

Executive Officer's Report

OCTOBER 21, 2026

CLEAR LAKE WATERSHED CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT:

In September, the Executive Officer joined 23 tribal, state, and local representatives at a signing ceremony at Clear Lake to highlight a historic co-management agreement to restore the Clear Lake watershed and protect the culturally vital *Chi* (*ṣátti*). The *Chi* (*ṣátti*) exists only in the Clear Lake watershed. For Pomo and Lake Miwok people, the fish is a cultural relative with deep connections to identity, ceremony, and tradition. Its decline reflects broader challenges facing the watershed. Recovering the *Chi* (*ṣátti*) requires healthier streams, wetlands, water quality, and habitat, creating benefits for wildlife, local communities, and future generations. This landmark co-management agreement brings together Tribal leadership and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to improve water quality, revive native species, restore habitat, and strengthen Clear Lake's long-term resilience. Reporters from the Los Angeles Times, Press Democrat, and Lake County News [covered the signing ceremony](#).



METHANE EMISSION REDUCTION PROGRAM:

The Methane Emission Reduction Program work resumed on September 8, following a pause due to contract clarification issues. The first well, UP 934B, was successfully plugged on September 11. Operations have since moved to the second well, UP

835C, which was plugged to surface at the end of September. A methane inspection of seven wells on September 14 found no leaks, though these wells are qualified for plugging and abandonment based on other marginal conventional well selection criteria. Eleven wells are currently scheduled for plug and abandonment. Work will continue through the rest of the year and into the first week of January. Progress has been smooth, with operations exceeding the estimated authorization for expenditure days. To accelerate the pace and ensure optimal use of the allocated project funds, the team is considering hiring a second rig, pending the availability of permitted wells, rig and crew resources, and eligible wells.

MARINE INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION:

On October 15, staff hosted a webinar to highlight and answer questions about three amended Marine Invasive Species Program regulations that became effective in recent months. Staff presented an [interactive data dashboard](#) on the Commission's website that allows users to sort and filter vessel arrival, ballast water, and inspection data by port, year, and vessel type.

Staff participated in two statewide and regional invasive species summits to highlight the Commission's Marine Invasive Species Program work. Staff delivered two presentations at the annual meeting of the Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species in Sacramento in late September and another presentation at the California Invasive Species Summit in Sacramento on October 1-2 (see images below).



OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY:

California Attorney General Rob Bonta and the California Energy Commission filed a [lawsuit](#) on September 22 against the federal administration and Invenergy, the

holder of an offshore wind lease in federal waters off Morro Bay. In June, the federal administration announced a settlement agreement with Invenergy, which allowed for Invenergy to abandon its lease in exchange for out-of-state investments in fossil fuel or geothermal energy projects. Three of five leases off the California coast in federal waters have been abandoned due to similar settlements with the federal administration (the others are Golden State Wind, LLC off Morro Bay and RWE U.S. Offshore off Humboldt Bay). California has taken legal action on each settlement.

The California Energy Commission recently released (in draft form) the third of three reports on wave and tidal energy as mandated by [SB 605](#) (Padilla, 2023). The [third report](#) focuses on legislative and executive actions to promote the development of wave and tidal energy. The California Energy Commission hosted a public workshop on September 30 regarding this report. The public comment period is open until November 3. Staff served on an interagency group advising on the development of these reports.

COASTAL HAZARDS AND OIL WELL ABANDONMENT:

Staff anticipate plugging and abandoning two legacy wells next year, depending on budget and tide considerations. The Commission will select wells that pose the greatest threat to the environment, including wells actively leaking oil or that show recent evidence of leakage into the environment. The plugging and abandonment approach will likely mirror previous well abandonments, driving a pipe pile around the well like a sleeve and filling the pipe with cement to entomb the well.

Staff plan to begin implementing blanket permitting for multiple wells, giving flexibility to adjust plans based on updated risk assessment data and to choose wells based on the most up-to-date information. One of the wells slated for abandonment next year, Well C, was observed leaking oil to the shore this past February. This well and the second well scheduled for abandonment, Well D, are only 42 feet apart. Abandoning them at the same time should reduce costs associated with mobilizing and demobilizing equipment and services. Abandonment planning and permitting for both wells is currently underway.

The contractor hired to remove coastal hazards, MP Environmental, has scheduled hazard removal work for the end of this year and in early 2027. An updated site walk with hazard assessment is expected in mid-December, with mobilization to

begin hazard removal work expected in the first week of January. The work is expected to take 32 days.

