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Feb. 7, 2007

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OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL TO FIGHT MARINE DEBRIS, FUND LOW-INTEREST LOANS TO FISHING BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

Public Encouraged to Attend and Participate at Thursday's Santa Monica Meeting

SACRAMENTO – The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) will vote on a resolution to reduce marine plastic waste, Thurs. Feb. 8 during their meeting in Santa Monica, Calif. Testimony from a panel of experts about the impact of marine debris along California's coast and a question and answer period with public input will precede an OPC vote on the resolution. The meeting will be held at the Doubletree Guest Suites Marquee Ballroom, 1707 Fourth Street, Santa Monica, 10 a.m.

"Marine debris is one of the worst problems our oceans face," said Secretary for Resources and OPC Chairman Mike Chrisman. "Passage of this OPC resolution will go a long way to help us promote reducing plastic waste and marine debris in the ocean."

The resolution identifies six priority solutions to the marine debris issue from the June 2006 Plastic Debris Project Action Plan. The six priorities include: Reducing the sources of marine debris (by extending the California Redemption Value from bottles and cans to plastics commonly found in the ocean); increasing the enforcement of anti-litter laws and enforcement of water quality laws to eliminate plastic pellet pollution; identifying innovative ways to reduce plastic waste; expanding watershed clean-up efforts; increasing the availability of cigarette butt and recycling containers and trash cans, at public places and schools statewide.

"We have an ocean-dependent, tourism-oriented economy that is negatively impacted because of marine debris," Chrisman said. "Studies have identified that between 60 and 80 percent of the waste in the ocean is plastic waste and this suggests that we must do something now to help protect the ocean and all the benefits it provides."

The OPC will also consider a resolution to capitalize the California Fisheries Fund. A seed money grant from the OPC for this fund will allow low-interest loans to be made to California fishing communities, groups, and businesses to assist them with a transition to environmentally and economically sustainable fishing practices.

"Allowing fisherman to be part of the sustainable fisheries process is essential to a healthy ocean and a healthy ocean economy," Chrisman said. "This fund will allow low-interest loans to be granted to help fishermen through this process. In the long-run, everyone will benefit from creating environmentally and economically sustainable fisheries."

A study will also be considered by the OPC to examine the impact of state regulations on California power plants that use the once through cooling process to generate energy. Studies have shown that the once through cooling process is harmful to the marine environment.

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http://resources.ca.gov/copc/02-08-07_meeting/Index OPC Book Contents 0702.pdf

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