**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**
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# CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION
# DUTY STATEMENT
# SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST (SPECIALIST)

**EMPLOYEE NAME:**

**WORKING TITLE:** Fire & Landscape Ecologist

**WORK UNIT/DIVISION:** Ecology Team/Technical Services Unit

**LOCATION:** TBD - San Francisco, Santa Cruz or Long Beach

**DATE OF APPOINTMENT:** xx/xx/2027

**CBID:** R10

**TENURE/TIMEBASE:** Limited-term/Full-time

The California Coastal Commission staff is charged with implementing the California Coastal Act of 1976 to protect, preserve and enhance resources in the coastal zone of California. The Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) is the advanced journey level of the series. Incumbents independently identify problems, develop courses of action, and conduct critical and/or sensitive scientific investigations and studies and may prepare guidance, policy, planning, or regulatory documents and legislative proposals on issues of importance to the employer, and do other related work. Incumbents may be assigned lead responsibility for a specific project, program function, or area of expertise; may act as a mentor to lower level staff; and may act as consultants to other technical staff, management, and other agencies in those matters.

## POSITION SUMMARY

Under the direction of the Ecology Team Manager, the incumbent will be responsible for review and analysis of regulatory and planning work associated with the ecological effects of vegetation management and wildfire resilience and risk reduction efforts in the coastal zone. This work will require the assessment of complex and sometimes controversial efforts focused on both fuel reduction and ecological health throughout California's coastal zone. Among other things, the incumbent will be responsible for the review of technical reports associated with coastal development (including CEQA and NEPA documents), certified planning and policy documents, streamlining requests pursuant to expedited wildfire mitigation efforts, enforcement actions, statewide assignments, habitat mitigation and restoration plans, and federal consistency reviews

(e.g., land management associated with vegetation treatments). The incumbent will also participate in programmatic coordination concerning natural resource protection along infrastructure corridors associated with utilities and transit. The incumbent may participate in work groups and science advisory panel assignments. The incumbent independently performs complex environmental analysis, research, and investigations, identifies problems, coordinates with other federal, state, and local agencies, and makes recommendations regarding project compliance with the natural resource policies of the Coastal Act, Local Coastal Plans (LCPs), Public Works Plans (PWPs), Environmental Protection Plans (EPPs), and similar. The incumbent writes complex technical memoranda, permit conditions, writes and/or edits staff report natural resource findings, reviews and edits habitat mitigation and restoration plans, prepares correspondence, answers questions from the public, and makes staff presentations to the Coastal Commission at public meetings. The incumbent has scientific, technical, and policy expertise in ecology (e.g., fire, landscape, vegetation), coastal botany and/or wildlife biology, vegetation treatment practices and policies, restoration and conservation science, geospatial analysis, statistical analysis, environmental impacts assessment, and climate science and adaptation. The incumbent is assigned responsibility for: (a) applying the natural resource protection policies of the Coastal Act to coastal development projects involving wildfire resilience and fuel reduction; (b) serving as an in-house subject matter expert on the Ecology Team; (c) guiding programmatic efforts aimed at facilitating streamlined review of proposed work, including for expedited wildfire mitigation efforts; (d) collaborating within the Technical Services Unit to provide robust support across the agency; and (e) special assignments as may be related to climate adaptation and resilience. The incumbent will represent the Coastal Commission staff on multi-agency work groups, task forces, and other similar entities, and serve as a resource person to the Commission, Commission staff, local, state and federal agencies, the legislature, stakeholder groups, media, and the public.

Additionally, the incumbent may also support the Ecology Team on tasks related to their broader experience and subject matter expertise. The incumbent works with the Commission's multi-disciplinary teams to evaluate alternative approaches and defensible policy positions concerning wildfire resilience and fuel reduction. The incumbent also liaises and coordinates with other resource agencies, to assist in facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting conformity with requirements under the Coastal Act.

## TYPICAL TASKS/DUTIES

The following is a general summary of the allocation of time to the various responsibilities assigned to the incumbent. This allocation does not necessarily reflect the actual time spent on each task on a day-to-day basis but is intended instead to represent a long-term average.

### 30% Review and prepare ecological recommendations for planning & regulatory projects

- Perform independent professional work reviewing complex planning and regulatory projects dealing with wildfire resilience, risk reduction, and other vegetation management efforts, to ensure conformity to natural resource policies of the Coastal Act and other relevant plans (e.g., within certified Local Coastal Programs, Public Works Plans, or applicable Environmental Protection Plans pursuant to expedited wildfire mitigation efforts).

