

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



## Strategic Plan

Staff continue to develop the 2027–2031 Strategic Plan. Since the June Commission meeting, staff have provided indispensable internal feedback on the Plan's focus areas, goals, objectives, and metrics. This feedback has been vital in molding the Plan in a manner that ensures it truly reflects the Commission's mission and priorities. Staff anticipate providing an update with an outline of the Strategic Plan at the Commission's October meeting, followed by releasing a draft for public review and comment.

## Offshore Oil and Gas Pipeline Analysis

Staff hosted three virtual public information-sharing webinars about its report on [offshore oil and gas pipeline leases](#). Staff hosted two 60-minute sessions on August 13—one at 2 p.m. and another at 6:00 p.m., and another on August 17. Staff also created a website page with information about the analysis, public engagement, and timeline. The report that staff is developing, encompassing nine offshore oil and gas pipeline leases covering 19 pipelines, is intended to guide the Commission's future decisions on offshore oil and gas pipeline leases. Staff expect to release a draft analysis for public comment in Spring 2027. The presentation shared during the webinars is available on the Commission's [website](#).

## Offshore Wind Energy

The federal government has entered into agreements with three of California's offshore wind energy developers to terminate their leases (Golden State Wind, Invenergy, and RWE). The California Energy Commission Chair and Attorney General sent a [notice of intent to sue](#) targeting an unlawful agreement between the U.S. Department of Interior and Golden State Wind LLC regarding the [Golden State Wind project](#), contending that the agreement jeopardizes California's clean energy gains, thousands of high-quality jobs, and over \$100 million in offshore wind energy investments. Shortly thereafter, the Attorney General filed [a second lawsuit](#) for the Invenergy Project, challenging the federal government's buyout of that lease. There is now one lease remaining offshore of Morro Bay, held by Equinor, and one lease in place offshore Humboldt.

United States Senators Alex Padilla, Chuck Schumer, Brian Schatz, Angus King, and Martin Heinrich [announced](#) that they and nine of their colleagues are

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



investigating the government's buyout agreements for offshore wind projects on the west and east coasts.

In July, a delegation from Japan visited the Commission to learn about offshore wind energy development in California. Commission staff hosted the delegation along with staff from the [California Energy Commission](#), [Go-Biz](#), and the [State Transportation Agency](#).



State agency meeting at the Commission's office with the Ports and Harbors Association of Japan and the Floating Offshore Wind Construction System Technology Research Association.

## **Federal Coastal Zone Management Act Review**

Staff sent a [letter](#) to the federal government supporting California's Coastal Zone Management program and highlighting the critical federal-state partnership that underscores stewardship of California's coastline. The letter emphasizes the longstanding collaboration between the Commission and the California Coastal Commission that has improved coastal protection and resilience. The letter also emphasizes that federal consistency reviews are essential and urges the federal government not to take any action that would jeopardize California's eligibility for Coastal Zone Management Act financial

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



assistance or impair California's coastal zone management agency's ability to protect and restore coastal resources that benefit everyone.

As background, in May, the federal government issued a [press release](#) announcing its intent to review California's Coastal Management Program, which includes the California Coastal Commission, the California Coastal Conservancy, and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [opened a public comment period](#) to gather information that will be used to determine next steps related to the certification of California's coastal management program under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. While the State Lands Commission is not directly implicated in this review, several of the sister agencies it works with to protect California's beaches, oceans, and public lands are implicated and the review [threatens California's coast](#).

The federal government held public meetings earlier this month, and on August 22, closed the public comment period. On August 7, the California Natural Resources Agency sent [comments](#) opposing the review and urged the public to make their voice heard.

## **California Natural Resources Agency Communications Summit**

Staff participated and helped organize a one-day California Natural Resources Agency communications summit that brought together communications, outreach, and public affairs leads from departments, conservancies and commissions across the Agency. The summit provided a valuable forum for staff to connect, exchange ideas, strengthen skills, and deepen partnerships. Staff gained meaningful insight into navigating today's fast-moving information environment, discussing news and misinformation, emerging tools, digital trends, and creating impactful digital content. Other topics included strengthening relationships with ethnic and community media and improving language access. Staff also heard directly from journalists representing public radio, television, digital, and print media.



# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



## **Tribal Stewardship Convening**

Staff attended the [2026 Tribal Stewardship Convening](#) organized by the California Natural Resources Agency. This year's theme, a new era: strengthening relationships for tribal stewardship, brought together California Native American Tribe leaders, non-governmental organizations, local jurisdictions, and philanthropy to deepen shared understanding for implementing the Tribal Stewardship Policy through collaboration and access.

