

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# W6f

**Date:** August 16, 2023

**To:** Commissioners and Interested Parties

**From:** Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director  
Sarah Christie, Legislative Director  
Christiane Parry, Public Education Program Manager  
Annie Kohut Frankel, Grants and Education Programs Manager

**Subject:** **Proposed Targeted WHALE TAIL® Grants for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 from the Commission's Public Education Program.**  
The Executive Director recommends that the Commission approve the following proposed targeted grants for Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

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## SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- A. Approve targeted grants for the following five projects (totaling \$441,070):
- 1) Kids' Adopt-A-Beach School Program (\$156,570)
  - 2) Justice Outside (Up to \$42,500)
  - 3) Heal the Bay Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
  - 4) I Love A Clean San Diego Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
  - 5) Tides Center (\$182,000)
- B. Approve a temporary reserve to remain unallocated at this time and awarded later in the fiscal year (\$50,000)
- C. Approve the following actions:
- 1) Reallocate any unneeded targeted grant funds to the temporary reserve.
  - 2) Allocate temporary reserve funds to one or more of the above targeted grants if reserve is not otherwise needed and recommended funding levels turn out to be insufficient.

## I. MOTION AND RESOLUTION

### Motion:

I move that the Commission **approve** the funding allocations set forth in the staff recommendation.

### Staff Recommendation of Approval:

Staff recommends a **YES** vote on the foregoing motion. Passage of this motion will result in authorization of the Executive Director or his designee to enter into the appropriate agreements for disbursing the available funds. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present.

### Resolution to Approve the Permit:

The Commission hereby approves and authorizes the Executive Director or his designee to:

- a. enter into the appropriate contracts for five targeted projects
- b. set aside a temporary reserve of \$50,000
- c. reallocate any unneeded targeted grant funds currently being approved to the temporary reserve
- d. increase targeted grant amounts if necessary using temporary reserve funds

## II. INTRODUCTION

The Commission's WHALE TAIL® Grants support projects that educate and involve the public in the protection of marine and coastal resources. These projects provide important benefits in advancing public understanding and support for the coast and ocean. Targeted grants support high priority, often recurring projects that may be linked to existing Commission programs and/or the goals identified in the Commission's Strategic Plan. Funding for the WHALE TAIL® Grants Program comes from sales and renewals of the California WHALE TAIL® License Plate (into the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account), and voluntary contributions to the Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund on the State tax form. In 2021, additional funds were allocated from the General Fund for this program through the State budget. Targeted grants during this fiscal year will be funded from the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account and the General Fund.

### WHALE TAIL® License Plate

The WHALE TAIL® License Plate was established as a mechanism through which the public can contribute funds to coastal and marine education programs in California. As of June 30, 2023, 272,045 license plates have been sold. After the DMV deducts

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administrative fees, funds from WHALE TAIL® Plate sales and renewals are divided between the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account (CBCEA) and the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). An average of \$11.36 is deposited into the CBCEA for each new plate that is sold, and \$20 per plate is deposited into the CBCEA from annual renewal fees. An equal amount per plate is deposited into the ELPF for all sequentially numbered WHALE TAIL® License Plates sold. Additional fees that are charged for personalized plates also go into the ELPF. *In total, from FY1997/98 through FY2022/23, WHALE TAIL® License Plate sales and renewal fees (plus miscellaneous other small fees) have contributed \$34.7 million to the CBCEA and \$88.8 million to the ELPF.*

The CBCEA funds the Coastal Commission's Public Education programs and if funds are available, some work at the State Coastal Conservancy. The ELPF funds a variety of environmental programs in state agencies such as the California Natural Resources Agency, California Conservation Corps, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks, and many others.