- Analyze and prepare ecological guidance on complex and highly technical proposed projects, including at scales ranging from individual structures to neighborhoods and landscapes, among public and private entities, including other agencies, and with fuel reduction and/or ecosystem health goals.
- Interact with applicants and their representatives, stakeholders, and other Commission staff to identify project design changes, mitigation measures, and ecological monitoring requirements needed to ensure conformity with applicable policies.
- Review applications for coastal development permits, federal consistency certifications and determinations, notices of impending development, expedited wildfire mitigation efforts, timber harvest plans, and appeals of local government action regarding proposed projects and their conformance with relevant natural resource policies. Guide and review any necessary mitigation actions, including plans for compensation resulting from unavoidable adverse impacts and monitoring requirements to ensure compliance.
- Conduct independent complex site investigations and inspections of work (completed or in-progress) as necessary to evaluate on-the-ground conditions at subject sites and surrounding areas, and identify measures to facilitate conformity to applicable natural resource policies.
- Prepare and present complex and often controversial staff recommendations to the Coastal Commission at public meetings and be able to support staff proposals and answer technical questions with accuracy and tact.
- Inform the work of other staff on project teams and keep manager informed of all important policy issues to enable and facilitate consistency in agency decision-making.
- Evaluate condition compliance with ecologically-relevant permit requirements, maintain project records and schedules, and other duties as required.

**30% Provide subject matter expertise & lead technical assessments**

- Develop and maintain scientific and technical expertise on specific topics related to wildfire resilience and risk reduction including specific habitats (e.g., forests, woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, and associated riparian habitat) and sensitive natural communities and species including plant and wildlife, fire ecology, landscape ecology, fuel treatments including details associated with prescribed fire and grazing practices, invasive species management, ecological restoration principles and practices, statistical and geospatial analyses, climate change, and climate adaptation.
- Research technical developments in subject area(s) and consult with and advise others at partner agencies and institutions engaged in related topics, including academia and non-governmental organizations.
- Act as a Commission staff lead on subject area(s) and provide technical and policy guidance to the Coastal Commission, staff, other agencies, project proponents, and the interested public to assure consistency in project review, planning efforts, and other Commission actions.

- Participate as the Commission's representative on work groups, interagency task forces, technical advisory panels, and other similar bodies. Deliver presentations at conferences, workshops, legislative hearings, etc.

**20% Support programmatic efforts & solutions**

- Coordinate with Commission staff on developing and implementing programmatic solutions to facilitate wildfire resilience and risk reduction implementation and other endeavors, including with local jurisdictions as well as public and private entities with wide-spanning responsibilities (e.g., utility companies, Caltrans).
- Participate in multi-agency efforts to advance statewide wildfire resilience efforts, including updates to the California Vegetation Treatment Program and similar where applicable to the coastal zone.
- Provide technical guidance to ensure consistency with relevant natural resource policies of the Coastal Act and certified planning documents, or applicable Environmental Protection Plans pursuant to expedited wildfire mitigation efforts.

**10% Collaborate within the Technical Services Unit**

- Routinely work with other technical staff in the unit, including experts in ecology, coastal engineering, geology, water quality, and mapping, on cross-cutting issues (e.g., climate adaptation), to facilitate robust guidance to management, project proponents, and the Commission, as well as support advisory efforts, science needs assessments, and staff capacity building.
- Support technical database management and information access, including geospatial and compliance tracking with respect to wildfire resilience endeavors.
- Contribute to technical review and consultation with partners on key subject matter, including in the course of grant development and review, intern and fellow mentorship, etc.
- Prepare and present internal and public guidance documents and training modules on assorted ecological topics and issues.

**5% Special assignments**

- Incumbent will have some special assignments related to regional and statewide initiatives, projects, and working groups including climate adaptation and wildfire resilience work.

**2% Marginal functions**

- Maintain project records and schedules pursuant to state requirements.
- Drive to site visits, meetings, and Commission hearings.

**3% Justice, equity, diversity and inclusion**

- Participate in professional development trainings, as well as tasks and activities that support programmatic and workplace diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Consider potential environmental justice impacts in projects, consistent with the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy, as applicable.
- Engage in tribal coordination and consultation for relevant projects, including communicating with and gathering information from tribes, assessing impacts to cultural and tribal resources, and incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, as appropriate and consistent with the Commission's Tribal Consultation Policy, as applicable.

