

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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October 5, 2026

TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

FROM: Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report

Heal the Bay Community Partner Award

On September 24, I had the pleasure of accepting the Heal the Bay Community Partner Award at their annual gala in Santa Monica. The Community Partner Award was presented to the Coastal Commission in recognition of 50 years of coastal protection on California's coast. I was joined at the event by Commissioners Jaime Lee and Anne Notthoff. It was an incredible honor to accept this award on behalf of the Commission. A huge thank you to Heal the Bay for recognizing the Commission with this award and for many years of partnership towards our shared goal of a clean, healthy and vibrant coast.

SB 484 Webpage

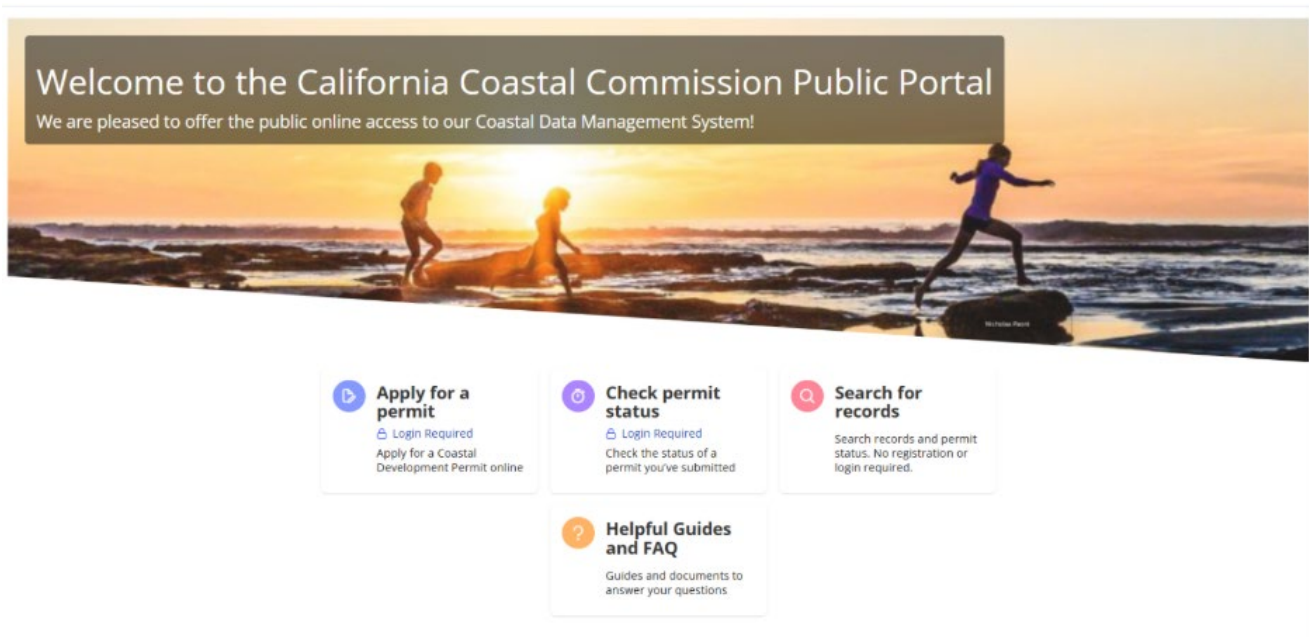
We are pleased to announce the addition of a new page on our website that provides information about the Coastal Commission's process for developing three or more Categorical Exclusion Orders for affordable housing projects pursuant to [Senate Bill 484](#). The webpage provides basic information about the Coastal Act and Senate Bill 484, as well as maps of the coastal zones for the 12 jurisdictions under consideration, consistent with the legislation. Coastal Commission and HCD staff will consult with the relevant local governments and interested stakeholders to inform them about the selection and implementation of these Categorical Exclusion Orders. The page is available at: www.coastal.ca.gov/sb484/

New Online CDP Application Process

We are pleased to share that applicants can now submit regular coastal development permit (CDP) applications online. Through our updated Coastal Data Management System (CDMS) Public Portal, users can register for a free account, enter their project information, and

upload required documents. This makes the application process more convenient and accessible, expanding the Commission's digital services to provide a streamlined and user-friendly experience. The new feature also supports efforts to improve processes and transparency by using digital technologies to allow expanded access to the Commission's information and records. This initial release supports regular CDP applications, and we are working to expand the system to allow other application types in the future.

