistency Unit since 1988, and served as the Federal Consistency Coordinator for the last 16 years. He has been with the Commission for 32 years. Given his extensive experience and knowledge of federal consistency, Larry can hit the ground running and has a proven track record of excellence.

Annual Form 700 – Statement of Economic Interest

The Annual Form 700 – Statement of Economic Interest filings are due for Commissioners and Alternates postmarked by **March 2, 2020**. Failure to submit the Form 700 on time can result in a significant fine. Notifications were sent out via email from the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) in early January to those who have email addresses on file. Commissioners and Alternates may submit their filings electronically directly to the FPPC

by logging in at [FPPC Form 700](#). The option of filing hardcopies is still available; please send these to the Commission's Human Resources office. Email notifications were sent with the documents attached on January 23, 2020 from the Commission's Human Resources office.

Meetings and Events

Environmental Justice Training

The Commission conducted an all-staff Environmental Justice training in January in Long Beach and San Francisco. The training was organized by staff on our Environmental Justice and Government Alliance on Race and Equity(GARE) team, many of whom participated in the GARE's "Train the Trainers" curriculum. The trainings included guest speakers from Cal EPA, the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy or CAUSE and the California Environmental Justice Alliance or CEJA. The training demonstrated the importance of conscious, deliberate state action to dismantle institutional racism, and included a historical view of the EJ movement; unconscious bias; structural barriers to participation; meaningful engagement; online screening tools; and the Commission's EJ policy implementation.

I attended both full days of the training and I have to say I am so proud of this agency and our staff for the ongoing progress we are making on this issue. It is clear to me that we are continuing to build the necessary trust and credibility with affected communities and the leaders of this movement, and I am so grateful they volunteered their valuable time to support our efforts. It was an incredible amount of work, but well worth it, and I received many, many positive comments from staff afterwards who are eager to learn and do more in this area. The training team is working on some follow-up, focused trainings, as well as a condensed training for the Commissioners. And finally, I want to thank the State Lands Commission who let us use their facility in Long Beach free of charge as well as the Coastal Conservancy, who allowed us to use a room for one of the breakout sessions at the Oakland training.

Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Regional Rail Corridor Meeting

On December 18, 2019, San Diego staff attended a meeting and site visit with local, regional, and state stakeholders and officials at the City of Del Mar presented by SANDAG and Caltrans, who provided an overview of the *Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) San Diego Regional Rail Corridor*, the nation's second busiest intercity rail corridor. The meeting included an update of the Del Mar bluffs current conditions and stabilization efforts to date, as well as an update on the San Diego Regional Rail Alternative Analysis, which identifies opportunities and challenges involved in moving the LOSSAN rail corridor off the bluffs altogether by 2050.

As a follow-up, San Diego staff then participated in the inaugural working group meeting for the *LOSSAN San Diego Regional Rail Corridor Working Group* on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 at SANDAG. This first meeting consisted of presentations and discussion of federal, state and local funding strategies to secure and stabilize the Del Mar Bluffs section of the LOSSAN rail corridor over the next few decades, as well as commencing long-term rail realignment studies.

NOAA/Coastal Zone (CZ) and National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR) West Coast Regional Meeting.

Commission staff, including the Executive Director, Chief Deputy, Federal Programs Manager and others, participated in the West Coast Regional CZ and NERR meeting January 22 - 23, 2020. Representatives from NOAA's Office for Coastal Management (Headquarters and West Coast Offices), Washington and Oregon State's Coastal Programs, and Reserve Managers from the Washington, Oregon and California NERRs attended the meeting in addition to representatives from the three California coastal management agencies (BCDC, Coastal Conservancy and Coastal Commission). This meeting occurs every one or two years and is an opportunity for knowledge transfer, information sharing and collaboration among the west coast states on high priority coastal management topics. This meeting including presentations and discussion on topics of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, with a focus on public access for all; adaptation planning for roads and transportation; developing a common message for outreach and education on the coastal programs resilience efforts; and national programmatic updates on federal funding, legislation, and other topics.

NOAA Directors and California Coastal Agency Directors Meeting with Natural Resources Agency Management

On January 23, 2020, the Executive Directors of the Coastal Commission, BCDC and the State Coastal Conservancy, along with the Director and West Coast Regional Director of NOAA's Office for Coastal Management met with Natural Resources Agency Deputy Secretaries Tom Gibson and Mark Gold to raise awareness of about the California Coastal Management Program at the California Natural Resources Agency and to share the results of the recent findings of the Coastal Zone Management Section 312 evaluation of California's Coastal Management Program. This was also a great opportunity to highlight to the Resources Agency Management California's strong Coastal Management Program and the benefits of having a certified Federal Coastal Management Program. We also discussed the opportunities for collaboration and partnerships as we all deal with climate change and sea level rise issues.

CalTrans/Coastal Commission Interagency Management Meeting

On January 30, the Executive Director, the Chief Deputy Director, along with all of the Commission's District Directors and Transportation Program staff, attended an interagency meeting with their Caltrans' counterparts in Sacramento. Caltrans attendees included new agency Director Toks Omishakin, who was appointed in October 2019, as well as the District Directors from Caltrans' six coastal districts. The purpose of the meeting was to continue to build interagency relationships and strengthen coordination between the two agencies while advancing our shared priorities, strategic plans and shared training programs and information dissemination.

