**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

**DUTY STATEMENT**

**SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST (SPECIALIST)**

**EMPLOYEE NAME:**

**WORKING TITLE:**  Ecologist

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

**LOCATION:** Arcata or San Francisco

**DATE OF APPOINTMENT:** xx/xx/2025

**CBID:** R10

**TENURE/TIMEBASE:** Permanent/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.

**POSITION SUMMARY**

Under the direction of the Ecology Group Environmental Program Manager and Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor), incumbent has lead responsibility for review and analysis of complex and sometimes controversial biological reports and environmental impact studies (EIRs and EISs) for projects primarily within the northern and north central California coastal zone (including Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, and Marin Counties) associated with coastal development, local coastal program updates, transportation projects, enforcement actions, energy and ocean projects, statewide assignments, habitat mitigation and restoration projects, planning efforts and federal consistency reviews and work groups and science advisory panel assignments. Incumbent independently performs complex environmental analysis, research, and investigations, identifies problems, coordinates with other federal, state, and local agencies, and makes recommendations for compliance with the natural resource policies of the Coastal Act, Local Coastal Plans (LCPs), Public Works Plans (PWPs), and similar planning documents. Incumbent writes complex technical memoranda, develops special 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 verbal staff presentations to the Coastal Commission. Incumbent has scientific, technical and policy knowledge and experience in ecology, biology, restoration science, statistical analysis, environmental impacts assessment, and is assigned responsibility for: (a) the Coastal Commission’s role in applying natural resource protection policies to coastal development projects occurring in assigned counties; (b) technical support of Transportation Program work and initiatives; (c) the Technical Services Unit Ecology Group’s role in projects and planning related to environmentally sensitive habitat, wetlands, and marine resources; and (d) coordinating with other state and federal agencies on projects and policy related to these issues. Incumbent will represent the Coastal Commission on multi-agency work groups, task forces, and other similar entities, and serves as a resource person to the Commission, other Commission staff, to staff of local, state and federal agencies, the legislature, special interest groups, media, and to the public.

In addition, incumbent will lead the advance mitigation program for habitat, particularly with respect to Caltrans transportation planning, in a manner that meets the State’s conservation priorities consistent with the Coastal Act. A key role of this position is to ensure that the Commission’s commitments are met under the Caltrans and Commission Interagency Agreements, State Advanced Mitigation Initiative MOU, and the Master Process Agreement for Planning and Developing Advance Mitigation throughout California for Caltrans’ Advanced Mitigation Program. Tasks include reviewing and commenting on State and Regional Advanced Mitigation Needs Assessments, participating in the development of potential mitigation banking and in-lieu fee proposals, and assisting with the review, preparation and presentation of related staff reports before the Commission. The incumbent also liaises and provides guidance to transportation agencies, in coordination with other resource agencies, to assist in meeting mitigation requirements under the Coastal Act and in supporting timely development of appropriate advanced mitigation proposals and projects, including plans for monitoring and performance assessment.

