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CONTACT: Sandy Cooney
(916) 653-9402

**Secretary for Natural Resources Lester Snow
Selected California Ocean Protection Council Chair**

Unanimous vote, 5-0, ensures continuity through 2010

Sacramento – By unanimous vote 5-0, California’s Ocean Protection Council (OPC) today selected Natural Resources Secretary Lester Snow to serve as OPC chairman for 2010. Each year the OPC chooses a council chair from among its five voting members.

“I’m excited about having this opportunity and appreciate the vote of confidence,” Snow said. “But today’s vote is truly about continuity and keeping our ocean protection mission on track as we make our final push to ensure that the Governor’s ocean policy legacy is well established.”

Recently appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger to serve as Natural Resources Agency Secretary, Snow replaced Mike Chrisman. In his role as OPC Chairman Snow will help guide Schwarzenegger administration policy on ocean issues.

Evaluation:

The OPC appointed an expert advisory panel to evaluate the organization’s progress during its first five years. The eight-member panel will be charged with three things. To develop recommendations based on evaluation of the OPC’s strategic plan. To help the OPC set priorities based on these recommendations for the next phase of their work and to provide the groundwork for the strategic plan during the next five years.

Panel members include; Steve Blank, U.C. Berkeley, Celeste Cantú, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, Richard M. Frank, Center for Law, Energy & the Environment, Dewitt John, Bowdoin College, Fred Keeley, Santa Cruz County treasurer, Paul A. Sandifer, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Terry Tamminen, former CalEPA secretary and Santa Monica Baykeeper founder, Andrea Tuttle, former California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (now known as CAL FIRE) and member, Economic and Technology Advancement Advisory Committee for the California Air Resources Board.

(http://opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/2000303/Eval/1003_COPC_04_EvaluationPanel_memo.pdf).

Seafloor Mapping:

The OPC authorized the expenditure \$1.7 million in additional federal funding for the California Seafloor Mapping Program. These funds are granted through NOAA and from the United States Minerals Management Service, Coastal Impact Assistance Program. Seafloor mapping is widely endorsed and was most recently supported by the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, as a critical data set by the federal Ocean Policy Task Force. Creating seafloor maps for all California waters was identified as an early goal of the OPC and is a high priority in their five year strategic planning process.

Since 2007, the seafloor mapping project has collected data along approximately 80 percent of the California coastline. Progress has been made toward verifying recently collected data and creating mapping products. The proposed authorization would fund continued video "ground-truthing" as well as completion of a 10-folio map series for up to 16 mapping blocks along the coast. Grant funds will also be used to initiate a pilot project to develop ecological habitat maps in state waters.

Sustainable Seafood:

In keeping with the requirements of Assembly Bill 1217, the California Sustainable Seafood Initiative, the OPC named members of an advisory panel (http://opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20100303/AB%201217/1003_COPC_12_AB1217.pdf). The panel will be charged with developing a guide and protocols for how California catch may be certified using internationally accepted standards for sustainability. OPC or staff will not certify California fisheries, rather recommendations will guide entities on how to become certified as sustainable. Working with the California Department of Agriculture, the panel will also implement a marketing assistance program and specific labeling to support the sale and consumption of California certified seafood. A competitive grant and loan program will also be established.

The need for sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biodiversity are widely recognized. Over the past century, the increasing demand for seafood has had huge implications for marine species and ocean ecosystems. The adoption of increasingly powerful technologies has led to a massive increase in global fishing capabilities. The demand for seafood in the U.S. is about 16 pounds of seafood per capita, which represents about \$69.8 billion in revenue. (See http://opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20100303/AB%201217/1003_COPC_12_AB1217.pdf for citations.)

OPC Resolutions:

The OPC also passed two resolutions.

One resolution, in support of hydrokinetic or wave energy, would establish the California Marine Renewable Energy Working Group. This interagency body will support the use of data in marine renewable energy planning and management.

The group will inform the state about wave energy development projects and proposals in California, highlight potential environmental issues and marine user conflicts, and improve how state agencies evaluate proposals for wave energy and other marine renewable energy development.

(http://opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20100303/Energy/1003_COPC_09_Marinere_new.pdf).

The second resolution relates to the importance of ocean observing and data collection. The OPC voted to continue support, development, and maintenance of an effective California system of ocean monitoring. California must maintain a healthy and productive ocean and coastal ecosystem and understanding the ocean environment and how coastal ecosystems respond to such changes is critical.

(http://www.opc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/agenda_items/20100303/IOOS/1003COPC_11_Observing.pdf).

Scientists agree that ocean observing improves the safety and efficiency of marine operations, weather predictions, climate impacts, natural hazards, reduces public health risks, and helps protect and restore healthy ecosystems. The use of high-frequency, or HF, radar for ocean observing also has utility for search and rescue operations and tracking oil spills and pollution.

About the OPC:

Governor Schwarzenegger signed the California Ocean Protection Act in November 2004 to create the Ocean Protection Council. OPC's mission is to ensure that California maintains healthy, resilient, and productive ocean and coastal ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. Visit the Web site <http://www.opc.ca.gov/>