

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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March 6, 2020

**TO:** California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

**FROM:** John Ainsworth, Executive Director

**SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, March 2020**

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## **LCP Program Status – Monterey, Santa Cruz Counties (SP Goal 4)**

The Central Coast district stretches from the San Mateo/Santa Cruz County border near Año Nuevo State Reserve in the north to San Luis Obispo County's southern border with Santa Barbara County near the Guadalupe Dunes in the south, nearly 300 miles of coastline. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary lies offshore for much of this length. The district has three coastal counties (Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo) and twelve incorporated cities (Santa Cruz, Capitola, Watsonville, Marina, Sand City, Seaside, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Carmel, Morro Bay, Pismo Beach, and Grover Beach), each with certified LCPs with the exception of the City of Monterey (where the Pacific Grove LCP is scheduled to be certified at the March 2020 Coastal Commission meeting). There are also five major harbors (in Santa Cruz, Moss Landing, Monterey, Morro Bay, and Port San Luis), numerous State Parks' Public Works Plans, and one coastal long-range development plan (for the University of California at Santa Cruz's Marine Science Campus).

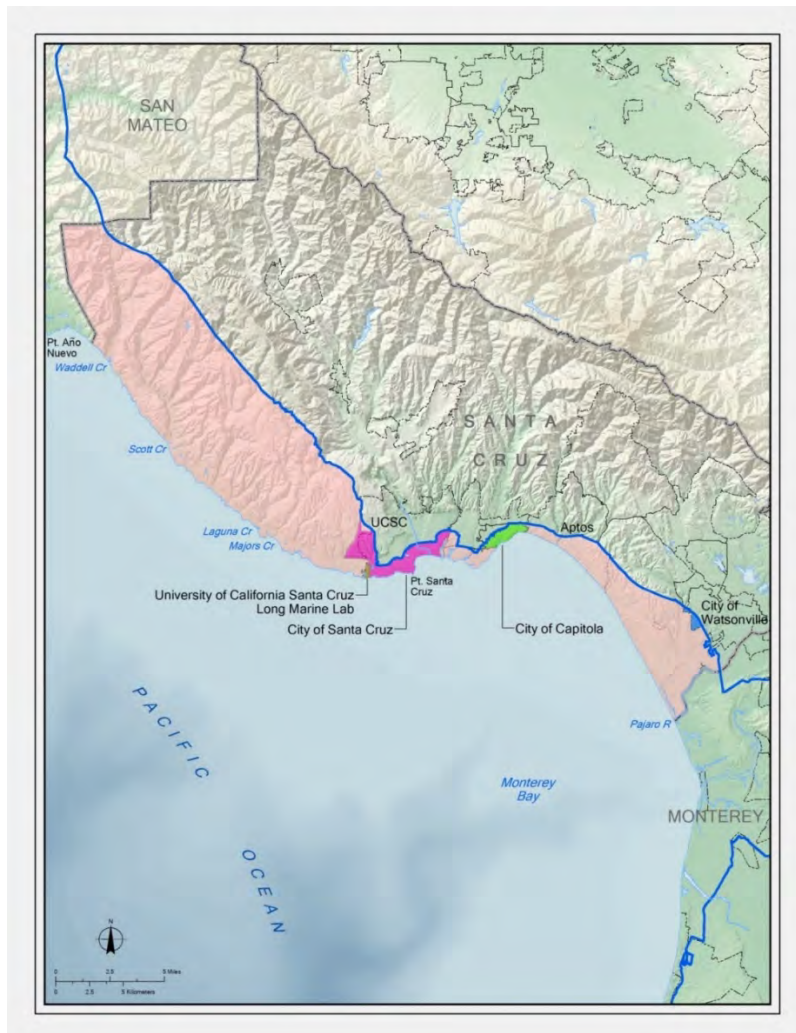
The Central Coast district coastal zone is diverse, with both rugged and more pastoral rural areas interspersed between population centers. Planning issues include protecting agriculture and scenic rural areas and responding to coastal erosion and sea level rise in the more urban parts of the district. The district also has significant public park lands and popular visitor destinations, intensifying the need to provide visitor-serving facilities and opportunities. Each of the Central Coast District LCPs within Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties are summarized below.

