

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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May 8, 2023

TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

FROM: Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, May 2023

Public Service Recognition Week

This week (May 7-13) is Public Service Recognition Week. During this week, we honor the people who serve our nation as federal, state, county, local and tribal government employees. I would like to take this opportunity to thank and celebrate all of the incredible public servants that work for the Coastal Commission and all of our sister agencies. California's coast is the thriving, vibrant place it is today because of their steadfast dedication to protecting and supporting public access, coastal resources, and coastal communities. It is an honor to serve with you!

LCP Grant Program Updates

- a. Rather than opening a 9th round of competitive grants, Coastal Commission staff will now allow for all grant proposals to be submitted on a rolling basis. In all cases, staff will review proposals for consistency with adopted program priorities and evaluation criteria. For proposals over \$500,000, staff will prepare recommendations for Coastal Commission review and approval at the next available Coastal Commission hearing (similar to the process for past competitive grant rounds). For proposals up to \$500,000, staff will continue to make recommendations for approval by the Executive Director. These updated program details are described in the "Review of Applications" section of the attached LCP Grant Program Guidelines document and will be reflected on the LCP grants website and in an upcoming announcement.
- b. Rolling LCP Local Assistance Grants
In October 2021 and November 2022, in conjunction with additional LCP Grant Program updates, the Commission approved a rolling grant application process by which grant proposals for up to \$500,000 could be approved by the Executive Director and announced at the following Coastal Commission meeting. The following grants were approved over the past month:
 - City of Arcata, \$178,000: The City of Arcata is proposing to complete an updated sea level rise vulnerability assessment (SLRVA) and an adaptation plan concept for planned capital

improvement projects. The SLRVA will include new analysis to build on the 2018 SLRVA, including in particular more detailed hydrological modeling. The City will also create an adaptation plan for capital improvement projects such as the next phase of improvements to the Arcata Wastewater Treatment Facility. Lastly, the City will update its LCP with the data and adaptation concepts it develops, which will inform implementation of the hazards and sea level rise related LCP policies and concepts that are part of the City's forthcoming comprehensive LCP update, providing, for example, more detailed thresholds and triggers for specific adaptation actions.

California State Association of Counties (CSAC) 2023 Legislative Conference

On April 13, staff from the Legislative, Executive, and Statewide Planning Units attended the Coastal Counties Regional Association meeting at the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) 2023 Legislative Conference. Statewide Planning Unit staff presented the Public Trust Guiding Principles & Action Plan, which is on the agenda for the Commission's consideration this month, to counties present at the meeting and answered questions relating to the proposed guidance. Attendees and Commission staff discussed issues relating to sea level rise and the public trust doctrine, beneficial reuse of sediment, nature-based adaptation strategies, and other issues relating to coastal resilience.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Meeting on Diablo Canyon

Commission staff attended an in-person meeting in San Luis Obispo with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Regional State Liaison. This meeting included representatives from the offices of seven different federal, state, and local elected officials as well as local and state regulatory agencies such as the California Energy Commission, Department of Water Resources, and San Luis Obispo Planning Department. The meeting was offered as a supplement to the public informational meeting held by NRC later that day and provided an additional opportunity for Commission staff to ask questions and hear the key messages provided by NRC related to its current assessment of Diablo Canyon Power Plant's safety performance and the License Renewal Process for nuclear power reactors.

Cattle Grazing and Wildfire Fuels Workshop

On April 20th, Senior Ecologist Dr. Lauren Garske-Garcia participated in the [Central Coast Rangelands Coalition's \(CCRC\) Spring 2023 Cattle Grazing and Wildfire Fuels Workshop](#). The all-day event took place in Berkeley at the East Bay Regional Parks Districts' lands, across several sites where various fuel treatment methods, including prescribed herbivory and vegetation mastication, have been employed to help mitigate fire risk for nearby development. Workshop participants primarily included ranchers, land and resource managers, academics, and consultants, and the day was split between technical lectures, site visits, and breakout groups where knowledge and experience could be directly shared among parties. As relates to the Commission's ongoing work to facilitate wildfire resilience efforts, prescribed herbivory is a tool authorized by the California Vegetation Treatment Program's Programmatic EIR and the Commission's four Public Works Plans for Forest Health, and in some situations, may be the most compatible option for addressing fire hazards, and natural resource and other land use goals, so it is imperative that our staff build both technical understanding and relationships within groups such as CCRC.

Kids Ocean Day 2023

Over the next few weeks, the Annual Kids Ocean Day events will be held in locations up and down the coast. Beginning on May 16th in San Francisco, followed by events in Orange County and San Diego on May 23rd, Los Angeles on May 25th, and Humboldt County on June 8th, school children who have participated in the Kids Ocean Day Assembly Program will head to the beach, many for their very first time, to participate in a morning of activities. The events will culminate with the formation of a work of aerial art, focused this year around the theme of “Give Nature a Chance.” Once completed, the aerial art will be available for viewing at oceanday.net.

