



January 26, 2016

Mr. Steve Kinsey  
Chair, California Coastal Commission  
Via email: [StatusOfExecutiveDirector@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:StatusOfExecutiveDirector@coastal.ca.gov)

**RE: Support for California Coastal Commission Executive Director Dr. Charles Lester**

Dear Chair Kinsey,

We write to you on this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the California Coastal Act – a world-renowned environmental law enacted under Governor Jerry Brown’s leadership in 1976 - to voice our pride in California’s long history of global leadership in coastal protection and our strong support for California Coastal Commission Executive Director, Dr. Charles Lester. Our organizations represent millions of Californians from all over the state, from inland and urban residents to rural coastal dwellers. We are deeply concerned over the unjustified and misguided attempt currently underway to oust Dr. Lester as Executive Director of the Coastal Commission.

Under Dr. Lester’s leadership since September 2011, the Coastal Commission has successfully applied the new administrative penalty authority in 2014 to remedy violations of public access, completed a state-of-the-art guidance document to help local governments better plan for and adapt to sea level rise and the impacts of climate change, and made tremendous strides in updating Local Coastal Plans for 24 cities/counties across California thanks to new funding from the Legislature. The Commission has increased public transparency by creating a modern database that provides the public easier online access to information on projects, improved interagency collaboration, and significantly reduced processing times for permits and appeals.

Threats to our coast and ocean have never been more pressing. A changing climate is bringing rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and greater vulnerability to all of our coastal resources. Firing the Coastal Commission’s Executive Director would undermine our state’s effectiveness on coastal protection at a time when the need for such protection is at an all-time high. There is no public record that Dr. Lester’s performance as Executive Director is anything but exemplary.

The Commission’s 2015 sea level policy recognizes that coastal planning decisions must respond to environmental justice concerns and include low-income persons and communities in planning efforts. It was a condition of California joining the Union that beaches remain public. Yet much of the California coast was off limits to people of color for much of the twentieth century through discriminatory housing and mortgage restrictions. Commission staff are working with diverse allies to preserve and broaden public access.

Thank you for your support of the Coastal Commission’s leadership to address climate change. We urge your continued support for the fundamental tenets of the California Coastal Act – protection of coastal access and coastal resources for all Californians – now and in the future. And we urge you to support Executive Director Charles Lester and his entire team in their continued efforts to achieve these goals. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions. You may directly contact Susan Jordan at [sjordan@coastaladvocates.com](mailto:sjordan@coastaladvocates.com) and Stefanie Sekich-Quinn at [Ssekich@surfrider.org](mailto:Ssekich@surfrider.org).

Very respectfully,

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Surfrider Foundation

Robert Garcia  
The City Project

Susan Jordan  
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Azul

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Green Latinos

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Ruben D. Arvizu  
Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society

Amy Trainer  
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

Debra Padilla  
Social and Public Art Resource Center

Dan Jacobsen  
Environment California

Matt O'Malley  
San Diego CoastKeeper

Lennie Roberts  
Committee for Green Foothills

Dan Silver  
Endangered Habitats League

Jay Ziegler  
The Nature Conservancy

Jean Watt  
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks

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Miriam Gordon  
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California CoastKeeper Alliance.

Garry Brown  
Orange County CoastKeeper

Don McEnhill  
Russian Riverkeeper

Pam Heatherington  
Environmental Center of San Diego

Peter Fugazzotto  
Salmon Protection And Watershed Network

Xavier Morales, Ph.D  
Latinos Coalition for a Healthy CA

Jeffrey Williams  
Black Surfers Collective

Kathryn Philips  
Sierra Club California

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Heal the Bay

Teresa Baker  
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Pacifcans for Highway 1 Alternatives

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Nicole Capretz  
Climate Action Campaign

Walter Moore  
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Georgia Hancock  
Animal Welfare Institute

Carlos Davidson  
Pacifica Climate Committee

Sandra E Jerabek  
Friends of Del Nor

Marcia Hanscom  
Ballona Institute

Becky Dennison  
Venice Community Housing

Cc: Governor Jerry Brown  
California Resources Secretary John Laird  
Senate Pro Tem Kevin de Leon  
Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins  
Assembly Speaker-elect Anthony Rendon  
Dr. Charles Lester, Executive Director, California Coastal Commission