Access the online application portal and helpful how-to guides here: [Public Portal](#)



Workshops / Conferences / Projects

Environmental Leadership Summit

On September 26, I had the pleasure of participating on a panel titled “50 Years of Coastal Protection: The Coastal Act at 50: Climate resilience, public access, and coastal stewardship” at the 10th Annual Environmental Leadership Summit in San Diego. The panel was moderated by Dr. Todd Holmes, an oral historian with the Bankroft Library’s Oral History Center at UC Berkeley and creator of the documentary, “To Save Our Coast: Proposition 20 (1972) and the Creation of the California Coastal Commission.” I was joined on the panel by Celia Solis, Director of Operations at Azul and Warner Chabot, former Executive Director of the San Francisco Estuary Institute, Vice President of the Ocean Conservancy and coastal activist extraordinaire. We had a wide-ranging conversation about the battle to pass Prop 20, notable Coastal Act Achievements, environmental justice on the coast, historic Coastal Commission battles, navigating shifting political landscapes and what the next 50 years of Coastal Protection look like. Thank you to the Environmental Center of San Diego for organizing such a fantastic event!

California Native American Day

The Commission's Public Education unit and Tribal Affairs Program participated in the 59th Annual California Native American Day in Sacramento on September 25. This year's theme was "Inherent Sovereignty: Tribal Nations Fighting to Protect Our Land and Defend Our People," recognizing the enduring responsibilities of Tribal Nations to their lands, cultures, and communities. The day celebrated living cultures, affirmed Tribal sovereignty, and educated the broader public about California Native history, resilience, and leadership. Staff showcased the Commission's programs and connected with participants, including a previous Whale Tail Grantee who learned about the grant program from Commission staff at the 55th Annual California Native American Day.



Restore America's Estuaries Conference

Several Commission staff attended the Restore America's Estuaries Conference in San Francisco from September 22-25. On September 23, Karen Vu (Statewide Planning Unit) was on a panel on *Partnering with Communities* and presented on the Commission's inclusion of environmental justice principles into its Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance. She highlighted the role of the environmental justice advisory group, the outreach and engagement plan, and shared both successes and lessons learned from the process. Dr. Lauren Garske-Garcia (Ecology Team Manager) sat on a panel that afternoon with fellow regulators, titled *From Permits to Projects: Unlocking Faster Climate Adaptation in California*, and presented how the Commission is cutting green tape to facilitate implementation of critical restoration and adaptation projects. While pointing to the Commission's many guidance resources and reinforcing the importance of early coordination, she provided examples of different permitting pathways and featured the use of Public Works Plans for expediting fire resilience work. Lastly, I participated on a panel with other Coastal Zone Management Program leaders titled *What's Going on in Western Coastal Zone Management Resilience and Engagement Projects*. We each presented a short video about a significant challenge each of our states face in creating regional shoreline resilience and then spent the balance of time discussing how to tackle

community-wide planning, incentivizing nature-based resilience solutions, and balancing private property rights with public access to the coast.

Floodplain Management Association Conference

Karen Vu from the Statewide Planning Unit was invited to speak at the Floodplain Management Association's annual conference in Long Beach on September 10. She was included on a panel on *State Agency Leadership in Funding and Enabling Nature-Based Solutions* along with representatives from the Ocean Protection Council, State Coastal Conservancy, and California Office of Emergency Services, and presented on the Commission's adopted Nature-Based Adaptation Strategies Guidance, including permitting pathways and Coastal Act considerations for nature-based solutions. She also answered questions about coordination with Coastal Commission staff on projects and how Coastal Commission staff are coordinating with other agencies to help encourage and improve permitting for nature-based adaptation strategies.

CNRA Coast NBAS Summit

Karen Vu and Sydney Schmitter from the Statewide Planning Unit were invited to speak at CNRA's Nature-Based Solutions Summit focused on Coasts on September 2 in San Francisco. Their panel on scaling up nature-based adaptation also included representatives from SFEI, Sustainability Conservation, and CDFW. They presented the Commission's adopted Nature-Based Adaptation Strategies Guidance, covering permitting pathways and Coastal Act considerations for nature-based solutions, future outreach on the Guidance, and how nature-based adaptation strategies support the implementation of SB 272 requirements related to sea level rise planning and adaptation in Local Coastal Programs.

Wave and Tidal Energy Report Available

For the past two and a half years, Commission Energy & Ocean Resources staff have participated in an interagency working group on wave and tidal energy as part of processes initiated by SB 605, approved in October 2023. SB 605 directed the California Energy Commission (CEC), in consultation with appropriate state agencies, to evaluate the feasibility of using wave and tidal energy as forms of clean energy, and to identify suitable sea space for offshore wave and tidal energy projects in state and federal waters. So far, two reports have been published by the CEC: one focusing on an evaluation of feasibility, costs, and benefits; and another focused on sea space analysis for wave and tidal energy. The CEC's third and final work product for SB 605, a Report to the Governor and Legislature, is now available for public comment through November 3, 2026. The draft report contains a summary of the previous reports and outlines considerations for the development of wave and tidal energy in California and can be accessed for review here:

<https://www.energy.ca.gov/publications/2026/senate-bill-605-wave-and-tidal-energy>

Public Education Program

Expired Marine Flare Collection Events in October

Multiple counties will offer free expired marine flare collection events in partnership with CalRecycle, the California Product Stewardship Council, California State Parks, and the Coastal Commission's California Boating Clean and Green Program.