California Vehicle Code Section 5067 dictates how the funds raised by sales of the WHALE TAIL® License Plate and deposited in the CBCEA account are to be used:

*“Upon appropriation by the legislature, the money in the account (CBCEA) shall be allocated by the Controller as follows: (A) First to the California Coastal Commission for expenditure for the Adopt-A-Beach program, the Beach Cleanup Day program, coastal public education programs, and grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations for the costs of operating and maintaining public beaches related to these programs.” (B) Second, from funds remaining after the allocation required under subparagraph (A), to the State Coastal Conservancy for coastal natural resource restoration and enhancement projects and for other projects consistent with the provisions of Division 21 (commencing with Section 31000) of the Public Resources Code (as amended in 2004 in Budget Trailer Bill SB 1107).*

In the early years that the WHALE TAIL® Plate was on the market, sales were robust. More recently, WHALE TAIL® License Plate sales have leveled off and declined since 2015 by an average of approximately 9% per year. Possible reasons for the trend include increased competition from other specialty plates in recent years, and the length of time the WHALE TAIL® Plate has been on the market. The Coastal Commission staff is working to address this funding reduction through marketing efforts to increase plate sales.

### **General Fund Allocation to WHALE TAIL® Grants**

The FY2021/2022 budget allocated \$10 million of local assistance funding to the Commission for WHALE TAIL® Grants, which must be encumbered by the end of FY2025.

### **Public Education Grantmaking Budget and Timetable**

Staff proposes to spend \$441,070 on targeted grants at this time, with \$97,000 from the CBCEA and \$344,070 from the General Fund local assistance allocation. Staff

proposes to spend approximately \$2,000,000 on competitive grants in FY2023/2024, which are expected to come before the commission for action in February 2024 following advertisement of the availability of grant funds and review of all submitted proposals.

The staff further proposes to allocate \$50,000 to a temporary reserve.

### III. APPROVAL OF TARGETED GRANTS FOR FIVE PROJECTS

The staff recommends five projects for immediate funding. These targeted grants are consistent with the legislative requirements and with the criteria applied to the competitive grants program. The grants will be subject to the same reporting requirements and rules as set forth for the WHALE TAIL® competitive grants.

The projects proposed for grant funding comprise ongoing educational efforts, stewardship activities to curb plastic pollution, restoration of coastal habitat, and support for WHALE TAIL® grantees on environmental equity and cultural relevancy.

The staff is requesting approval of grants for the following projects:

- 1) Kids’ Ocean Day Adopt-A-Beach School Program and Beach Fieldtrip (\$156,570)  
Funds would be awarded to Friends of the Dunes, Marine Science Institute, Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education, Orange County Coastkeeper, I Love A Clean San Diego, Community Action Partnership of Kern, and National Fisheries Conservation Center.
- 2) Justice Outside (Up to \$42,500)
- 3) Heal the Bay Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
- 4) I Love A Clean San Diego Adopt-A-Beach Program (\$30,000)
- 5) Tides Center Marine Education Project (\$182,000)

The staff recommends that the grants listed above be funded from the following sources:

**General Fund for a total of \$344,070**

- Kids Ocean Day programs \$156,570
- Justice Outside \$42,500
- Heal the Bay \$30,000
- I Love A Clean San Diego \$30,000
- Tides Center, Project Grow \$85,000

**CBCEA Fund for a total of \$97,000**

- Tides Center, statewide education and outreach \$97,000

**1. \$156,570 FOR KIDS' OCEAN DAY ADOPT-A-BEACH SCHOOL PROGRAM**

This program engages low-income schools from coastal and inland communities and involves upwards of 8,000 children a year. The program was started in Los Angeles County in 1993 by the Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education with the support of the Coastal Commission, and has expanded into five additional locations, coordinated by separate partner grantees: San Diego (I Love a Clean San Diego), Orange County (Orange County Coastkeeper), Kern County (Community Action Partnership of Kern), San Francisco Bay Area (Marine Science Institute), and Humboldt Bay (Friends of the Dunes). The program includes an engaging school assembly or classroom presentation and discussion of watersheds and the storm drain system, waste and litter reduction strategies, and the dangers of marine debris. Teachers are provided with additional related activities to conduct with their classes. At the end of the school year, students enjoy a field trip coinciding with World Oceans Day to play at the beach, participate in a beach cleanup, and create an aerial art display by standing in formation to spell out an ocean conservation message which is photographed from above. Art coordination is funded through a grant to the National Fisheries Conservation Center.

