

Date of Hearing: June 25, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Diane Papan, Chair

SB 1324 (Limón) – As Amended April 10, 2024

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: California Ocean Science Trust: agreements

SUMMARY: Authorizes the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), or entities within those agencies to enter into a direct agreement with the California Ocean Science Trust (OST) for the delivery of peer reviews, technical guidance, or scientific reports and analyses. This bill also makes findings and declarations.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the CNRA secretary to enter into an agreement with OST [Public Resources Code (PRC) § 36990 *et. seq.*].
- 2) Defines OST's purposes to include the following:
 - a) Seek funds for California ocean resource science projects, emphasizing the development of new funding sources;
 - b) Fund California ocean resource science projects that help fulfill the missions of the state's ocean resource management agencies;
 - c) Encourage coordinated, multi-agency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science to deliver actionable science solutions that accelerate equitable climate change adaptation;
 - d) Encourage graduate education programs, training, and workforce development opportunities in management-oriented ocean resource science in public and private universities and colleges in California;
 - e) Encourage new technologies that reduce the cost, increase the amount, or improve the quality of ocean resource management information; and
 - f) Promote more effective coordination of California ocean resource science useful to management agencies (PRC § 36990).
- 3) Establishes the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) in state government and directs OPC to, among other things, contract with OST and other nonprofit organizations, ocean science institutes, academic institutions, or others that have experience in conducting the scientific and educational tasks that are required by the OPC (PRC § 35600 and § 35615, respectively).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of this bill.** This bill authorizes CNRA, CalEPA, or the respective departments, boards, commissions, and conservancies of either entity to enter into a direct agreement OST for the delivery of peer reviews, technical guidance, or scientific reports and analyses. According to the author, “Understanding the dynamics of biodiversity and ecological health in the ocean through research is instrumental in maintaining the balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. Organizations such as [OST] help support this important work through their research. [This bill] would enable [CNRA] and [CalEPA] to access the best available information by contracting with [OST] for further science services such as peer reviews, technical guidance, or reports.”
- 2) **Background.** The California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act of 2000 (CORSA) authorized the creation of the OST and recognized the value of independent science to support and inform policy and management decisions for the state’s ocean resources. OST operates as a tax-exempt, independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and is supported by the state, academic institutions, federal government, philanthropy, and private industry.

In 2021, the OST began providing actionable science advice and information directly to the Legislature including, rapid response memos to legislative inquiries, technical feedback on bill ideas, and briefings and events on relevant topics. AB 2287 (Stone, Chapter 208, Statutes of 2022) updated OST’s directive to explicitly improve access to climate adaptation and mitigation science to address climate change in ocean management.

Collaboration is key. To date, only the Secretary of CNRA and OPC have been able to enter into direct agreement with OST and benefit from the science services, peer review, and reports. OST has occasionally provided scientific services to other state agencies and departments through its contract with OPC, but this arrangement has challenges, particularly since OPC ends up with the bill for a service provided to another agency.

Entities within the CNRA and CalEPA, including departments, boards, commissions, and conservancies, also have a need for access to OST’s science services as oceans are increasingly being tapped as sites for potential solutions to climate change. Further, given the accelerated pace and consequences of ocean degradation, providing access to rapid, responsive science services to relevant entities within CNRA and CalEPA makes sense.

- 3) **Arguments in support.** OST (sponsor) and the Monterey Bay Aquarium Foundation (MBAF) write in support of this bill. OST writes that this bill will enable OST to “most effectively deliver the multidisciplinary science essential to equitable climate impact mitigation and adaptation.” MBAF concurs that this bill will further implement CORSA and “encourage coordinated, multiagency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science and deliver actionable science solutions for equitable climate change adaptation.”
- 4) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.
- 5) **Related legislation.** AB 2287 (Stone), Chapter 208, Statutes of 2022, renames the California Ocean Trust as OST, updates its purposes to explicitly incorporate climate change and training, and authorizes OST to undertake certain activities related to fulfilling its purposes.

AB 1056 (Leno), Chapter 372, Statutes of 2007, authorizes OPC to directly contract with OST and other nonprofit organizations, ocean science institutes, academic institutions, or others that have experience in conducting the scientific and educational tasks that are required by OPC.

AB 2387 (Keeley), Chapter 516, Statutes of 2000, enacted CORSA, which, among other things, established OST.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Ocean Science Trust (Sponsor)
Monterey Bay Aquarium Foundation

Opposition

None on file

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