### **Santa Cruz County**

Santa Cruz County totals approximately 607 square miles, 113 square miles of which are located in the coastal zone, spanning approximately 45 miles of shoreline. The physical environment of Santa Cruz County is beautiful and diverse. With a spectacular coastline, accessible beaches, and wooded mountains all in proximity to several northern California metropolitan areas, Santa Cruz County is an important vacation and recreation area. Within its borders are several State parks (including portions of Big Basin, Wilder Ranch, and Gray Whale State Parks) and a number of State beaches (including Twin Lakes,

Seacliff, Sunset and Manresa State Beaches). Much of the more rural north coast surrounding the town of Davenport is part of the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument. The County also contains a large stretch of Highway 1, including the incredibly scenic area located north of the City of Santa Cruz to San Mateo County. The topography of the County is varied in character, containing such features as agricultural lands and the forested Santa Cruz Mountains in the north and northeast, the mid-County coastal terraces (where a large portion of the County's population is located), and the alluvial south County, which is predominately in agricultural use.

The central California coast location and the County's topographic features contribute to the ideal Mediterranean climate of Santa Cruz County. Due to this climate and the variety of landscape types, the County contains a diverse economic base which is often natural resource-based and includes visitor-serving and service industries, agriculture and manufacturing. The dominant economic activities are generally centered in the agricultural and food processing of the south County and services and tourism in the North County. Other economic activities include quarrying, forestry, wood products, fishing and other manufacturing. The County's LCP was originally adopted in 1983 and last had a major update in 1994. The County is currently updating the coastal hazards components of the LCP, and Commission staff is working actively with the County on this update.



### **City of Santa Cruz**

The City of Santa Cruz has about eight miles of shoreline and the densest portions of the City occupy a picturesque location along the banks of the San Lorenzo River, between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Cruz Mountains. The majority of the City's coastal zone is urbanized, but open space and natural areas (e.g., Natural Bridges State Beach, Moore Creek Preserve, and UCSC's Terrace Point lands) are also found within the City's coastal zone. Steamer Lane, a famous surfing spot, is located just off of Lighthouse Point along scenic West Cliff Drive. The Santa Cruz Harbor is located in the City and is an important harbor facility for recreational and commercial fishing in Monterey Bay. The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, adjoining commercial establishments, and the City's Municipal Wharf are located on and adjacent to the City's Main and Cowell Beaches. These areas together form a popular beach and general visitor destination with an estimated one million visitors annually. The City is also home to many historic structures, including many buildings designed in a variety of Victorian architectural styles. The Commission certified the original LCP in 1981 and last approved a major update of the LCP in 1995. The City is currently pursuing a full LCP update, and Commission staff continue to work closely with the City on that effort.

### **City of Capitola-by-the-Sea**

The City of Capitola-by-the-Sea has about two miles of shoreline along Monterey Bay. Even though Capitola is highly urbanized, the City has many important natural features, including New Brighton State Beach, several monarch butterfly groves, and Soquel Creek. The Esplanade in Capitola Village is a vibrant commercial visitor-serving district located adjacent to Capitola Beach and the mouth of Soquel Creek. The unarmored cliffs of Depot Hill located downcoast of Capitola Beach contain a rich assemblage of well-preserved marine fossils. The Commission certified the City's LCP in 1990, and certified three areas of deferred certification (Rispin Mansion, Shadowbrook, and El Salto parcels) in 2005. The City is currently working on a full LCP update, and Commission staff is working closely with City staff on this effort.

### **City of Watsonville**

Only a small portion (less than 10%) of the City of Watsonville lies within the coastal zone. This coastal zone area constitutes approximately 300 acres and is mostly made up of undeveloped farmlands and sensitive habitat areas. Developed areas in the City's coastal zone include the City's wastewater treatment facility located along the Pajaro River, the City's landfill, and Pajaro Valley High School. The Commission certified the City's LCP in 1988, and it was fully updated in 2000. At this time, no LCP update is planned or being pursued.

### **Monterey County**

Monterey County is located on the southern half of Monterey Bay along the central California coast. The Monterey County coastline extends some 136 miles from the flat coastal plain south of the Pajaro River to the rugged mountainous shoreline of Big Sur to just south of the town of Gorda. Coastal estuaries, bays, and rivermouths add another 56 miles of shoreline to the coastal zone. Monterey County has four LCP segments represented by four Land Use Plans (LUPs) for specific defined areas: North County, Del Monte Forest, Carmel Area, and Big Sur. There are also three areas of deferred

certification in the County, at Fort Ord Dunes State Park, Mal Paso Beach, and Yankee Point. The Fort Ord area is only deferred because it came into the unincorporated County as part of the base decommissioning process in the 1990s. Areas of deferred certification at Mal Paso Beach and Yankee Point were deferred when the LCP was originally certified over concerns that the proposed LCP lacked provisions to address the lack of public access to the shoreline in these areas. Since that time, public access to Mal Paso Beach has been perfected, but the issues at Yankee Point still remain. Each of the segments is discussed briefly below.