**Program History.** The Commission took this Los Angeles-based program statewide by expanding to the San Francisco Bay area in 1998, to San Diego in 1999, to Humboldt County in 2002, to Orange County in 2003. The Commission launched a Central Valley component to the program in 2001. From 2001 to 2018, students from Fresno County traveled to Monterey Bay, and from 2003 to 2008, students from, Tulare County traveled to the coast in San Luis Obispo County. In 2019, students from Kern County traveled to San Luis Obispo County. In 2020, assemblies were suspended and beach events were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020/21 schoolyear, presentations were held virtually, and students created artwork that was incorporated into an online picture mosaic and video for their culminating project. Beginning in 2021/22, in-person programming returned.

**Proposal.** For FY2023/24, the staff proposes a total of \$156,570 to continue programs in San Diego, Orange County, San Francisco Bay Area, Kern County, and Humboldt Bay. Assemblies will be held during the winter and spring, and beach field trips and aerial art will take place near the end of the schoolyear. Funds will be allocated to the five participating organizations leading programming in their regions (Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education, I Love a Clean San Diego, Orange County Coastkeeper, Community Action Partnership of Kern, Marine Science Institute, and Friends of the Dunes) for staff time, necessary expenses, and buses, as well as to the National Fisheries Conservation Center to provide guidance and leadership in the aerial art creation.

**2. Up to \$42,500 FOR JUSTICE OUTSIDE**

Justice Outside is a nonprofit organization that funds outdoor programming, leads trainings that foster culturally relevant programs, and advises on efforts to enhance equity in philanthropy.

**Program History.** Since FY2017/18, the Coastal Commission has granted funds to Justice Outside (formerly Youth Outside) to offer trainings on pursuing equity and inclusion in environmental education for WHALE TAIL® Grant recipients, including stipends for participating organizations. In 2020, Justice Outside received funds to evaluate and improve the equity and accessibility of the competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants application process. From 2021-2023, funding enabled Justice Outside to provide individual coaching to interested grantee organizations.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes up to \$42,500 for Justice Outside to offer trainings for WHALE TAIL® grantees, including participant stipends. The training will focus on social and environmental justice to help program leaders and their broader organizations develop and implement more equitable programs. Prior to the trainings, grantees will be surveyed on their needs so that the trainings can be tailored for them.

### 3. **\$30,000 FOR HEAL THE BAY'S ADOPT-A-BEACH PROGRAM**

Heal the Bay serves as the coordinator for both the Adopt-A-Beach Program and Coastal Cleanup Day for Los Angeles County. As the coordinator of the Adopt-A-Beach program, the organization arranges cleanups and provides supplies for hundreds of groups of volunteers committed to cleaning a beach three times. They organize Adopt-A-Beach field trips and provide bus funding to participating low-income schools. Heal the Bay also hosts monthly zero-waste "Nothin' But Sand" public cleanup events and maintains an interactive database of cleanup data.

**Program History.** Heal the Bay received three competitive Adopt-A-Beach grants in FY1998/99 through FY2000/01. Since FY2002/03, the Commission has supported Heal the Bay's extensive Adopt-A-Beach Program through targeted grants. Heal the Bay's Adopt-A-Beach Program reaches tens of thousands of people a year and fits the goal of the targeted grants by carrying out activities associated with Commission programs.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes providing a \$30,000 grant for Heal the Bay to continue and improve its extensive Adopt-A-Beach Program as described above.