Oil Spill Prevention and Response Workshops for Marinas and Yacht Clubs

The Boating Clean and Green Program is partnering with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Office of Spill Prevention and Response to offer free workshops to help marinas and yacht clubs learn about California’s oil spill response structure, communication tools and protocols, best practices, and available resources. For northern California, there will be a virtual workshop on May 11th. For southern California, there will be a hybrid (both in person and virtual) workshop at California Yacht Club in Marina Del Rey on July 27th. For more information, visit the Boating Clean and Green Program website.

Long Beach Visit

On April 25-27, I traveled to the Long Beach office for a series of staff briefings, meetings with government partners and site visits. Highlights of the trip included in-person meetings with staff and some elected officials from the Cities of Hermosa Beach, Laguna Beach and San Clemente, a staff meeting and tour of the Port of Long Beach, site visits to several Orange County locations, and a post-work hangout with the incredible Long Beach Coastal Commission staff. I look forward to making similar visits to all the other District offices over the next year.

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Updated LCP Grant Program Guidelines

The full text of the updated LCP Local Assistance Grant Program details, as revised in May 2023, including the guidelines for eligible grantees and projects, program priorities, evaluation criteria, and application review, is as follows.¹

Eligible Grantees and Projects

These grants are intended to provide assistance to local governments responsible for developing and amending Local Coastal Programs, and such local governments must be the primary applicant and grantee. Coastal jurisdictions may also partner together in support of regional planning efforts and/or grant funds may be used to support relevant stakeholder groups to achieve specific project goals. Local governments are eligible to apply for projects that were not previously funded.

Eligible projects are those that are designed to assist local governments in assessing impacts and planning for coastal resiliency, including adapting to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise, and which contain an LCP planning component. Grant funds may be used for technical, economic, policy, and other analyses, feasibility studies, vulnerability assessments, adaptation plans, outreach and coordination efforts, and activities related to LCP adoption and submittal. LCP planning components may include development of a new LCP, a comprehensive LCP update, an LCP amendment (e.g., updates to coastal hazards policies; incorporation of new sea level rise related policies or programs), targeted LCP changes (e.g., changes to LCP policies/zoning to allow for implementation of identified sea level rise adaptation strategies or climate resiliency projects; updates to previously adopted SLR policies in response to continued planning), or similar activities undertaken through a Public Works Plan (PWP) process.

More information on eligible project types is provided in the program priorities and evaluation criteria sections below. Additional details, including project examples, may be provided in forthcoming grant application announcements.

Program Priorities

Applications will be evaluated for their ability to advance coastal resiliency efforts in the context of LCP planning. This may include:

- Completion of technical, economic, policy, or other analyses meant to assist in understanding, planning for, and adapting to climate change and sea level rise,

¹ Note that the evaluation criteria and program priorities were updated and adopted by the Commission in [October 2021](#) and remain unchanged, though the application processes have been periodically revised to better meet grant program and local government needs.

and increasing coastal resiliency, including but not limited to general vulnerability assessments, studies to evaluate impacts based on evolving science (e.g., extreme sea level rise, groundwater change), feasibility and design studies for nature-based adaptation or other specific strategies, and development of monitoring programs

- Planning work and/or related studies to support development of regional, neighborhood, site, or asset specific adaptation approaches, including phased adaptation/adaptation pathways, such as for a Shoreline Management Plan, a Coastal Hazards Response Plan as required by a Coastal Development Permit, or similar
- Planning work and/or focused outreach efforts to increase public awareness and participation in climate change and sea level rise planning activities, particularly among vulnerable communities
- Planning work to address environmental justice concerns, particularly related to climate change and sea level rise planning activities, and to ensure equitable protection of coastal resources and provision of public coastal access and lower-cost recreation for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or place of residence
- Completion of land use plan and/or zoning work to achieve certification of a new Local Coastal Program (or an Area of Deferred Certification) or planning and/or zoning work to significantly update certified LCPs (or LCP segments) in whole or in part to provide for coastal resiliency, or to reflect changed conditions, new information and scientific knowledge, new programs and policies, or other significant changed circumstances

Evaluation Criteria

Staff will evaluate grant applications against the following selection criteria. The criteria will be considered as a whole, not weighted.

Public Benefit/Significance

The Commission will consider the extent to which the proposed project will address issues of statewide significance and maximize public benefits of the coast. These can include reducing greenhouse gases and addressing the impacts of climate change and sea level rise; preserving and enhancing coastal habitat; protecting, providing and enhancing public access; protecting priority land uses such as agriculture, coastal dependent development, or recreation; protecting and providing lower cost visitor and recreational opportunities. The Commission will consider the extent to which priority Coastal Act resources are addressed and the public benefits maximized.

Environmental Justice

In 2016, the Legislature passed AB 2616 giving the Coastal Commission explicit authority to consider environmental justice, defined in California Government Code Section 65040.12(e), as updated in 2020, as: “*The fair treatment and meaningful*

engagement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins with respect to the development, adoption, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Low-income communities, indigenous communities, communities of color, and other marginalized communities often bear a disproportionate burden of pollution or other environmental harms, while suffering from a lack of environmental services, such as clean drinking water, clean air, and access to parks and open space. Addressing these types of disparities and barriers to meaningful involvement is critical for ensuring that Coastal Act goals of protecting coastal resources for all are equitably fulfilled, particularly as climate change results in evolving risks, without creating new or continuing to exacerbate existing environmental burdens in environmental justice communities. The Coastal Commission will consider the extent to which environmental justice issues are addressed when evaluating grant proposals.

