

## Committee Staff Summary for July 17-18, 2024 MRC

**10. Staff and Agency Updates****Today's Item**Information Action 

Receive verbal and written updates from staff and other agencies, including the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) and the Department.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)****Background**

This is a standing agenda item for staff and agencies to provide an update on marine-related activities of interest. Updates related to current work plan topics are generally provided in writing. Members of the public will have an opportunity to share their thoughts, although the level of in-meeting discussion will be at the discretion of the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) co-chairs.

**A. OPC**

OPC staff will provide a verbal update on topics of interest to MRC.

**B. Department****I. Law Enforcement Division (LED)**

LED will provide a verbal update on recent law enforcement cases.

**II. Marine Region**

Marine Region staff will provide verbal updates on various work plan topics, including:

- a. Statewide red abalone recovery plan
- b. Electronic recreational fishing report cards rulemaking
- c. Commercial harvest of marine algae sea palm

**C. Commission Staff**

- I. *Aquaculture state water bottom leases: Applications for new leases.* Staff and Department staff have prepared a written update on progress in strengthening interagency coordination efforts; such efforts will support implementation of the Commission's enhanced process for new aquaculture lease applications. Staff suggests one pending lease application may be ready for MRC vetting in November 2024 (Exhibit 1).
- II. *Coastal Fishing Communities Project.* The Commission's Sea Grant state fellow has been taking the lead in updating the Commission's Coastal Fishing Communities Project [webpage](#), which is nearly complete through policy adoption. She has also been collaborating on developing an ArcGIS StoryMap as a stakeholder engagement tool, and engaging coastal fishing community members directly to initiate implementation of the new Coastal Fishing Communities Policy.

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**Significant Public Comments (N/A)**

**Recommendation (N/A)**

**Exhibits**

1. [Staff and Department staff update on pending aquaculture lease actions, dated July 10, 2024](#)

**Committee Direction/Recommendation (N/A)**

## **California Fish and Game Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

# **Implementing the Enhanced Aquaculture Leasing Process for New State Water Bottom Lease Applications: Update on Interagency Coordination for Aquaculture Leasing and Permitting**

*Prepared by Commission Staff for the July 17-18, 2024 Marine Resources Committee Meeting*

## **Background**

At its August 2023 meeting, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) approved an enhanced leasing process for considering applications for a new state water bottom lease for aquaculture purposes, as well as evaluation criteria to support a public interest determination by the Commission. Throughout the fall and winter, Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) staffs worked together to develop an implementation strategy for the enhanced leasing process and advancing state water bottom lease applications.

## **Spring 2024 Outreach and Agency Input**

Commission staff and the Department's state aquaculture coordinator held outreach meetings with representatives of state and federal agencies involved in state aquaculture permitting. The goal of the meetings was to inform each agency of the Commission's recently-approved process and criteria for aquaculture leasing, and to gauge their interest in participating in interagency coordination meetings with applicants. The individual discussions resulted in valuable recommendations for facilitating future coordination meetings, and laid a foundation for improved communication among the agencies involved in aquaculture leasing and permitting.

Nearly all agencies expressed a commitment to participating in the Commission's first interagency coordination effort for aquaculture leasing and permitting. State Lands Commission staff indicated they would be available on an as-needed basis.

Based on the overall positive response, Commission and Department staffs notified San Andreas Shellfish Farm, one of three current lease applicants, and offered an interagency coordination meeting to receive feedback on the proposed lease area and project description.

## **San Andreas Shellfish Farm – Interagency Coordination Meeting**

On June 25, 2024, Commission and Department staffs held a joint interagency coordination meeting with San Andreas Shellfish Farm, its consultant, and representatives from the various agencies: California Coastal Commission, California Department of Public Health, San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Protected Resources Division, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (San Francisco Bay District). The State Lands Commission was kept informed of the process.

The two-hour meeting consisted of two parts:

- Part 1: Applicant presentation and agency feedback on the proposed project.
- Part 2: Agencies discussed the proposed project amongst themselves, to ask questions of staff and one another, coordinate, and provide feedback on the meeting format and content.

Both the applicant and agencies found the meeting valuable and informative. The agencies expressed interest in continuing future coordination efforts for aquaculture leasing and permitting, not only for discussing new lease applications and anticipated reviews and permitting, but also to coordinate on amendments to existing aquaculture leases and permits.

### **Next Steps**

Commission and Department staffs will continue discussions with San Andreas Shellfish Farm to address agency input. Staff will confirm that all public interest “requirements” criteria have been met prior to public vetting of the application. Commission staff proposes to schedule the application for discussion at the November 2024 MRC meeting, following further discussions with the applicant.