

ATTACHMENT 1
Telegram Tribune Newspaper Article Regarding an
RLFF Marine Research Grant to Cal Poly University

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The Tribune

CAL POLY - Cal Poly has received a \$160,000 grant to continue research through the county's Marine Interests Group.

The money will allow the group to expand its research into the health of local fish stocks. It will also fund new research into polluted runoff and the status of sea birds.

The grant is from the Sacramento-based Resources Legacy Fund Foundation, a group that works to conserve and restore natural landscapes, including marine systems. It comes after a year of extensive fact-finding and panel discussions by the Marine Interests Group.

The panel of 18 local business people, fishermen, academics and government officials with a stake in the county's coastal ecosystem discovered that the Central Coast's oceans are important as a transition zone between colder northern ecosystems and warmer southern ones. Yet little scientific data about the region exist.

The research is intended to help fill that gap, said Dean Wendt, a Cal Poly biology professor who will coordinate the overall project.

"In the absence of adequate data, debates, litigation and misunderstandings rage," he said. "Thus, it's critical to improve the situation."

The grant will fund research during 2004, but the programs are intended to last three years. Cal Poly will apply for additional grants to fund the final two years.

Last year, Wendt and others from Cal Poly began studying the commercially important rockfish fishery by surveying catches on recreational fishing vessels. The grant will be used to expand the research to include:

- tagging of rockfish,
- using divers and trawls to project the future health of fish stocks, and
- tagging of cabezon to assess the health of this near-shore fish that is important to the area's live-fish trap fishery.

The grant also allows Cal Poly to undertake two new areas of research:

- In one project, sand crabs will be collected and their tissue tested for the presence of common pesticides. This project will be done in collaboration with state water officials.
- In the other, Cal Poly will work with the Audubon Society to assess the abundance and species composition of pelagic birds, which spend much of their lives at sea and are considered indicators of the health of the ocean's food chain. This information will be compared to similar data collected by the state Department of Fish and Game from 1975 to 1980.

Finally, the grant will be used to fund more meetings of the Marine Interests Group this year. The group plans to meet in May and quarterly thereafter, Wendt said.

The group is also interested in funding other initiatives, said Don Maruska, a Morro Bay facilitator who coordinates the group's activities. These include improving management of marine resources, promoting consumer education and marketing locally caught seafood.