

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 24, 2007

**UC MARINE COUNCIL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP**

File No. 07-027

Project Manager: Laura Engeman

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Consideration and possible Conservancy authorization to disburse up to \$60,000 to the University of California Davis, Office of Research, Sponsored Projects to support University of California Marine Council graduate fellowships that will promote improved scientific knowledge on significant coastal and marine issues facing California and enhance the state's ability to effectively manage these resources.

**LOCATION:** Statewide

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [List of selected fellows and research topics](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$60,000 to the University of California Davis, Office of Research, Sponsored Projects to support University of California Marine Council graduate fellowships as described in the accompanying staff recommendation, that will promote improved scientific research on significant coastal and marine issues facing California and enhance the state's ability to effectively manage these resources.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 5.5 (Section 31220) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the protection and restoration of coastal, ocean and marine resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.”

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

**Project Description:** Staff is requesting that the Conservancy authorize a grant up to \$60,000 to the University of California Davis, Office of Research, Sponsored Programs to support the University of California Marine Council (UCMC) graduate fellowship program. The goal of the UCMC fellowship program is to build bridges between scientific research and policy development. This is accomplished by linking University natural and social scientists with State resource managers and policy makers to ensure that research informs long-term policies that lead to sustainable coastal and ocean resources. These funds would cover the costs of two one-year fellowships awarded as part of that program.

The 2007 UCMC fellowship program is focusing on two research areas that are recognized as high priority by the California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy adopted by the California Ocean Protection Council in September 2005. These are: (1) marine protected areas and ecosystem-based management, and (2) global warming impacts on California’s coastal zone. Expanding scientific knowledge and understanding in these areas can significantly enhance the state’s ability to effectively manage its coastal and ocean resources. Selected fellows and their research topics, attached as Exhibit 1, include: climate change impacts on marine organisms, implications of ocean acidification and increased ocean temperatures, and studies to inform marine protected area design and management concerns. At the end of the fellowship program, UCMC intends to hold a conference for interested University scientists, state agency personnel, and legislative staff to discuss the students’ findings and their resource management implications.

**Project History:** UCMC invited graduate students to submit proposals in the two research areas with the expectation of being able to fund six to eight projects of interest to the State of California. By supporting the project, the Conservancy would be contributing to high-quality research to support improved management of California’s ocean and coastal resources. This research is necessary in order to fill existing gaps in knowledge that hinder effective policy and decision-making, and is particularly critical as California grapples with complex issues such as climate change and ecosystem-based management. This grant serves as one component of a broader strategy by the Conservancy’s Ocean Program and the California Ocean Protection Council to commit to funding research projects that improve our understanding and management of the state’s ocean and coastal resources.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$60,000
UCMC	<u>\$180,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$240,000</b>

Staff recommends the Conservancy approve the use of up to \$60,000 of the Environmental License Plate Funds, appropriated to the Conservancy in the FY 06 for use in connection with the California Ocean Protection Act, Division 26.5 of the Public Resources Code. The Environmental License Plate Fund may be used pursuant to the California Ocean Protection Act to support programs of the University of California and others in furtherance of fish and wildlife habitat protection and related water quality purposes relating to the acquisition, preservation, or restoration of natural areas and ecological resources.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 5.5 (Section 31220) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which allows the Conservancy to carry out projects and fund coastal watershed and marine habitat, water quality, sediment management and living marine resources protection. Under Section 31220 of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may undertake projects that meet any of the objectives specified in subsection (b) of that section. Research projects funded through this partnership will meet the purposes of this division, specifically by studying threats to coastal and marine fish and wildlife and by evaluating impacts of population pressures on coastal and marine resources.

In addition, the proposed project is consistent with 31220(b), subsection 10, since it will promote the California Ocean Protection Act's goal of advancing scientific understanding to improve efforts to protect, conserve, restore, and manage coastal waters and ocean ecosystems.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

The Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan was last updated in 2003. Since that time the Legislature has expanded the Conservancy's role in the protection and restoration of ocean resources through the passage of the Ocean Protection Act (SB 1319) and amendments to the Conservancy's enabling legislation (SB 1110). These changes are not fully reflected in the Conservancy's goals contained in the Strategic Plan. Nonetheless, the project will help to further many of the Conservancy's existing goals related to habitat protection and water quality, particularly for coastal watersheds, and coastal and marine resources. The project will result in research that enhances ecosystem-based management and contributes to resource manager's understanding of potential climate change impacts to the state's ocean and coastal resources.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S  
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

**Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The research areas selected by the UC Marine Council are identified as priority research needs in the California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy, a research strategy document widely supported by the scientific community, the OPC and the public.
4. **Location:** This project supports scientific research on the ocean and coast, which may be conducted in many locations statewide.
5. **Need:** This research is needed to fill gaps in information required for implementing ecosystem-based management and climate change adaptation strategies pertaining to the state's ocean and coastal resources.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Fellowship research on marine protected areas, ecosystem-based management, and climate change impacts will provide valuable scientific information relevant to a wide range of state projects, and is likely to also inform ocean and coastal management discussions nationally, or even internationally.

**Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** UCMC will award eight graduate fellowships July 1, 2007. Two of these graduate fellowships will be funded by the Conservancy pending authorization of the expenditure of these funds.
8. **Leverage:** UCMC is providing the core funds for the fellowship program. Conservancy approval of this recommendation would contribute funds for two additional fellowships.
9. **Innovation:** UCMC is a unique intercampus collaboration with the goal of linking scientific research to state coastal and ocean resource management needs. The UCMC 2007 fellowship program will directly encourage research in two areas where the state currently has information gaps and promote information sharing and collaboration between the academic community and state agencies.
10. **Readiness:** UCMC is poised to accept the grant and award fellowships before July 1, 2007.
11. **Cooperation:** The Conservancy's Ocean Program Staff will primarily coordinate with UCMC, however research findings derived from the students participating in the fellowship program will be shared with relevant state agencies, the Ocean Protection Council and the

California Ocean Science Trust.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

Preparation of the project involves only data collection, research and resource evaluation activities which will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and is thus categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15306. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval by the Conservancy.