## SUPERVISION EXERCISED OVER OTHERS

This is not a supervisory position. The incumbent may be assigned lead responsibility for a specific project, program function, or area of expertise; may act as a mentor to newer or lower-level staff; and may act as a consultant to other technical staff, management, and other agencies in those matters.

## KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of: basic principles of land, water, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources research; principles of ecology including as relates to fire and landscapes; principles of restoration and mitigation; soil sciences, resource management, and hydrology; statistical methods; land-use practices with reference to their general effect on natural resources and the environment; California and Federal environmental laws, rules, regulations, and requirements; basic toxicology, hydrology, geology, and principles of risk assessment and risk management; concepts employed in a variety of disciplines including environmental planning, economics, and resource management; geolocation and geo-referencing software applications as well as geospatial analytical tools, and resource conservation program impacts and implementation strategies. Additionally, broad knowledge of the legislative process; the California Coastal Act and/or Coastal Zone Management Act; specific California and Federal environmental regulatory and resource management laws, regulations, plans, programs, and policies relating to their program area such as CEQA, Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act, California Forest Practice Rules, and the California Vegetation Treatment Program; relevant resource management practices and techniques; and chemical substances and their interactions with and effects on the environment.

Ability to: apply or modify scientific methods and principles; collect, organize, and manage environmental data, including through literature review, consultations, and data repositories; analyze and evaluate data and reach sound conclusions; review, check, and interpret scientific and environmental reports; analyze situations, including alternatives, and take appropriate actions including provision of constructive guidance such as avoidance and minimization measures to limit potential adverse effects on sensitive coastal resources; establish and maintain cooperative relations with all persons contacted; communicate effectively; prepare clear, complete, and technically accurate reports; apply laws, rules, regulations, policies, and requirements of California and Federal environmental protection and resource management programs; assess the impact of proposed State and Federal environmental legislation and regulations; understand principles of risk assessment and risk management; work with professionals from a variety of disciplines within and outside of State government; and review and understand technical research reports on emerging environmental issues. Additionally,

ability to develop scientific methodologies, research projects, criteria, procedures, guidelines, reference materials, planning and regulatory documents, and other innovative solutions for critical and/or sensitive environmental management problems, including as relates to wildfire resilience and natural resource protections; independently plan environmental studies; provide research and evaluation of important projects concerning environmental protection; develop techniques for handling and analyzing a large variety of detailed data; communicate the results and implications of studies to non-specialists; act as an expert witness in court or at legislative or quasi-judicial hearings; provide leadership in accomplishing basic functions and objectives in assigned programs; and inspire confidence and effective working relationships with employees, managers, and leaders in government and industry.

## CONSEQUENCE OF ERROR/RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS

High levels of decision-making are expected. Work will be reviewed by the Ecology Team Manager or the Technical Services Unit Deputy Director, prior to publication, after which it will be reviewed by the Coastal Commission in a public session, and if litigation ensues, by the Courts.

The consequences of error are high; important coastal resources such as wetlands, environmentally sensitive habitat, marine resources, and other coastal resources could be compromised if errors are made. Given the high levels of technical complexity of work regularly assigned, it is difficult for reviewers to detect errors in facts or judgment, therefore the independent judgment expected is very high. Errors in judgment could also erode agency credibility, and/or significantly increase legal costs to the agency.

## PUBLIC AND INTERNAL CONTACTS

This position requires extensive contact with other scientific and technical staff, planners, management; federal, state, and local government staff; and the public including the press.

## PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Ability to lift up to 15 pounds.
- Ability to use a computer several hours a day.
- Ability to make site visits, inspections, and attend meetings. (Required to maintain a valid Defensive Driver's Training card if operation of a State vehicle is needed to perform work.)
- Ability to develop and maintain cooperative relationships.
- Ability to effectively manage stress associated with multi-tasking, adapting to changes in priorities, and completing tasks or projects under time constraints.

## WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Prolonged periods of sitting
- Work in office at least four days per week; may work from home one day per week
- Occasional overnight travel for site visits throughout the state

I certify that this duty statement represents an accurate description of the essential functions of this position.

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**LAUREN GARSKE-GARCIA, PHD** **DATE**
**ECOLOGY TEAM MANAGER / SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST (SUPERVISORY)**
I have read this duty statement and agree that it represents the duties I am assigned.

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**(EMPLOYEE'S NAME)** **DATE**
**FIRE & LANDSCAPE ECOLOGIST / SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST (SPECIALIST)**