- Alameda, Marin, San Mateo, and Santa Cruz County - Sunday, October 25th
- West Contra Costa County - October 14th through October 24th, Wednesday through Saturday
- Orange County, Ventura County, and Port of San Diego - Saturday, October 24th

Only expired marine flares from residents and boaters berthing their boats in the named areas will be accepted. No marine flares from commercial craft or organizations will be accepted during these events. Proof of residence or eligibility is required.

Find time and location details for these collection events at

www.calpsc.org/marineflarecollectionevents. For more information about expired marine flares, visit dbw.parks.ca.gov/marineflares and [listen to our podcast about this topic](#).

Coastal Cleanup Day

Saturday, September 19th was the 42nd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day. The event was a huge success across the state, as events took place in all 58 counties, from the Sierra out to the coast. Reports continue to roll in from coordinators around the state, but as of now, over 32,000 volunteers turned out and removed over 305,000 pounds of trash from California's creeks, lakes, and coast. It was another amazing day of service, and for many, it was their first step into the larger world of coastal stewardship.



Share your Coastal Memory

As one aspect of our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Coastal Act, we are hoping that the public will share some of their personal experiences with the coast. We are collecting coastal memories to use on social media and our website to illustrate the connections we have to our coast. They can be brief or more involved, and pictures or even short videos will help paint a more vivid picture. Memories can be submitted anonymously. Please visit [this page](#) to upload your story and help us understand how the Coastal Act has impacted you.

From Act to Action: The First 50 Years of Coastal Protection

As part of our many initiatives to celebrate the Coastal Act's 50th Anniversary, Commission staff will be spotlighting key program achievements and a public access success at each monthly hearing. The goal is to educate the public, honor the Act's legacy, and highlight the Commission's ongoing work to protect California's coast. We will continue to show our Coastal Access Spotlight series to the Commission for the rest of this year, as well as post the videos on Instagram and YouTube via the Commission's website: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/highlights.html>

BEACH CELEBRATION! It's time! The Commission's 50th anniversary beach celebration will be held in Long Beach this Saturday, October 10, from 1-6pm at Junipero Beach. The event will be free of charge and open to the public for an afternoon of music, entertainment, speakers, and activities to celebrate 50 years of coastal protection. Hope to see you all there!

The Passing of Pat Veesart

It is with deep sadness that I share the passing of one of the most beloved and remarkable members of our coastal family, Pat Veesart. During his time at the Commission, Pat served as both the North *and* South Coast Enforcement Supervisor, overseeing district enforcement work statewide as well as providing support for many of the cases that were elevated to you all as Orders.

Pat was inspired to come work for the Coastal Commission after we denied San Luis Obispo County's plan to develop the Hearst Ranch as a destination golf resort in 1999. As the Chair of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, he was one of the founding members of the North Coast Alliance, the group of local grassroots NGOs that formed the nucleus of what became a tsunami of public opposition to the Hearst Corporation's plans. Although he had been an environmental activist for many years, that was the first time he had ever engaged directly with the Coastal Act, and it made an impression on him—he was awed by the brilliance of Peter Douglas and impressed by the ability of a government agency to save a place he loved deeply.

Those of us who had the great good fortune to work with Pat will always remember his easy-going, plain-spoken, unpretentious style. Beneath those plaid flannel shirts and that short-brimmed Stetson was a ferociously brilliant analytical mind that could form a bullet-proof Chapter 3 argument. He came to know the Coastal Act as well as any attorney, and he interpreted the law through the lens of his diverse life experience as a self-taught naturalist, general contractor, and County planning commissioner. His staff presentation in the 11 Lagunita case regarding the extent of that rebuild, down to details regarding the purlins and the dimensions of the studs, was considered expert testimony by the court and contributed to the success of that seminal case.

Pat was a lover of California's wild places - from the Smith River to the Sespe Wilderness, from Santa Cruz Island to his beloved Carrizo Plain. He was a lover of music, a reader of books, a paella magician, and a friend to all dogs. He passed quietly on September 10 in his home at the Goodwin Ranch on the Carrizo Plain. He will be forever missed by his colleagues who had the great good fortune to know and love him.