**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% | **Essential Functions: Ecology Group*** Responsible for performing independent professional work to implement complex planning and regulatory projects in context of the Coastal Act.
* Analyze and prepare reports/memoranda on complex and highly technical proposed development projects including residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, public works, state and national park, habitat mitigation and restoration, habitat health and fire resiliency, aquaculture, etc.
* Review permit applications, federal consistency certifications and determinations, LCP amendments, appeals of local government action regarding proposed projects, and PWPs.
* Conduct independent complex site investigations, as necessary.
* Prepare and present complex and often controversial staff recommendations to the Coastal Commission and be able to support staff proposals and answer questions with accuracy and tact.
* Provide technical expertise and analysis as needed for district staff and the Commission’s Enforcement, Transportation, Energy and Ocean Resources, Federal Consistency, Legal, and Statewide Programs.
* May direct the work of other analysts on project teams and be responsible for coordinating with Coastal Commission’s legal and technical staff and keeping supervisor informed of all important policy issues.
* Determine condition compliance on completed projects, maintain project records and schedules pursuant to state requirements, and perform other duties as required.
 |
| 30% | **Advance Mitigation*** Work with Caltrans to continue to implement interagency and partnership agreements, including providing guidance on mitigation requirements/opportunities early in the development of specific projects and assisting in the implementation of Caltrans’ State Transportation and Environmental Partnership for Permitting Efficiency (STEPPE).
* Serve as point person on Caltrans Advance Mitigation Program (AMP) and Statewide Advance Mitigation Initiative Working Group (SAMI).
* Review and comment on Caltrans’ State and Regional Advance Mitigation Needs Assessments, requests for mitigation proposals, and other related documents.
* Assist in the identification of advance mitigation project opportunities and locations that may align with both meeting mitigation needs and facilitating positive resource protection outcomes in the coastal zone, including as identified and consistent with statewide initiatives and Local Coastal Programs.
* Represent the Commission on Interagency Review Teams, coordinate with federal and state agency partners on California-specific bank processes and attend interagency meetings and site visits aimed at developing and implementing appropriate advance mitigation proposals throughout the coastal zone.
* Coordinate with federal and state agencies, Caltrans, and other entities creating mitigation banks to plan, review, and permit proposed coastal mitigation banks.
* Create and maintain a compendium of best practices, both in terms of administrative process and technical scientific approaches to advanced mitigation.
 |
| 20% | **Subject Area Expertise, Project Lead & Technical Assignments*** Develop and maintain expertise on specific topics including specific habitats (e.g., beaches, coastal dunes, estuaries and coastal wetlands, rivers/creeks/streams and associated riparian habitat, grasslands, and forests) and sensitive communities and species including plant and wildlife, ecological restoration principles, fire ecology, statistical analysis, invasive species, in-lieu fee programs and mitigation banking, fish passage and stream restoration, conservation grazing, sea level rise and climate change, and climate adaptation.
* Research technical developments in subject area(s) and consult with and advise others at agencies and institutions engaged in related topics.
* Act as a Coastal 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, local coastal program amendments, and other Coastal Commission actions.
* Participate as the Coastal Commission’s representative on work groups, interagency task forces, technical advisory panels, and other similar bodies. Give presentations at conferences, workshops, legislative hearings, etc.
 |
| 10% | **Technical Services Unit Collaboration*** Collaborate with other technical staff in the unit, including experts in coastal engineering, geology, water quality, and mapping, on cross-cutting issues (e.g., climate adaptation, bridge replacements and fish passage, dredging), to facilitate robust guidance to management, project proponents, and the Commission, as well as support advisory efforts, science needs assessments, and staff capacity building.
 |
| 5% | **Other Duties/Special Assignments*** Determine condition compliance on permit prior to issuance requirements and completed projects, maintain project records and schedules, and other duties as required.
* Prepare and present internal and public guidance documents and training modules on an array of biological topics and issues.
* Incumbent will have some special assignments related to regional and state-wide initiatives, projects, and working groups including wetland restoration and climate change work.
 |
| 3% | **Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*** Participate in tasks, trainings, outreach and other activities that support implementation of the agency’s Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) plan, which aims to create an inclusive workplace that allows staff from diverse backgrounds to thrive and improves agency outreach and public engagement. For example, this may include attending quarterly JEDI calls, sitting on interview panels, contributing to or attending staff trainings on JEDI issues such as on implicit bias, presenting at outreach events at locations with greater diversity, and providing input on hiring practices.
 |
| 2% | **Marginal Functions*** Assists with the copying, collating and mailing of staff reports, notices and other materials for monthly Commission meetings and other trainings and meetings.
* Lifts and moves boxes.
* Pulls files.
* Drives a state vehicle, rental car, or personal vehicle to site visits and meetings.
* Participates in various special projects to advance the Commission’s Strategic Plan.
 |

**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 consultants to other technical staff, management, and other agencies in those matters.

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

In addition to the above: broad knowledge of the Coastal Act; other California and Federal environmental regulatory and resource management laws, regulations, plans, programs, and policies; resource management practices and techniques; and the legislative process.

Ability to: understand, review, and edit habitat mitigation/restoration and monitoring plan designs, monitoring methods and procedures, success criteria, adaptive management approaches, guidelines, and other innovative solutions for critical and/or sensitive environmental management problems; research and evaluate issues and projects concerning coastal habitats and species and environmental protection; develop organizational strategies for handling and analyzing a large variety of detailed data; communicate implications of proposed projects upon natural resources 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 either the Environmental Program Manager or the Technical Services Unit 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 Coastal Program Analysts, technical staff, management, federal, state and local government staff, and the public as well as representatives from other agencies.

**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.
* Ability to develop and maintain cooperative relationships.
* Ability to multi-task, adapt to changes in priorities, and complete tasks or projects with short notice.
* Required to maintain a valid Defensive Driver’s Training card if operation of a State vehicle is needed to perform work.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT**

* Prolonged periods of sitting
* Work from home and San Francisco or Arcata office
* Work in office two to three days per week
* Frequent travel for District work and site visits

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

**JONNA ENGEL DATE**

**ECOLOGY GROUP ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM MANAGER I**

I have read this duty statement and agree that it represents the duties I am assigned.

**(EMPLOYEE’S NAME) DATE**

**ECOLOGIST / SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST (SPECIALIST)**