

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# W6f

**Date:** April 24, 2020

**To:** Commissioners and Interested Parties

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

**Subject:** Executive Director's determination that amendments to existing Whale Tail® Grants related to COVID-19 pandemic are appropriate.

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## SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission concur with the Executive Director's determination that amendments to allow for creativity and flexibility in adapting Whale Tail® Grants funded programs are appropriate in the context of the current restrictions and future uncertainties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## BACKGROUND

When the Commission approves Whale Tail® Grant awards, it grants authority to the Executive Director or his designee to amend grant agreements as needed. Because of physical distancing orders and school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Whale Tail® Grant recipients find themselves unable to complete their projects as described in their grant agreements. In order to support these local organizations doing important work for education, access, and stewardship, Staff will facilitate grant agreement amendments with the goal of continuing to provide the public with quality coastal and marine education and stewardship opportunities in line with Whale Tail® Grant guidelines.

While everyone in California is dealing with physical distancing restrictions and school closures, each grant recipient has their own individual challenges. When possible, grants deadlines will be extended in order to allow the project tasks to be fully completed over a longer time frame. For some project tasks, such as a teacher training, a shift to an online platform may accomplish similar goals and reach the same target

audience as originally planned. For other projects that engage the public or students in outdoor camps or other group gatherings, a creative approach with flexibility in outcomes and audience will be necessary.

A strong component of the Whale Tail® Grant program is to facilitate communal experiences to enjoy and learn about our coast and ocean. In light of the need for physical distancing to keep people safe during this time, it is necessary to temporarily reimagine these experiences. The local organizations which receive Coastal Commission grants are uniquely qualified and trusted to serve their communities during this difficult time. One of the Whale Tail® Grant categories is organizations with annual operating budgets of \$500,000 or less working with underserved communities. Continuing to support these organizations now as they strive to serve their audiences will increase their ability to stay in business when Californians can safely gather in neighborhoods, schools, and on beaches after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission concur with the determination of the Executive Director that review of amendments to existing Whale Tail® Grants by the Executive Director or his designee, in the context of the current restrictions and future uncertainties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, should allow for flexibility in adapting grant funded programs, and directs staff to use its discretion and creativity in working with grantees to amend scopes of work and timeframes to maintain the intent and public benefit provided by grant programs to the extent possible, while being flexible in terms of project activities and outcomes.