**North County segment.** The North County portion of the Monterey County LCP was first certified in 1982. The North County coastal zone encompasses the unincorporated area of the county from the Pajaro River to the Marina city limit. This LCP segment includes roughly nine miles of shoreline and associated coastal dune habitat, thousands of acres of prime agricultural lands, rural and low-density residential development, and also includes Elkhorn Slough, which is one of California's principal estuaries and wetland features and a National Estuarine Research Reserve. Moss Landing Harbor and the Dynegy power plant are located in the unincorporated town of Moss Landing. The Harbor lies at the western edge of the Elkhorn Slough watershed and supports approximately 155 recreational motor and sail boats, and approximately 455 commercial, research, and recreational boats, including commercial fishing and oceanographic research vessels. Commission staff has been working with the County on updates to the North County portion of the LCP, including the Moss Landing Community Plan, to help provide additional protections for agricultural lands, groundwater resources, ESHA, wetlands, and other sensitive habitats; new provisions to address sea level rise and flood hazards; long-term planning for Moss Landing Harbor; and a General Development Plan for the reuse of the former National Refractories site at Moss Landing.

**Fort Ord Dunes State Park (area of deferred certification).** Fort Ord Dunes State Park is a new, roughly 980 acre state park located west of Highway 1 in northern Monterey County. The park encompasses roughly four miles of shoreline and currently provides for limited day use. These lands were transferred from the federal government to State Parks in 1994. In 2004, the Fort Ord Dunes State Park General Plan was approved by the State Parks and Recreation Commission, which contemplates specific park improvements, including the establishment of environmental campsites. The Commission recently approved a new State Parks campground in Fort Ord Dunes State Park in 2017, and State Parks indicates that it intends to start construction on the campground project this summer.

**Del Monte Forest segment.** The Del Monte Forest portion of the County's LCP was first certified in 1984. This area extends inland three to four miles in places and is located along roughly 7 miles of central California shoreline on the Monterey Peninsula (occupying much of the peninsula landform) and is bounded roughly by the cities of Pacific Grove and Monterey to the north and northwest, and Carmel to the south; State Highway One skirts the Del Monte Forest a couple of miles inland. A circuitous private road system winds through the Del Monte Forest, including the word-famous 17-Mile Drive. The Pebble Beach Company owns the roads and almost all of the undeveloped land in the Forest. The Del Monte Forest has long been recognized for its natural beauty and is well known for its mostly craggy shoreline that extends through the bluff platform and large areas of dunes up through and into a sloped landform mantled by native Monterey pine forest. The Del Monte Forest is home to a variety of plant and animal species, including some that are exceptionally rare. This LCP segment was the subject of a partial update in 2012 that also provided for a final build out and preservation plan for the Pebble Beach Company's remaining undeveloped landholdings in the Del Monte Forest.

**Carmel Area segment.** The Carmel Area portion of the County LCP was first certified in 1983. The Carmel Area follows roughly seven miles of rugged shoreline south of the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea. South of the Carmel River, the Carmel area coastal zone encompasses a variety of habitat types and land uses including Monterey pine forest habitat, river, estuarine, and wetland habitats, chaparral, creeks and riparian habitats. Land

uses include low-medium density residential, agricultural lands, commercial visitor-serving, and watershed protection areas. The County is beginning to undertake an update for this LCP segment. Primary issues include the preservation of agricultural lands and sensitive habitats, regulation of vacation rentals, addressing flood and sea level rise impacts, development and alignment of the California Coastal Trail, and expanding access into recently acquired public lands.

**Big Sur Coast segment.** The Big Sur coast area of unincorporated Monterey County is over 70 miles in length and stretches from the Carmel area in the north, south to the San Luis Obispo county line just south of the town of Gorda. As the largest planning area in Monterey County (some 150,000 acres), the Big Sur region is also the most geographically distinctive. The Big Sur coastal zone stretches well inland and encompasses a variety of habitat types including chaparral, redwood forest, oak woodland, coastal scrub, river and estuarine, to name a few. The Big Sur coast is world famous for its dramatic scenic shoreline vistas and landscapes, with sweeping undeveloped views of the Santa Lucia Mountains, coastal bluffs, rocky coastline, beaches, and the ocean from Highway 1. The County is in the process of updating this LCP segment and has held public workshops to gather input on a range of issues from identification and protection of sensitive habitats, provision of secondary dwelling units, vacation rental rules, fire protection and fuel modification, California Coastal Trail planning, and provision of water and other public services. Commission staff is working actively with the County on this update.