## **Tijuana River Transboundary Pollution Crisis**

Transboundary flows across the U.S.-Mexico border through the Tijuana River Valley continue to carry untreated sewage and other pollution from Tijuana into South San Diego County. Significant local and state advocacy over several years has resulted in actions to begin to address this crisis. These include: 1) Upgrading the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant wastewater treatment capacity to 35 million gallons per day (an increase of 10 million gallons per day); 2) The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board adopting [Order No. R9-2026-0005](#) amending the treatment plant's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit to authorize the discharge of up to 35 million gallons per day; and 3) A U.S. commitment, via a 2025 [MOU](#), to expand the treatment plant's capacity to 50 million gallons per day. California has also implemented projects to address impacts, including: 1) The Tijuana River Trash Control Structure pilot project that deployed a floating trash boom that intercepted over 1,500 tons of trash in the 2025-2026 wet season and has been funded by the State Water Resources Control Board for 2026-2027 operation; 2) The Smuggler's Gulch dredging project, completed in 2024, which removed ~30,000 cubic yards of accumulated sediment and debris in the Gulch and Tijuana River Pilot Channel; and 3) Habitat restoration underway across seven-acres adjacent to the Tijuana River. California's 2026-2027 budget funds a Border Water Quality Protection Unit at the Regional Board to address cross-border pollution. Yet the solutions that have been implemented or are still being pursued will take years to complete.

Continuing transboundary flows and associated public health impacts highlight a critical environmental justice issue for the communities of Imperial Beach, Nestor, and San Ysidro. Between 2023 and 2025, beaches in Imperial Beach were closed more than 90 percent of the time owing to sewage flows. Beach closures continue there and elsewhere. Air quality impacts persist as well. Recent [research](#) reports that

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



atmospheric hydrogen sulfide levels near the Saturn Boulevard river crossing can peak at levels thousands of times greater than typical ambient levels in urban areas, increasing the risk of respiratory disease and neurological effects. This necessitated San Diego County's implementation of an [Air Improvement Relief Effort Program](#) that provides up to three free air purifiers to residents who live in the region.

Transboundary pollution continues to be a threat to human health and safety and directly interferes with the public's access to the coastline and ocean. Staff remain committed to supporting efforts to address this crisis.

## **Newport Beach Granted Lands**

The City of Newport Beach sent staff a [letter](#) detailing its compliance plan and implementation progress to address recommendations in staff's [Report on the City of Newport Beach's Public Trust Lands Management](#). The City has completed Phase I of its plan, which included an in-person stakeholder meeting and creation of a webpage to solicit feedback and provide the public with information on the City's compliance process. The City has also initiated appraisals to determine the monetary value of moorings, residential piers, and yacht clubs, and is determining how to undertake mapping to update residential pier rental areas. Phase II is anticipated to start in September and will include targeted outreach to harbor users. This outreach will be followed by the City's Harbor Commission providing rate and policy change recommendations based on stakeholder input. Staff continues to work closely with City staff as this process moves forward.

## **Abandoned Vessels**

The Commission has spent the \$12 million it received in 2021 to remove commercial abandoned vessels in the Delta, removing 27 abandoned or derelict vessels that were hazardous to waterways. Staff are preparing an informational update for the Commission's October meeting.

In July, staff attended a multi-agency event at the Sacramento Yacht Club organized by Sacramento and Yolo County law enforcement. The event, known as the Sacramento Yolo Blitz, focused on river safety awareness during peak summer boating and recreational water activity. Commission staff gave a presentation about the Commission's jurisdiction and abandoned vessel

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



removal work. The Department of Boating and Waterways also attended and gave a presentation.



## Coastal Hazards and Oil Well Abandonment

In June, staff retained [Padre Associates](#) to investigate natural seeps in the Santa Barbara Channel. The work is expected to include a comprehensive research review on seep activity and the use of advanced technology to study seep systems and evaluate how natural processes and human activities influence them. Staff anticipate remediating two to three legacy oil and gas wells offshore Summerland, Santa Barbara early next year and removing coastal hazards later this year. Engineering planning and permitting for the well remediations is underway. Staff are drafting the final [SB 44](#) report to submit to the Legislature before December 31, 2026. This report will highlight program accomplishments over the past eight years.

## Platform Inspection and Safety Audit Program

Our engineers inspect offshore and onshore oil production facilities monthly, testing pollution prevention equipment, alarms, controls, and shutdown systems that would be triggered during an emergency. Platform inspections ensure the integrity of platform safety systems and that equipment is available and in good operating condition to respond to emergencies or spills. Over the past year, staff inspected about 1,500 items or devices monthly, completed 84 inspections, and tested more than 18,000 individual devices. Very few failures were found, such as a gas detector or a fire alarm that did not work.



# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



Our engineers also audit offshore oil and gas facilities every five years, evaluating whether a facility's safety systems, maintenance practices, spill prevention measures, operating procedures, and other safety management measures meet regulatory and industry standards. Staff also assess facility design, condition, procedures, and personnel. After the team completes its fieldwork, it produces a report ranking any problems found, known as action items, by the level of accident or pollution risk they pose and establishes deadlines for fixing them.

Staff are auditing five facilities that are part of the Long Beach Unit offshore oil and gas operations. Three of the five facility audits are complete. In October 2025, staff finished auditing the Broadway and Mitchell processing facility that processes and ships oil production from the four production islands. This audit identified no priority one action items, 18 priority two action items, and 101 priority three action items, all of which have been addressed.

Staff completed the [Island White oil production facility audit](#) in April. The operator, California Resources Corporation, must resolve all priority action items identified in the audit by October. Staff completed the Island Chaffee oil production facility audit in July and, in September, will issue its findings and identify action items.



