California Sea Grant State Fellowship Program 2020

Host Agency: California State Lands Commission
Location: 100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South, Sacramento, CA 95825
Fellowship Supervisors: Jennifer Mattox, Science Policy Advisor/Tribal Liaison; Maren Farnum, Environmental Scientist
Points of Contact: Jennifer Mattox, jennifer.mattox@slc.ca.gov; (916) 574-0748; Maren Farnum, maren.farnum@slc.ca.gov; (916) 574-0966

Agency Background:
The California State Lands Commission (Commission) is an independent and dynamic state agency that works on the cutting edge of integrating science into policy decisions. The three-person Commission is comprised of the State Controller, Lieutenant Governor, and the Director of Finance. One of the Commission’s major roles is to act as the landlord for lands within its jurisdiction. This sets the Commission apart from purely regulatory agencies. When California became a state in 1850, it acquired approximately four million acres of land underlying the State’s navigable and tidal waterways. These “sovereign lands” include the beds of California’s navigable rivers, lakes, and streams, as well as the State’s tide and submerged lands along the State’s 1,100+ miles of coastline and offshore islands, from approximately the mean high tide line to three nautical miles offshore. The Commission holds these lands in trust for the people of California under the Public Trust Doctrine.

Part of the Commission’s trust responsibility includes reviewing and approving or denying lease applications for uses of or activities on sovereign lands (e.g., major energy projects, artificial reefs, piers, etc.). Activities on sovereign lands must be appropriate public trust uses, including commerce, fishing, navigation, environmental preservation, and recreation. The Commission is the main agency tasked with protecting public access and overseeing public trust uses. Valid public trust uses sometimes conflict with each other; the Commission works to manage those conflicts and ensure that the Public Trust Doctrine is upheld on sovereign land. In this way, the Commission, along with its sister state agencies, decides on appropriate uses for California’s ocean and proactively plans for future issues and conflicts.

The Legislature has enacted more than 300 statutes granting sovereign public trust lands to over 80 local municipalities (referred to as grantees or trustees) to manage in trust for the people of California. The specific uses permitted in each granting statute vary. Some trust grants authorize the construction of ports, harbors, airports, wharves, docks, piers, slips, quays and other structures necessary to facilitate commerce and navigation, while others allow only visitor serving recreational uses or open space. All grants reserve to the people the right to fish in the waters over the lands and the right to convenient access to those waters for that purpose.

While granted public trust lands and assets are managed locally, the Legislature delegated the State’s residual and review authority for granted lands to the Commission. The Commission represents the statewide public interest to ensure that trustees operate their grants in conformance with the California Constitution, applicable granting statutes, and the Public Trust Doctrine. Recognizing that evaluating and planning for sea-level rise impacts on granted public trust lands must be prioritized, in 2013, the Legislature enacted Assembly Bill (AB) 691. This bill requires trustees of granted lands with average annual gross public trust revenues exceeding $250,000 to submit a sea-level rise adaptation strategy assessment to the Commission by July
The assessments are required to inventory vulnerable assets and infrastructure, estimate the financial costs of sea-level rise, and describe specific sea-level rise adaptation and mitigation strategies.

**Position Description:**

Under the direction of the Science Policy Advisor/Tribal Liaison and the Environmental Scientist within the Commission’s Executive Office, the Sea Grant Fellow will have the opportunity to work primarily (±75%) with our granted lands trustees (major ports, harbor districts, marinas, and local jurisdictions) and the Commission’s consultant team on reviewing AB 691 sea-level rise vulnerability and adaptation assessments, evaluating compliance with the legislative criteria, and developing a comprehensive, statewide synthesis to inform a set of recommended actions. The main tasks will be to identify priority assets and preferred sea-level rise adaptation approaches, evaluate the economic impacts of sea-level rise, and recommend short-term and long-term actions to support local implementation efforts. The recommended actions should reflect a systematic approach to implementing adaptation measures that will provide long-term asset security, ensuring the public’s access and use rights, as well as investments.

The Fellow will also work (±25%) on a variety of short and long-term projects throughout the fellowship year, which may include working on the San Diego Ocean Planning Partnership pilot, supporting the Commission’s environmental justice team, refining climate change and sea-level rise policy and outreach strategies, integrating the best available science into decision-making processes, and analyzing and compiling scientific materials for a variety of Commission projects. The Fellow may also participate in conferences, interagency meetings, and collaborative projects with other Fellows as opportunities arise.