### **City of Marina**

The incorporated City of Marina is a relatively small coastal community in North Monterey County and is situated roughly between the Salinas River mouth and the Fort Ord Dunes State Park. The City has about three miles of shoreline mostly fronted by significant coastal dune habitat, most of which is in public ownership. The last remaining sand mining plant on the Monterey Bay operates just above the surf line in the northern portion of the City. The sand mining plant was required by the Commission in 2017 to stop sand extraction activities (by December 2020), to cease production altogether (by 2023), and to transfer the property to a non-profit or public agency at that time. Thus, the effects of the plant are soon to be eliminated, and the property put to higher and better Coastal Act priority use. The coastal zone inland of Highway 1 is limited to roughly 60 acres that includes commercial retail development, visitor-serving overnight accommodations, coastal dunes, and three significant vernal ponds/coastal wetlands. The LCP was certified in 1982 and there have been relatively few amendments. The Commission awarded the City a Round 4 LCP grant (\$85,685) in August 2017 to support a comprehensive update to the City's LCP to address sustainable development, increased opportunities for coastal access and recreation, and vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise. The City is actively working on that update, including through provisions that embrace the concept of managed retreat; one of the first coastal cities or counties to do so in California.

### **City of Sand City**

The Sand City coastal zone extends from the southern boundary of Fort Ord Dunes State Park to the City of Seaside on the south. West of Highway 1, Sand City has approximately 1.5 miles of shoreline and is comprised primarily of sand dunes. The coastal zone area includes all of the areas west of the highway and a strip of land 200 feet in width inland and adjacent to the highway right-of-way. The area west of the highway is planned for major

resort development in two locations, and preservation otherwise. In addition, the Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way and 100 feet on the western side of the right-of-way are also located in the coastal zone. Inland areas are developed at urban intensities with residential, commercial, and industrial uses. The LCP was certified in 1982. No updates are planned currently.

### **City of Seaside**

The City of Seaside coastal zone encompasses roughly 90 acres of land that extends from the shoreline inland of the highway to the terminus of Canyon Del Rey Creek. The Seaside coastal zone includes 500 feet of shore frontage west of Highway 1. A former estuarine complex comprised of Robert's Lake and Laguna Grande makes up the vast portion of the coastal zone inland of the highway. Land uses within the coastal zone include residential, commercial, and park/open space. Habitats found in the Seaside coastal zone include sand dune, estuarine, emergent wetland, and coastal oak woodland. The Seaside LCP was certified by the Commission in 2013.

### **City of Monterey**

The City of Monterey has divided its Land Use Plan (LUP) into five segments: Cannery Row, Harbor, Del Monte Beach, Skyline, and Laguna Grande (the Laguna Grande LUP remains uncertified). The City does not have a certified Implementation Plan, and thus lacks an overall LCP. The Commission awarded the City a Round 2 LCP grant (\$235,000) to help support an LCP certification process. The City has completed its scheduled work program, which included public outreach and development of an Existing Conditions Report (including an analysis of sea level rise vulnerability), a Vision, Goals, and Objectives Report, an alternatives analysis, and is currently working on drafting of the LCP update. Although the LCP is divided into the five subareas described above, the intention of the grant was to update, consolidate, and adopt one Land Use Plan and Implementation Plan for the City. Commission staff continues to work closely with the City to finalize development of its comprehensive LCP. Each of the segments is discussed briefly below.

**Cannery Row segment.** The Commission certified the Cannery Row LUP in 1981. The Cannery Row coastal zone is narrow and primarily extends only to the inland portion of Cannery Row itself. Cannery Row is a popular tourist destination, which contains many shops, restaurants, several hotels, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. The Cannery Row coastline is generally rocky, but it also includes two accessible beaches at McAbee Beach and San Carlos Beach. Public and visual access to the coastline is blocked in many locations by development, but there are seven public access areas along the 0.7-mile stretch of Cannery Row. A popular recreational trail (part of the California Coastal Trail (CCT)) passes through the Cannery Row coastal zone.

