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UCSB Research Projects Part of \$4 Million Grant from Ocean Protection Council

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Santa Barbara, Calif. — The California Ocean Protection Council has awarded \$4 million to support the initial monitoring of newly designated marine protected areas along the southern California coast. The projects, three of which are headquartered at UC Santa Barbara, will collect baseline information for up to three years. They will target marine life and habitats — as well as commercial and recreational activities — inside and outside the protected areas from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the California/Mexico Border.

UCSB-based projects include surveys of rocky intertidal ecosystems, with lead investigators Carol Blanchette, research biologist at the campus's Marine Science Institute (MSI); integrative assessment of baseline ecological and socioeconomic conditions, with lead investigators Blanchette and Jennifer Caselle, assistant research biologist at MSI; and surveys of sandy beach and surf zone ecosystems, with lead investigators Jenifer E. Dugan, associate research biologist at MSI and deputy director of the campus's Coastal Marine Institute, and Henry Page, associate research biologist at MSI.

"Having so many of our researchers involved in the monitoring effort speaks to the incredible talent and expertise of the researchers at the Marine Science Institute," said MSI director Mark Brzezinski. "Not only will they be part of the teams of scientists monitoring beaches and intertidal and subtidal habitats throughout Southern California, they will play a leadership role in the synthesis of the data from all of these efforts."

Scientists from UC Santa Cruz; California State University, Fullerton; Sonoma State University; and the Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary are also involved in the projects.

The South Coast Marine Protected Area (MPA) Baseline Program is a collaboration of the California Ocean Protection Council, MPA Monitoring Enterprise, California Department of Fish and Game, Ocean Science Trust, and California Sea Grant.

The program enables teams of researchers, citizen-scientists, and fishermen to survey the

region's sandy beaches, rocky shores, kelp beds, and deep-water ecosystems in and around the network of new MPAs. These surveys will include ecologically and economically important species of fishes and invertebrates, as well as a range of human activities, such as commercial and recreational fishing, and "non-consumptive" recreation such as tide-pooling, bird watching and scuba diving.

Researchers will combine new and historical data, collected inside and outside the MPAs, to document key aspects of the region's ecological and socioeconomic characteristics at or near the time of MPA implementation. From this, they will be able to document initial changes in marine habitats, species, fisheries, and recreation that may be associated with the new MPAs. The results of these projects will lay the foundation for future assessments of the effectiveness of the MPAs in meeting the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act.

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