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Contact: Clark Blanchard
clark.blanchard@resources.ca.gov
(916) 651-7585

Ocean Protection Council Releases Sea-Level Rise Draft Resolution for 45-Day Public Comment Period

Interagency Sea-Level Rise Task Force Guidelines Inform Process

Sacramento, Calif. – California’s Ocean Protection Council (OPC) today released for a 45-day public comment period a resolution to combat the future impacts of climate-induced sea-level rise. The resolution incorporates Interagency Sea-Level Rise Task Force guidelines and is in conjunction with California’s ongoing climate adaptation strategy. Public comment will be taken until Jan. 14, 2011.

“Since 2008, when Governor Schwarzenegger called for action to manage the future impacts of sea-level rise, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that a strategy is in place,” said OPC Chair and Secretary for Natural Resources Lester Snow. “The OPC sea-level rise resolution that we’re releasing today for public comment is another important step forward in keeping people and property safe.”

Research funded in part by the OPC indicates that a 55-inch sea-level rise with a 100-year storm event along the California coast may cause nearly \$100 billion in property damages and could put nearly 480,000 people at risk. An executive order signed by the governor in 2008 directed state agencies to develop a climate adaptation strategy and consider a range of sea-level rise scenarios for the years 2050 and 2100 in order to assess project vulnerability and reduce expected risks, and increase resiliency to sea-level rise.

The draft resolution, that follows the state’s adaptation strategy released a year ago, identifies expected ranges for sea-level rise in 20-year increments between 2030 and 2070 and also for 2100. When using the year 2000 as a baseline, the average projected sea-level rise is 5-8 inches in 2030 then ranges up to 43-69 inches in 2100. The state’s adaptation strategy calls for project timeframes to be identified so that sea-level rise assessments can be made. The resolution suggests considering risk tolerance and adaptive capacity to guide decisions of whether to use low, medium, or high sea-level rise projections.

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The OPC has worked with other state agencies to support the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in developing recommendations for sea-level rise projections specific to California. Although the final NAS report is not likely to be released in 2012, the OPC staff convened a Sea-Level Rise Task Force of state agencies that developed a sea-level rise interim guidance document. This guidance was used to inform the OPC's sea-level rise resolution.

The work of the interagency task force also addresses recommendations in the resolution that direct state agencies to coordinate with each other when selecting sea-level rise values and where appropriate and feasible, to use the same sea-level rise projections.

To ensure the interim guidance was based upon the best available science, the task force worked with members of the OPC's Science Advisory Team.

The OPC approved \$1,500,000 in support for the Collaborative Fisheries Research Organization to fund projects that will create partnerships between fishermen and scientists to develop and collect fishery data necessary to sustainably manage California fisheries. The OPC also approved \$455,356 to The Nature Conservancy for the Central Coast Groundfish Project to support an innovative approach to reducing in the impact of trawl gear along the central coast.

For the OPC's sea-level rise draft resolution, the sea-level rise interagency task force guidance document or more information on the OPC meeting Nov. 29 agenda see www.opc.ca.gov