**Harbor LUP.** The Commission certified the Harbor LUP in 2003. The Harbor LUP segment is comprised of shoreline property along Monterey Bay and is located west of the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School Property and southeast of Cannery Row. This segment is a hub of the tourist and fishing industry and includes the recreational Fisherman's Wharf (Wharf No. 1), the commercial fishing facilities on Wharf No. 2, and two marinas. Window-on-the-Bay Park, the recreational trail (a segment of the CCT), and a portion of Monterey State Beach all lie within this segment. The area contains many of the historic sites of the Monterey State Historic Park.

**Del Monte Beach LUP.** The Commission certified the Del Monte Beach LUP in 2003. This area abuts the Harbor planning area to the west and the Seaside City limit to the east. Major properties in this area include: the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School; an abandoned wastewater treatment pump station; the Del Monte Beach Tract 2 subdivision (the Commission approved a re-subdivision of this area in 2002, which reduced the number of developable parcels from 60 to 11); the Del Monte Beach Tract 1 subdivision; the oceanfront Ocean Harbor House condominium complex; City and State Parks beach properties; the CCT recreation trail; and the shorefront Monterey Beach Hotel at the Seaside City limit. The Del Monte Beach LUP area contains significant sand dune resources. The Naval Postgraduate School has restored portions of its property with native vegetation. The Commission required four-and-a-half acres of dune habitat to be restored as part of the Del Monte Beach Tract 2 re-subdivision. Portions of the State Parks properties have been restored, with plans for additional restoration in the future.

**Skyline LUP.** The Commission certified the Skyline LUP in 1992. The most important environmental element of the Skyline planning area is its significant stands of native Monterey pine forest, which shelters unique and sensitive plant associations and endemic species. Existing development in this planning area includes Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and the U.S. Army Presidio.

**Laguna Grande LUP.** This LUP was never certified, and an Implementation Plan was not developed.

### **City of Pacific Grove**

The City of Pacific Grove is a relatively small coastal city in Monterey County, located immediately west of the City of Monterey and upcoast of the unincorporated Del Monte Forest area. The city's coastal zone is 458 acres, stretching from the Monterey Bay Aquarium to the Asilomar Conference Grounds. The Pacific Grove shoreline is pretty spectacular, with both beach areas and rocky shoreline combining to provide an immersive coastal experience, especially because almost the entire length of shoreline in Pacific Grove is in public ownership, and a continuous recreational trail extends along all of it. The coastal zone area also includes numerous land use types, including residential and commercial development near its downtown core, as well as significant dune habitat in Asilomar, including at Asilomar State Beach and State Parks Asilomar Conference grounds. Using a Round 1 LCP Grant in 2013 (\$130,000), the City embarked on an effort to complete its LCP. Following considerable local discussion, the City submitted the proposed LCP to the Commission, who conditionally approved the LCP in November of last year. The City Council ultimately voted to accept the Commission-required changes, and the LCP is scheduled to be certified by the Commission at the March 2020 Commission meeting. At that point, the City will have a fully certified LCP, and primary coastal permit authority will be transferred to the City.

### **City of Carmel-by-the-Sea**

The City of Carmel is located west of Highway 1 and south of the Monterey peninsula between the Del Monte Forest and the Carmel planning area of Monterey County. The City is renowned for its mile-long stretch of white sand beach and quaint residential dwellings nestled among a forest of Monterey pine and oak trees. Land uses within the City are primarily residential, commercial, and open space recreation. The central core of the village is commercial and is comprised of a mix of restaurants, art galleries, and shops



that attract visitors from around the State and beyond. Beyond the commercial core are residential uses and visitor serving accommodations, with the remaining area consisting of predominantly open space and parklands. Carmel's LCP was certified in 2004 and contains specific measures to protect the unique village character including historic residences, forest resources, public views, and the spectacular white sand beach.

## **Meetings and Events**

### **Cutting Green Tape Round Table**

On February 12, the Commission's Statewide Planning Manager attended the second 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 needed environmental restoration projects. The meeting included a number of Resource Agencies and was part of a series of 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. Commission staff will also attend a follow up meeting for this effort on March 18.

