



Ocean Resources Enhancement and Hatchery Program Ocean Resources Enhancement Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 30, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (PST)

Location: 3020 Old Ranch Parkway, Suite 160, Seal Beach, CA 90740, and Microsoft TEAMS Video Conference

The following were in attendance:

Ocean Resources Enhancement Advisory Panel (OREAP) members and alternate members: John Ballotti, Tonie Bangos, Sandra Estep, Jim Hendricks, Merit McCrea, Michael Quill, Theresa Talley, and Tony Vaught.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW): Bryan Barney, Kathryn Johnson, Kirsten Ramey (OREAP member), and Valerie Taylor.

Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute (HSWRI): Mark Drawbridge, Ruairi MacNamara, and Mike Shane.

Ocean Resources Enhancement and Hatchery Program (OREHP) Scientific Advisory Committee member (SAC): Ken Leber.

Members of the Public: Chris Arechaederra, Justin Funa, and Scott McCreary.

1. Introductions and announcements

- Introductions from all attendees, both in-person and online.

2. Discussion on the OREHP Budget and the SAC's Post-Release Survival (PRS) Subcommittee's recommendation to add a line item to the budget for post-release assessment (short-term) research

- Valerie Taylor summarized Table 1 and Table 2 of the OREHP Fund Balance and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026/27 document. A copy of this document can be requested by e-mailing the OREHP Coordinator at OREHP@wildlife.ca.gov.
- OREHP stamp account is projected to run out of funds in 2-3 FYs under current spending and revenue projections.
- Discussion on options to increase revenue.
 - Increase geographic requirement for Ocean Enhancement stamp to all California ocean waters.
 - Require purchase of Ocean Enhancement stamp to 1- and 2-day fishing licenses.

- Proposed changes could potentially take effect by January 1, 2028, if legislation is approved.
- Ken Leber presented the SAC PRS Subcommittee's motion to recommend an annual line-item allocation of \$300,000 to the OREHP budget to support short-term post release assessment. This will provide the resources needed for rapid assessment (soon after release through the first-year post release) of studies designed to improve post-release survival and enable adaptive management of OREHP contributions to the white seabass fishery.
 - For FY 26/27, funding would support an acoustic tagging study to track fish survival, dispersal patterns, and effects of release strategy, acclimation duration, and habitat.
 - Discussions about whether a less robust study could yield significant results at a lower cost.
 - Concerns were raised about the potential for fish to disperse and the challenges this poses for monitoring survival rates.
 - Dr. Chris Lowe from California State University, Long Beach, is reviewing the scope of work drafted by HSWRI and will provide an estimated budget to HSWRI and CDFW staff after his review.
 - OREAP decided to wait for a budget estimate from Dr. Lowe and will revisit the funding request in the fall.
- John Ballotti called for a motion to accept the proposed budget as presented in Table 2 of the OREHP Fund Balance and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026/27 document. Jim Hendricks seconded the motion. The motion passed by a majority (5 – yes, 1 – abstain).

3. Receive update on the process to amend the OREHP statute (Fish and Game Code Sections 6590-6598)

- Tonie Bangos stated that they [Coastal Conservation Association California] have begun conversations with California legislators and aides to amend the OREHP statute.

4. Receive update on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) white seabass genetics study

- Bryan Barney presented a brief update on the CDFW white seabass genetics study aimed at assessing hatchery contributions to the white seabass catch using parentage-based tagging approach
 - A reference genome has been completed, and 2,700 fish samples have been sequenced with 500 more expected to be completed soon.
 - Preliminary results will be shared at the upcoming OREAP-SAC Workshop in May.

5. Receive update on hatchery and field operations from Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute (HSWRI)

- Mark Drawbridge presented a summary of hatchery and field operations. A copy

of the presentation can be requested by e-mailing the OREHP Coordinator at OREHP@wildlife.ca.gov.

6. Public comment on agenda items and closing of meeting

- No comments received from the public.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.