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California Announces Commitments to Address Ocean Acidification and Other Threats to Coastal Communities and Ecosystems at United Nations Oceans Conference

New York, NY – Today, at [The Ocean Conference](#), an international meeting hosted by the United Nations to support the implementation of its sustainable development goal for oceans, California state representatives announced the state’s voluntary commitments to implement [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14](#), to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources in the face of climate change and shifting ocean conditions. In addition, the state emphasized commitments to address the impacts of ocean acidification, a phenomenon which fundamentally changes the chemistry of the oceans.

“California considers climate change to be a threat not only to our coasts, but to the world,” said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird. “The impacts of ocean acidification threaten our fisheries and ecosystems along the West Coast. Inaction is no longer an option, and we are committed to work towards a zero-carbon emissions economy that will invest in our future and stem the tide of alarming climate-related changes in our oceans. Through these collective agreements, we are proving we can tackle this global threat.”

One goal of the conference is to achieve commitments to reverse the decline in the health of the world’s oceans and exchange knowledge on how different regions are successfully addressing threats posed to their marine resources and environment. California is a founding member of the [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#) (Alliance), which brings together jurisdictions across the globe to combat ocean acidification and increase awareness that changing ocean conditions are an immediate and critical threat to coastal economies and ocean ecosystems. By June 2018, the state will work to grow the Alliance to over 60 governments and affiliate members who are committed to taking actions to combat ocean acidification, both within their region and globally.

Alliance members will take meaningful actions within their jurisdiction, as allowed by their existing capacity, to develop Ocean Acidification Action Plans. The Action Plans will assist in the implementation of the UN SDG target relating to ocean acidification. As a founding member, California will release its letter of commitment to developing an Action Plan in August of this year, and release its Action Plan by the end of 2017.

In addition to the ocean acidification commitment, California has registered several other commitments relating to reducing marine debris in California watersheds and ocean waters, preparing for sea-level rise, protecting California's marine ecosystems through effective management of the state's marine protected area network, and implementing science-based management plans to ensure sustainable fisheries in California.

In 2014, nearly 75 percent of California's population lived in coastal counties and along the State's iconic 1,270 miles of mainland coastline and the San Francisco Bay's additional 500-mile shoreline. In 2013, the ocean and coast contributed \$44.2 billion to the state's GDP, provided \$19.3 billion in wages and salaries, and 502,073 jobs. These figures demonstrate how much the people and economy of California relies on the coastline and the ocean.

In recent years, California has already felt the effects of increased ocean acidification and the ecological and economic toll of this phenomenon. The Brown administration [has taken action](#) to mitigate the impacts of this phenomenon as well as protect coastal communities from continued offshore oil and gas drilling and boost efforts to develop offshore renewable energy.

Throughout the conference, Secretary Laird and Gov. Brown advisor Ken Alex will share the experiences of the U.S. West Coast shellfish and fishing industry as a harbinger for the impacts coastal communities might face in the future from increased levels of carbon dioxide in the oceans. They will also provide guidance to other governments attending on how they might follow the state's model development of an Action Plan on ocean acidification to protect our coastal resources at an official side event on June 8.

A full list of California's voluntary commitments that span many of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14 can be found [here](#).

[The Ocean Conference](#) takes place from June 5-9 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. The conference was mandated by member countries to ensure implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 14 for the health of the world's oceans.

The [Pacific Coast Collaborative](#) states of Washington, Oregon, California, and the province of British Columbia are founding members of the [International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification](#) by which members commit to working collaboratively and take individual actions that address the environmental and economic threat posed by ocean acidification in their region.

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