

February 4, 2016

Mr. Steve Kinsey
Chair, California Coastal Commission



RE: Support for California Coastal Commission Exec. Director, Dr. Charles Lester

Dear Chairperson Kinsey and members of the Commission:

Marin Conservation League is writing to add our voice to the collective voices of millions who are uniting in protest over the threatened removal of Dr. Charles Lester from a position as Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission that he has filled admirably for four and a half years. Throughout his almost 20 years on Commission staff, Dr. Lester has proved himself to be careful, deliberative, and fair in implementing the California Coastal Act.

It is particularly unfortunate that this proposed action coincides with the 40th anniversary of a law that signaled, as have myriad other laws, California's leadership in environmental and coastal protection. As with other citizens of California, we believe that the attempt to oust Dr. Lester is unjustified in view of his able leadership of Commission staff, and it is highly misguided in view of the Commission's accomplishments during his term as Director. Those accomplishments include successful application of the new administrative penalty authority granted by the Legislature to remedy violations of public access, completion of the Commission's first guidance document to help local governments plan for and adapt to sea level rise, receipt of a \$3 million budget increase to hire staff to focus on sea level rise planning, obtaining funding to update Local Coastal Plans for 24 cities and counties along the California coast, developing the technological tools to increase public transparency through easier online access, improving interagency collaboration, and significantly reducing processing times for permits and appeals.

As we look to a future in which the known and unknown effects of climate change pose new threats to California's coast and coastal communities, we need experienced leadership more than ever. The Coastal Act charges the Commission with protecting sensitive habitats, marine resources, and scenic vistas, and maintaining productive agricultural lands while also broadening public access to include diverse communities – not an easy task! Dr. Lester has shown throughout his term as Director his deep understanding of the California Coastal Act and the practical realities of implementing it for the long-term benefit of all Californians.

We join others in urging you to retain Dr. Lester as Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Powers".

Kate Powers
President, Marin Conservation League

Cc: Assemblyman Marc Levine, Senator Mike McGuire, Congressman Jared Huffman

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