### **Bolinas Wye Technical Advisory Committee**

On Tuesday, February 18, Commission Ecologist Dr. Lauren Garske-Garcia joined several agency partners for a kick-off meeting of the [Bolinas Wye Technical Advisory Committee](#) in Stinson Beach. The group is beginning a cooperative planning process for sea level rise adaptation at the north end of Bolinas Lagoon in Marin County, where two County roads intersect with the State's Shoreline Highway. These aging roads collectively provide core access to communities in West Marin, are under threat of rising seas, and have historically disconnected natural hydrologic and ecological processes from the surrounding landscape. The effort aims to enhance sea level rise resilience, reconnect watershed hydrology and restore floodplains, improve overall ecological function of the area, and address traffic safety concerns.

### **Interagency Sea Level Rise Communications Plan Meeting**

On February 24, Commission staff members participated in an interagency meeting/workshop hosted by the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to present and discuss the results of efforts to develop a coordinated communications strategy for the state on addressing sea level rise and other climate impacts in California. The team from OPC, the public relations firm Fleishman-Hillard, and California Marine Sanctuary Foundation presented a series of possible talking points and briefing materials for review and feedback from the state agency staff who participated. Agencies represented at the meeting included: Coastal Commission, BCDC, State Coastal Conservancy, State Lands Commission, State Parks, OPR, OPC, the Delta Stewardship Council and the Delta Protection Commission. The input provided by state agency staff will be used to finalize the overall communication strategy and associated materials that can be used by state agencies going forward.

## **UC Santa Cruz - Coastal Governance Course**

On Thursday, February 26, Commission Ecologist Dr. Lauren Garske-Garcia participated as a panelist on coastal planning for an upper division/graduate level course at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The course, Environmental Studies 150: Coastal Governance, introduces approximately 50 students from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds to theories of coastal and ocean governance with an emphasis on current policy and management approaches. Following a mini-lecture, students had an afternoon to engage with panelists on a variety of coastal planning issues and particularly emphasized climate adaptation for local communities and natural resources.

## **Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project – Directors Meetings**

On February 27, Susan Hansch, Chief Deputy Director and Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, Deputy Director, attended the annual Director's Meeting of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project in Long Beach. The WRP is comprised of Directors and staff of 18 public agencies working together to protect, enhance and restore wetlands and coastal watersheds between Point Conception and the Mexican Border. At last month's meeting, Susan and Kate joined the leadership of other federal, state and local agencies to discuss ways to improve restoration outcomes in Southern California. Susan served as a voting member of the Director's Group representing the Commission and the Director's Group voted unanimously to approve the 2020 work plan of potential restoration projects.

## **Public Education**

### **Check the Coast Campaign**

The Public Education Unit has launched the [Check the Coast Campaign](#) to encourage donations to the Protect Our Coast and Ocean Fund on the state tax form. The Campaign features America's first youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman, 3-Michelin-Star chef Dominique Crenn, film producer Sachi Cunningham, and surfer and designer Kassia Meador. The campaign includes ads on mass transit in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and a social media campaign. We welcome Commission help in getting the word out about this fund through your social networks and contacts – staff sent out an email to Commissioners with the details. The campaign runs through April 15.

### **King Tide Program**

A successful King Tides season was completed in February. Local organizations held 54 community events focused on the King Tides, and citizen scientists submitted nearly 1,000 photos to the Project. You can explore a map of this year's photos by visiting [California.kingtides.net](http://California.kingtides.net).

### **Training for Kids Ocean Day Program**

On February 20, Public Education staff held a one-day training for coordinators of the Kids Ocean Day Program, in which students at elementary schools in six communities around California receive in-school assemblies about plastic pollution and its effect on our coast and ocean, and later travel to the beach for a fun day of play, clean-up, and forming an aerial art design in the sand. The coordinators from San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Humboldt County discussed program challenges and opportunities, and brainstormed themes and images for this year's aerial art. The cleanups will take place near the end of May.

## **2020 Dockwalker Program**

Boating Clean Green staff launched its 2020 Dockwalker program in February, holding training workshops in Alameda and San Francisco on Feb 18 and 25, respectively.

## **Coastal Access and Sea Level Rise Video Series**

Rigler Creative has produced, with funding provided by a Commission Whale Tail Grant, a new series of five videos ([Coastal Video Series](#)) exploring broad themes and topics related to coastal access and sea level rise in California. The five new videos are:

- *40 Years of the California Coastal Act*
- *Public Access for all on the California Coast*
- *Kids Belong at the Beach*
- *Sea Level Rise and the California Coast*
- *Activism and the California Coast*

Rigler Creative is the production company that previously produced the [California Coastal Trail video series](#), which highlights different Coastal Trail segments. In addition, the five videos will provide the basis of an hour-long PBS special that will be shown nationally.