**Desirable Qualifications:**

- Ability to work independently and with diverse interdisciplinary teams that require clear communication;
- Someone who is a self-starter and deadline-oriented;
- Experience with GIS and web-development;
- Ability to develop and apply expertise in natural resources and coastal management issues and regulations (e.g. National Environmental Policy Act, California Coastal Act, California Ocean Protection Act, Federal and State Endangered Species Acts, etc.).
- Ability to translate science into layperson’s terms;
- Knowledge of/familiarity with resource economics;
- Ability to work toward consensus positions with government, private, and public interest groups;
- Enthusiasm for public policy and lawmaking; ability to work in a complex, fast-paced professional environment;
- An interest or experience in using social media to education, engage, and communicate with a wide array of audiences.
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The three-person Commission is comprised of the State Controller, Lieutenant Governor, and the Director of Finance. The Fellow will be supervised by the Science Policy Advisor/Tribal Liaison and the Environmental Scientist within the Commission’s Executive Office. The Science Policy Advisor/Tribal Liaison consults with other Commission staff on many issues where science and policy interface and helps staff navigate complex and politically sensitive issues, including adaptation to climate change and sea-level rise; management of California’s marine protected areas; development of offshore renewable energy; and the preservation of cultural and tribal resources. This work includes extensive coordination with other Commission divisions, including Environmental Planning and Management, Legal, External Affairs, Mineral Resources Management, Marine Environmental Protection, and Land Management.

Position Description:

The Sea Grant Fellow will have the opportunity to work on complex and challenging marine and coastal issues. The Sea Grant Fellow’s main work will generally be split into two main areas: coastal resilience, climate change preparedness, and other ocean science policy; and tribal engagement and environmental justice.
Under the direction of the Science Policy Advisor/Tribal Liaison and the Environmental Scientist within the Executive Office, the Sea Grant Fellow will spend ±50% time on projects related to climate change and sea-level rise; offshore renewable energy; coastal erosion, seawalls, and natural coastal infrastructure; and the San Diego Ocean Planning Partnership. These projects encompass a number of challenging and high-profile activities, including continuing to refine and deliver a comprehensive sea-level rise and climate change education and training program for Commission staff including use of an in-house GIS viewer; participating on state-level interagency efforts to address sea-level rise policy, including the State Guidance update and the Safeguarding California update; compiling, reviewing, and developing materials for a coastal armoring report; participating on interagency teams exploring offshore renewable energy potential; evaluating and compiling scientific materials for negotiations on sensitive projects; integrating the best available science into Commission decision-making processes; and collaborating with other state, federal, local, and tribal entities.

The Sea Grant Fellow will spend the remainder of their time, under the direction of the Commission’s Tribal Liaison and Environmental Justice coordinator, researching issues and supporting efforts related to Tribal engagement on projects; incorporating traditional knowledge and practices into activities and decisions; exploring and developing proposals for mutually beneficial partnerships with Tribes or other indigenous groups and trusts; participating on interagency groups including the Cultural Resources Climate Change Task Force and Santa Barbara oil and gas decommissioning working group; and participating on the Commission’s environmental justice implementation team to ensure integration of Tribal environmental justice and equity issues.

The Fellow will likely have a variety of short-term and long-term projects throughout the fellowship year. The Fellow will also be welcome to participate in conferences, interagency meetings, and collaborative projects with other Fellows as opportunities arise. Many of these projects are ongoing and the Fellow will have an opportunity to continue the work started by current and former Fellows. The Fellow will interact with Commission staff from multiple divisions that encompass a wide variety of coastal and marine resource topics. Specific project and program duties will be developed collaboratively among the Fellow, Science Policy Advisor and Tribal Liaison, and Executive Office, and will be based on the Commission’s needs that arise during the fellowship, as well as the Fellow’s interests.

Desirable Qualifications:

- Ability to work both independently and with diverse interdisciplinary teams that require clear communication;
- Ability to develop and apply expertise in natural resources and coastal management issues;
- Ability to translate science into layman’s terms;
- Familiarity and/or experience with GIS and web-development;
- Ability to work toward consensus positions with governmental, private, and public interest groups;
- An interest or experience in using social media to educate, engage, and communicate with a wide array of audiences; and
- An interest in CEQA and other natural resource laws, rules, and regulations (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), California Coastal Act, California Ocean Protection Act, Federal and State Endangered Species Acts, etc.).