Mr. Omishakin and Mr. Ainsworth gave introductory remarks on the importance of the collaborative relationship between Caltrans and the Commission. Presentations highlighted the Commission's interagency agreement with Caltrans, our Integrated Planning Team (IPT), as well as our work together on critical transportation infrastructure projects to enhance public access, address sea level rise and climate change, and promote advance mitigation. Roundtables and discussions in the meeting focused on ways to increase early coordination on projects, streamline and improve permit processing,

and continue to protect and enhance coastal resources in project development; many of which are also reflected in the recent interagency recommendations of the AB 1282 Permitting Taskforce. The discussions led to a number of fruitful ideas for improving coordination and relationships, and we plan to develop the meeting into an annual event.

California Vegetation Treatment Program Meeting

On January 15, the Commission's Statewide Planning staff and Senior Ecologist met in Sacramento with staff of the Board of Forestry and CalFIRE to discuss CalFIRE's implementation of the new California Vegetation Treatment Program. The Vegetation Treatment Program will increase the pace and scale of vegetation treatment throughout the state, including in the coastal zone, to help reduce fire risks. Staff explained Coastal Act requirements and the three agencies worked collaboratively together to explore opportunities for achieving fuel load reduction while supporting ecological health.

Cutting Green Tape Round Table

On January 6, the Executive Director attended a Round Table Discussion on “*Cutting Green tape*” organized by Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot. This initiative is focused on creating more efficient and effective permitting and regulatory systems to speed up much need environmental restoration projects. The meeting included a number of Resource Agencies and will be followed up with three more meetings with the goal of developing by Earth Day a white paper that spells out actionable regulatory streamlining efforts that are discrete and deliverable and that all of the agencies can support.

Western Snowy Plover Range-Wide Meeting

On January 8th and 9th, Dr. Laurie Koteen attended the Western Snowy Plover range-wide meeting at the Moss Landing Marine Lab. The meeting focused on the myriad issues facing snowy plovers, a federally threatened shore bird, across their range from Washington State into northern Mexico. Further, it brought together scientists and natural resource managers with expertise in snowy plover management to discuss challenges and successes in snowy plover conservation and recovery. Dr. Koteen's talk addressed how the Coastal Commission balances the Coastal Act's ESHA and public access policies in the context of snowy plover management, using examples from recent coastal development permits and management plans across the state, and in light of sea level rise.

California Department of Fish & Wildlife Training

On Tuesday and Wednesday, January 21 and 22, Technical Services ecologists Dr. Jonna Engel and Dr. Lauren Garske-Garcia attended a two-day training covering three online analysis tools developed and housed within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Biogeographic Data Branch, including the *California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB)*, *California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR)*, and *Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE)*. The CNDDDB is an inventory of the status and locations of rare natural communities, plants, and animals in California. CNDDDB staff work with partners to maintain current lists of rare habitats and species, as well as to maintain an ever-growing database

of their GIS-mapped locations. The CWHR is a state-of-the-art information system for California's wildlife that contains life history, geographic range, habitat relationships, and management information on 712 species of animals known to occur in the state. CWHR products aid in understanding, conserving, and managing California's wildlife. ACE is a CDFW effort to analyze large amounts of map-based data in a targeted, strategic way, and expressed visually, so decisions can be informed around important goals like conservation of biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and climate change resiliency. These programs provide vital diagnostic information for analyzing Coastal Commission projects. In the near future the Technical Services ecologists and Mapping staff will be offering an internal training for CCC staff, specifically, coastal analysts, to introduce them to these programs and how they can be incorporated into their work.

Goleta Slough Management Committee

On Thursday, January 23, Dr. Jonna Engel attended the *Goleta Slough Management Committee* (GSMC) meeting. The GSMC was initially formed in 1991 at the request of the Santa Barbara Airport Director as the preparation of a management plan addressing the entire Goleta Slough Ecosystem was being prepared. The committee is run by a facilitator and consists of local government staff, academics, NGO's, regulatory agencies, and consultants. The purpose of the group is to examine issues and make recommendations for the 2,000 acre Goleta Slough ecosystem. At this meeting, the Goleta Slough Mouth ad hoc committee reported on the status of the slough mouth, Santa Barbara County Parks staff reported on the status of Goleta Beach County Park permits, and City of Goleta staff reported on their creek's restoration program.

Hollister Ranch – Coastal Access Program Planning

The consultant hired by the State Agency Team to provide outreach, facilitation and planning services, is hosting Interactive Workshop # 1 on Thursday February 20 at 6 pm, at the Goleta Valley Community Center, in Santa Barbara County. This will be the first of several workshops planned for 2020. The focus of this first workshop will be on small group conversations that will inform the substance and process for developing a proposed access program. The discussions will include such topics as the benefits, opportunities and concerns that surround increased coastal access through Hollister Ranch.

An informational flyer is circulating – on social media and to all persons who submitted comments to the Coastal Commission in-box for Hollister Ranch comments.

The flyer – in English and Spanish [Hollister Ranch Flyer](#) – is also posted on the Coastal Commission, State Coastal Conservancy and State Lands Commission websites.

Coastal Commission 2019 Year in Review

Attachment A to this report is the *Annual Year in Review Report* outlining the many Commission accomplishments achieved in 2019. The report also includes a look ahead to the challenges and opportunities facing us in 2020. The 2019 year-end review report is also available on the Commission's homepage: www.coastal.ca.gov.

2019 Commission Workload Review Report

Attachment B to this report is the annual *Commission Workload Review Report for 2019*. This report is a comprehensive review of the Commission's workload over the past year.

Attachment A - Year in Review Report