### 4. **\$30,000 FOR I LOVE A CLEAN SAN DIEGO'S ADOPT-A-BEACH PROGRAM**

As the coordinator for San Diego County's Adopt-A-Beach Program, I Love A Clean San Diego (ILACSD) offers a number of enhanced features such as acknowledging adopting volunteers by placing placards with their group names at 83 adopted locations; delivering interpretive presentations to cleanup volunteers; coordinating cleanups at inland canyons with waterways that drain to the coast; conducting outreach to the Spanish-speaking community; and hosting interactive litter-tracking and volunteer databases. They encourage zero-waste cleanups by offering kits with reusable supplies.

**Program History.** In FY2002/03, ILACSD received a competitive grant to enhance its Adopt-A-Beach program and the Coastal Commission has supported them with

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targeted grants in the years since. ILACSD's Adopt-A-Beach Program manages 105 coastal and inland cleanup locations throughout San Diego County and fits the goal of the targeted grants by carrying out activities associated with Commission programs.

**Proposal.** Staff proposes providing a \$30,000 grant for I Love A Clean San Diego to continue and improve its extensive Adopt-A-Beach Program as described above.

### 5. Up to \$182,000 FOR THE TIDES CENTER/MARINE EDUCATION PROJECT

The Marine Education Project is a project of the nonprofit Tides Center in partnership with the Commission's Public Education Program. The mission of the Marine Education Project is to preserve and restore the biodiversity and health of California's coastal and marine ecosystems through scientifically supported community involvement, education, and action. The Marine Education Project programs that would receive WHALE TAIL® funding are Project Grow and the statewide Education and Outreach Project.

**Program History.** Coastal Commission funding has supported in varying amounts Project Grow since 2000/01 and statewide education and outreach, including school-based marine education, since 2003/04.

**Proposal.** Up to \$85,000 from this grant will support Project Grow, which promotes coastal stewardship by mobilizing community volunteers to restore habitat at Upper Newport Bay and beyond. Program volunteers remove non-native plants, collect seeds and propagate seedlings in an onsite native plant nursery, plant native plants, and monitor and maintain restored areas. Project Grow hosts an Environmental Leadership Program for college interns from diverse backgrounds who develop skills in ecological restoration, leading and organizing public events, volunteer safety and management, and environmental education. Interns help lead groups of volunteers in restoration activities. The funds would support staff and program expenses.

\$97,000 would fund Marine Education Project staffing in support of statewide public education activities, including coordinating Coastal Cleanup Day and other volunteer programs, K-12 education, and contests for youth and adults.

## IV. APPROVAL OF \$50,000 TEMPORARY RESERVE

To keep some funding available for unforeseen needs and other potential targeted grant projects, staff recommends that the Commission set aside a temporary reserve to be allocated at a later date.

**Program History.** Maintaining a temporary reserve fund is a fiscally prudent efficiency measure for a grant program of this size, as it allows for some flexibility in the face of unforeseen circumstances should one or more grantees go over or under budget. Commissioners have approved setting aside temporary reserves since FY2001/02. During some years reserve funds have been used for a targeted grant project, during other years they have been divided between funding a targeted grant and adding to the

balance of the competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants budget, and during the remaining years the entire balance was added to the amount available for competitive grants later in the fiscal year.

**Proposal.** Staff recommends maintaining funds in a temporary reserve to keep some grant funding available for potential opportunities and needs that may arise. If not needed this fiscal year, the temporary reserve funds will revert and be available for future grants.

## **V. APPROVAL OF ABILITY TO REALLOCATE UNNEEDED FUNDS**

1. In the event that one of the above targeted grantees does not need all the funds currently being allocated, Commissioners direct the staff to reallocate the remaining money to the following competitive grants budget or add it to the \$50,000 reserve described above.
2. In the event that one or more of the above targeted grantees needs more funds than are currently being allocated to successfully complete a project, and not all of the funds in the temporary reserve are needed for another purpose, Commissioners direct the Executive Director to increase the targeted grant awards using funds from the \$50,000 reserve.

The motion can be found on page 2 of this staff report.