BOLSA CHICA SEA LEVEL RISE FEASIBILITY STUDY:

Staff, in coordination with our consultants and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, have initiated a sea level rise feasibility study for the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve in Huntington Beach. Staff are also working closely with the onsite operator, California Resources Corporation, to ensure that the company's planned removal of oil infrastructure is appropriately incorporated into the study. The reserve is particularly vulnerable to early sea level rise impacts due to ground subsidence caused by decades of oil extraction, resulting in large areas of the site sitting below mean sea level.

The 1200-acre reserve provides habitat for over 22 special status species and is designated by the US EPA as a critical flyway for migratory birds. The public open space at the reserve serves roughly one hundred thousand visitors annually, includes more than seven miles of hiking trails, and is a popular destination for wildlife photographers, bird watchers and nonprofit educational programs. As the steward of California's public trust lands, staff will evaluate sea level rise adaptation strategies that preserve habitat and public access at the reserve.

OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DECOMMISSIONING:

PLATFORM HOLLY

Staff are developing a draft Environmental Impact Report to decommission Platform Holly and hope to release it for public comment in 2027. That will be followed by public comment and final certification.

The Commission started this decommissioning project after [Venoco filed for bankruptcy](#) in 2017. 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 has been cleaned, and the platform is unstaffed and remotely monitored for safety. The proposed decommissioning project that will be analyzed in the Draft 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 in early 2027. Last November, the Commission adopted an [Addendum](#) to the Final Rincon Phase 2 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.

PLATFORM ESTHER

DCOR, LLC, the Platform Esther owner and operator, has completed the plugging and abandonment of the wells on Platform Esther and is currently completing the flush and clean of the platform's oil and gas processing equipment. Platform Esther offshore Seal Beach is one of California's last platforms in state waters, and its shutdown leaves only two remaining operational oil platforms in state waters. Platform Esther 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.

PORT COVID-19 FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS:

The Covid-19 pandemic caused severe economic impacts for California's ports, particularly those that relied on travel and tourism for their economic health. With the reduced revenue from travel and tourism, ports did not have funding to meet their operational needs and protect public safety, and many were considering layoffs, service reductions, delayed maintenance, and other drastic measures to maintain economic health. Despite this, ports were excluded from many sources of federal pandemic relief funds. In April 2021, the Commission adopted a resolution urging the Legislature to direct economic relief funds to the ports.

In summer 2021, the Legislature appropriated \$250 million to the Commission to address the pandemic's economic impact on ports. In December 2021, April 2022, and August 2022, the Commission distributed funds to support the ports' economic recovery, such as for activities that include avoiding layoffs, restoring jobs and services lost due to COVID-19, and supporting safe operations.

The Legislature required that the ports encumber the funds by December 31, 2026. Staff has monitored the recipients to ensure they use the funds appropriately and meet the deadline. As of October, all recipient ports encumbered their funds or are on track to do so by the December deadline.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT:

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

Sarah Mongano, a Senior Environmental Scientist in our Division of Environmental Science, Planning, and Management celebrated 25 years of service with the Commission.

SUPERIOR ACCOMPLISHMENT AWARDS

Theresa Haynes in our Administrative Services Division received a superior accomplishment award for her diligence and commitment to protecting the limited resources of the Commission. By diving deep and asking questions, Theresa saved the Commission over \$20,000.

The "Back Channel Team" comprised of Cathy Chan, Warren Crunk, Renee DeLeon, Michelle Haflich, Arturo Ibarra, Jefferson Kwong, Kim Lunetta, Jeffrey Plovnick, Adrian Portillo, and Luke Ward were awarded a superior accomplishment award for their commitment and dedication to facilitating public comment and presentations during Commission meetings. Recently the Commission heard a highly controversial item. The Back Channel Team worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure smooth and successful administration of the meeting.

Lucinda Calvo in our Legal Division received a superior accomplishment award for going above and beyond on a project with multiple complicating factors. Lucinda was instrumental in getting the project finalized in a tight timeline. Without her significant effort this action would not have been possible for the June Commission meeting.

PERSONNEL UPDATES:

PROMOTIONS

We are thrilled to announce that Ānela Freeman has been promoted to Administrative Services Division Chief.

Ānela's leadership, dedication, and deep commitment to the Administrative Services Division and its staff have been instrumental in driving the division forward. Over the course of her tenure, she has consistently demonstrated exceptional operational vision, collaborative leadership, and a steadfast dedication to supporting staff. Congratulations Ānela!

NEW HIRES

The Administrative Services Division welcomed Erin Delany as a Personnel Specialist, Lakayla Brown as an Office Technician (Typing) and Kelsey R. Haydon as an Analyst I.

Photos provided by Commission staff unless otherwise noted.