

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

455 Market Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105-2421
Voice: (415) 904-5200
WEB: WWW.COASTAL.CA.GOV



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February 1, 2026

TO: California Coastal Commission and Interested Parties

FROM: Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report

Announcements

I'm very pleased to inform you that the Office of Administrative Law has approved our requested changes to the Commission's regulations - increasing the time period to vest a permit for a 100% affordable housing project from two years to five and doubling the timeframe for extensions from one year to two. This will give affordable housing developers additional certainty when seeking funding to support these important projects. This was an important priority for Affordable developers because of the complex funding arrangements that are required to get these kinds of projects off the ground. A 2-year CDP just does not provide the kind of runway needed to secure these complex financial arrangements. I want to thank our partners in the affordable housing development community, especially the California Housing Partnership, Housing California, and People's Self-Help Housing, as well as your staff, who worked to fast-track this effort. The new regulations went into effect on Thursday, January 29th.

Public Education

WHALE TAIL® Grants

The application for the 2025-2026 WHALE TAIL® Competitive Grants cycle closed on December 15. Thank you to the Ocean Protection Council for providing \$2 million in funds for this grant cycle. We received a record-breaking 437 applications, including 53 proposals through a tribal set-aside for projects led by, in partnership with, and/or directly engaging California Native American tribes and tribal communities. The requests totaled \$18.6 million, demonstrating the great need for these funds and the programs they support. Staff will review applications and will present the recommended projects at the April Commission meeting.

Environmental Justice Program

First Commission Tribal Affairs Coordinator

I am pleased to announce that Courtney Owen joined the Commission in December as the first Tribal Affairs Coordinator. In this new role, Courtney will help shape our Tribal Consultation Program, supporting district tribal liaisons and advancing high-priority tribal issues, including Offshore Wind. She's based in the San Francisco office and brings over a decade of experience to her new role. Most recently, she was a Senior Program Associate at the Udall Foundation's National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, where she co-designed equitable governance processes with Tribes, federal agencies, and other partners. We are excited to have Courtney on board and look forward to her contributions to our Tribal Consultation Program.

Shifting the Current: Advancing Environmental Justice at the California Coastal Commission

I am proud to share the release of a new internal report titled: *Shifting the Current: Advancing Environmental Justice at the California Coastal Commission*. It is a retrospective on the ongoing implementation of the 2019 Environmental Justice Policy at the Commission.

The report explains key actions and outcomes across permitting, planning, and enforcement. It highlights efforts for stronger engagement with historically marginalized communities and Tribal Nations and better language access and public participation.

Additionally, the report outlines reflections from these last six years as well as priorities for 2026–2030. These include expanding engagement, removing barriers to coastal access, increasing accountability, and advancing climate resilience in ways that amplify the voices of historically excluded communities.

You can view the full report and explore key highlights [linked here](#) or on our homepage highlights.

Blues Beach Land Return

On December 19th, I met with the Board of the non-profit tribal Kai Poma to sign the public access management plan for the Blues Beach Property in northern Mendocino County. As you may recall, last April the Commission approved a CDP application by Caltrans to divide three state-owned parcels for the purpose of transferring 136 acres of coastal land to Kai Poma, a tribally chartered, non-profit corporation governed by members of three federally recognized California Native American Tribes: the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, the Round Valley Indian Tribes, and the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians. This land return was originally authorized by legislation (Senate Bill 231) authored by Senator Mike McGuire and signed into law by Governor Newsom in 2021. The management plan, which our staff and the Kai Poma Board developed collaboratively over the past four years, sets out a framework that will guide Kai Poma's management of the transferred property. The plan describes how Kai Poma will provide public access and protect sensitive natural and cultural resources on the land, and lays out a process by which Kai Poma, with support from the Commission, will craft long-term management strategies for stewarding the property into the future.

Caltrans anticipates finalizing the property transfer in the first half of this year. We are so grateful to Kai Poma Chair Eddie Knight and the rest of Kai Poma Board for their partnership in reaching this point, and we look forward to seeing this historic land return completed.



Check out our [new Webpage](#) celebrating 50 Years of the Coastal Act

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

Program Spotlight: Environmental Justice

As part of our many initiatives to celebrate the Coastal Act's 50th Anniversary, Commission staff will be spotlighting key programs and achievements 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. This initiative is called "From Act to Action: The First 50 Years of Coastal Protection". This month, we will spotlight one of our newest efforts, the Environmental Justice Program.

Public Access Spotlight: Ritz Carlton Resort, Half Moon Bay

In addition to spotlighting key programs and achievements, we will also highlight one coastal access project that the Commission has required at each Commission meeting for the rest of the year. This month's feature focuses on the Ritz Carlton Resort in the City of Half Moon Bay. The Commission approved this 350-room resort hotel in 1992. The hotel sits atop a tall bluff and commands outstanding views of the Half Moon Bay shoreline. Significant public access amenities required by the Commission include: an ADA Accessible bluff top trail

(which is a one-mile-long segment of the California Coastal Trail), 40 parking spaces reserved for public access visitors, restrooms, and a beach access stairway. The Hotel developer was required to build and manage these facilities, and today they are well used by both the general public and the hotel guests. Check out the Highlights Section of our website for a map of the site.

Emergency Permits:

North Coast District

G-1-25-0040 issued to Caltrans to mitigate potential damage to sensitive resources adjacent to the emergency work site authorized by G-1-25-0012 for the Westport slide emergency repair project at Blues Beach, Mendocino County

G-1-26-0003 issued to the County of Del Norte to mechanically breach the sandbar between the Lake Earl/Lake Tolowa Lagoon complex and the Pacific Ocean, Del Norte County

South Central Coast District

G-4-25-0043: Emergency Coastal Development Permit issued to University of California at Santa Barbara for placement of 300 sandbags for erosion protection of Lagoon Berm Road at Campus Point, UCSB Campus, Santa Barbara County.

South Coast District

G-5-25-0045: Emergency Coastal Development Permit issued to Joseph Marino for an approximately 100-foot-long soldier pile wall system across the rear yard, one row of tiebacks, and a four-foot-high 16-inch-thick continuous anchor block wall to remediate bluff failure at 49 Marguerite Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes, LA County.