## Offshore Oil and Gas Decommissioning

### [Platform Holly](#)

Staff are developing an Environmental Impact Report to decommission Platform Holly and hope to release it for public comment in early 2027. The Commission

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



started this decommissioning project in 2017 after [Venoco filed for bankruptcy](#). Platform Holly is currently in caretaker status, meaning that the wells have been plugged and disconnected from the reservoir, process fluids have been removed, equipment cleaned, and the platform is unstaffed and remotely monitored for safety. The decommissioning project that will be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report is to fully remove Platform Holly, though partial removal, cutting the platform at least 85 feet below the surface and leaving the lower portion in place, remains under consideration.

## Rincon Island

Staff are preparing to decommission Rincon Island and other facilities associated with the former oil and gas operation. Staff are preparing a scope of work to hire a contractor to perform the work and anticipate releasing a contract solicitation by the end of 2026. Last November, the Commission adopted an [Addendum](#) to the Rincon Decommissioning Environmental Impact Report, ending Phase 2 of the project. This was preceded by plugging and abandoning 70 oil and gas wells and removing oil processing facilities and structures at Rincon Island, the onshore facility, and an adjacent parcel. Additional information is available in [Staff Report 53](#).

## Platform Esther

Platform Esther offshore Seal Beach ceased production last year as part of a [settlement](#) between the Commission and DCOR, LLC. The settlement ended oil production about 15 years ahead of its originally anticipated life and requires DCOR, LLC to pay all decommissioning costs. In July, DCOR LLC, the owner and operator of Platform Esther, completed the plugging and abandonment of all 30 wells on the platform. The next steps are for DCOR to submit a decommissioning plan to the Commission and an application to decommission the platform as well as initiating environmental review under CEQA. Platform Eva restarted in June 2025. The decommissioning plan and application are due 36 months after Platform Eva restarts.

## Marine Invasive Species Program

Staff completed three rulemakings in July. The [first rulemaking](#) increases the vessel arrival fee from \$1,000 to \$1,225 per qualifying voyage. The [second rulemaking](#) updates our Marine Invasive Species Act enforcement process by



# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



clarifying violation classifications, revising penalty amounts and procedures, and strengthening ballast water and biofouling management and reporting. This regulation also updates the administrative process for notices, hearings, and civil penalty assessment. The [third rulemaking](#) makes permanent the emergency regulations enacted last year in response to the introduction of the golden mussel at the Port of Stockton. This regulation requires certain vessels, approximately 24 annually that carry low-salinity ballast water to California's low-salinity ports, to meet heightened management methods, including ballast water exchange, to reduce the likelihood of new species invasions.

Staff published two articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The first is titled [Closure of the Strait of Hormuz may trigger a bioinvasion super-spread event](#). This paper, published in the journal *Biological Invasions*, highlights the likely unprecedented accumulation of species on the underwater surfaces of 1,500+ vessels idled for months in the Persian Gulf and how those species may be spread to global ports once ship traffic in the region resumes.

The second published paper is called [California's Marine Invasive Species Program: 25 years of comprehensive pathway management](#). This paper, published in the journal *Management of Biological Invasions*, highlights the Commission's multi-agency Marine Invasive Species Program over its 25-year history. Despite enormous shipping-related environmental pressures on California ports during these decades, California experienced a three-fold reduction in shipping-related nonindigenous species since the start of the program. More information is available in [Staff Report 52](#).

Staff traveled to Peru to deliver invasive species prevention training to port authorities and the shipping industry. The trainings, organized by the [International Maritime Organization's TEST Biofouling Project](#) focused on risk assessments, and in-water ship inspections and cleaning. Staff used modules and manuals developed by the TEST Biofouling Project, mixing lecture-style presentations with leading questions and activities to stimulate participation and engagement. Staff weaved in the Commission's experience to augment the material with personal examples. Participants included ship owners, operators, ship agents, the Peruvian Navy, regulators, professors, biologists and oceanographers from regional universities, and academia. Staff built

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



collaborations with Peruvian researchers and policymakers to improve biofouling management and invasive species prevention across the Americas.



## Staff Spotlight:

### Milestones:

Jim Koepke, Supervising Boundary Determination Officer with the Land Management Division, completed 25 years of state service.

### Promotions:

The Environmental Science Planning and Management Division promoted Robin M. Tuohy to a Senior Environmental Scientist. The Marine Environmental Protection Division promoted Everard A. D'Silva to Marine Safety Specialist I. Congratulations!

### New Hires:

The Marine Environmental Protection Division welcomed Nikkol W. N. Fisher as an Office Technician. The Administrative Services Division welcomed back Jesenia A. Castellon as an Accountant Technician and Holly Polyak as an Analyst II. The Mineral Resources Management Division welcomed Erick Osorio as an Associate Process Safety Engineer.

### Retirements:

Long-time Commission employee Kristin Schwartz retired.

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

August 25, 2026



Photos provided by Commission staff unless otherwise noted.

Banner photo credit: San Diego Downtown Photo by Florence Low / California Department of Water Resources