Addressing the Effects of Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most significant policy areas to emerge since many of the LCPs have been certified. The Commission is seeking LCP updates and amendments that address the effects of climate change, including land use, housing, transportation, and habitat restoration and conservation policies that facilitate reductions in greenhouse gases and vehicle miles traveled, as well as the planning and implementation of strategies to adapt to sea level rise and other issue areas affected by climate change, such as changes in habitats and fire hazards.

Relative Need for LCP Update

Related to the public benefits of a proposal, the Commission will consider the relative need for an LCP update, considering the length of time since an LCP or LCP segment has been updated and the significance of the issues proposed to be updated. For example, many jurisdictions seek to assess vulnerability and develop adaptation solutions to address sea level rise, fire, or other climate change impacts to critical infrastructure, residential areas, recreational amenities and open space, or significant wetland and habitat areas. Others have identified needs to reduce vehicle miles traveled, encourage smart growth, increase climate-resilient housing supply, improve public transit, and enhance pedestrian and bicycle options, particularly to and along the coast. A proposal to complete technical studies, economic analyses, mapping, public outreach, and development of LCP policies in support of these options may be important.

Likelihood of Success/Effectiveness

Overall, the success of the Commission’s grant program will be measured by the progress made toward development and implementation of climate resilience strategies, including through LCP certification, update, or amendment. The Commission will consider the likelihood of success of each proposal, including evaluating the practicality, feasibility, and effectiveness of a proposed work program that may lead to successful implementation. Proposals must address the need for coordination with the public and the Commission, and provide for practicable benchmarks for development and review of studies, plans, LCP policies, and other project-specific deliverables.

Other evidence in support of this criteria may include resolutions of intent and endorsement for the proposed work from the jurisdiction and other organizations, matching funds, or other complementary efforts (see below), or other factors that may affect the likelihood that an LCP amendment will be successfully completed. Applicants will be asked to describe any LCP planning work that has been initiated or is already underway at the local level and how this grant program is needed to substantially further that effort. A resolution from the applicant committing to completing an LCP Amendment submittal to the Commission will be required as part of the application.

For new LCP development, the local government should demonstrate its willingness and capacity to assume local coastal development permit processing. Relatedly, some areas of the coastal zone remain uncertified because the Commission and local government have been unable to reach agreement on the resolution of issues or the issue is particularly intractable. The Commission will consider the likelihood that such areas and specific policy questions can be successfully addressed, leading to certification of the area.

Project Integration/Leverage/Matching Funds

The Commission will consider the relationship of the LCP work program to other planning work being undertaken by the jurisdiction. There are several statewide grant programs underway which may positively integrate with this LCP Planning Grant program. Applicants will be asked to describe any other related grant awards (such as through past Coastal Commission grant rounds, or from the Ocean Protection Council, Coastal Conservancy, Caltrans, or the Strategic Growth Council) that may support the LCP planning work. The Commission will consider the ability to integrate and leverage any additional program funds available that could help support LCP certification, update, or amendment.

Review of Applications

The LCP Local Assistance Grant Program will be administered on a rolling basis in two ways:

1. **Grant proposals greater than \$500,000:** Proposals for grants greater than \$500,000 may be submitted at any time. Commission staff will review applications and prepare recommendations for Coastal Commission authorization of individual grant awards. Once a complete grant application has been submitted, staff will seek to take proposals to the next scheduled Coastal Commission hearing for final approval. The level of funding that staff will recommend to the Commission for a particular award will be determined by the amount of available grant funds, as well as consistency with program priorities, evaluation criteria, and other general considerations as described below.
2. **Grant proposals up to \$500,000:** Proposals for grants up to \$500,000 can be submitted at any time and will be reviewed by staff against the program priorities, evaluation criteria, and other general considerations as described below. The Executive Director will make a final determination on grant awards within 30 days of submittal of a complete grant application and is authorized to enter into grant

agreements with grantees for allocation of these funds. The Executive Director will provide an update to the Coastal Commission on awarded projects. This funding to be approved by the Executive Director will initially be capped at \$5 million but this amount may be increased by the Commission, based on interest and available funding.

In all cases, staff will review applications according to the adopted priorities and evaluation criteria, as well as administrative considerations including the sequence of tasks and likelihood of timely completion of the work program; the necessity of each task; and the reasonableness of costs proposed for specific tasks. Applicants are encouraged to work with Coastal Commission staff while developing grant proposals. Applicants with approved grants will be required to coordinate with Coastal Commission staff to develop a grant agreement that is subject to certain program requirements and special conditions, such as requirements for public outreach, review of deliverables, reporting and invoicing, and coordination with Coastal Commission staff. More information on application processes will be provided in grant announcements and on the Coastal Commission website.