

# Memo

Date: January 26, 2016

To: Members of the State Coastal Conservancy

From: Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer

Amy Hutzel, Deputy Executive Officer

CC: Legislative Oversight Members

RE: 2016 Strategic Plan Progress Report & Proposed Update

This is our third annual progress report on implementation of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. In December of 2012, the Coastal Conservancy adopted a five-year Strategic Plan that identified specific goals and objectives to help the Conservancy prioritize its work. In June of 2015, the Conservancy adopted an update to the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan to include priorities for Proposition 1 funding, refine the climate change objectives based on our experience with the Climate Ready grant rounds, add objectives related to the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program, and revise objectives related to the provision of low-cost visitor accommodation along the coast.

This progress report highlights accomplishments under each of the goals of the Strategic Plan. A table showing specific accomplishments for each objective is provided as Attachment A. We have exceeded some numeric objectives, we are on track to complete several others and a few have limited progress - these will be a focus for work over the next few years. Generally, the Conservancy is farther ahead in meeting implementation objectives than planning objectives, demonstrating a focus on delivering projects that have completed planning already. The Climate Ready and Explore the Coast grant rounds have aided in achieving or surpassing objectives to address climate change and provide educational/interpretive programs. Proposition 1 grant rounds over the next two years will help the Conservancy accomplish objectives related to coastal watersheds and resources, water quality and sustainability, and climate resilience.

#### **Coastal Access Goals**

### Coastal Trail (Goal 1)

The Conservancy made progress implementing the objectives under Goal 1, but many of the Coastal Trail objectives are only partially complete, especially objectives to construct new Coastal Trail segments and install signs on 300 miles of Coastal Trail. In 2015, the Conservancy approved funding for design and construction of new coastal trail in Pacific Grove and three land acquisitions that will allow for new Coastal Trail segments (Estero Ranch and Richardson Kashia in Sonoma County and Pillar Point Bluff in San Mateo County). We will continue to work on projects to design, build, and secure rights-of-way for the Coastal Trail and sign the trail.

## Coastal Access (Goal 2)

The Conservancy has made significant progress on the objectives related to coastal recreational facilities and regional trails. Most of these objectives have been completed, with the exception of constructing regional trails connecting to the coast and the new objective to develop a San Ana River Parkway Plan.

## **Urban Waterfront Revitalization and Low Cost Accommodations (Goal 3)**

The Conservancy made progress implementing projects related to the objectives under Goal 3, particularly the development and implementation of waterfront revitalization projects. To reach objectives for low-cost accommodation, we will need to develop a plan to expand low-cost coastal accommodation on public lands, and develop projects to plan two and construct one more low-cost coastal accommodation. The Conservancy authorized funds in 2015 for additional lodging at Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center in Mendocino.

#### **Coastal Resource Conservation Goals**

#### Protect Coastal Resource Properties (Goal 4)

The Conservancy exceeded the numeric objectives under the goal related to protection of coastal resource properties. Last year, the Conservancy helped protect a number of very important acquisitions along the coast, including:

- The Parker Ranch easement in Mendocino (2,554 acres),
- The Richardson Kashia acquisition in Sonoma County (688 acres),
- The Estero Ranch acquisition in Sonoma County (547 acres),
- The Gallagher Ranch easement in Marin (330 acres), and
- The Arroyo Burro acquisition in the City of Santa Barbara (14.7 acres).

# Coastal Watershed Projects (Goal 5)

The Conservancy is on track with or has exceeded most of the objectives under the coastal watershed goal, to enhance biological diversity, improve water quality, restore or enhance habitats and natural resources, including sea otter recovery. In 2015, the Conservancy authorized coastal watershed planning or implementation projects at Cardiff Beach, Carmel River, City of Los Angeles (Green Alleys), Eel River, Elkhorn Slough, Napa River watershed,

Humboldt Bay, Klamath River, Mad River, Obregon Park, Orick Mill Site, Salinas River, Salt River, Santa Clara River, Sonoma Creek, White Slough, and Wood Creek. Over the next two years, we need to plan and implement projects to improve coastal water quality to meet the numerical objectives. Proposition 1 grant rounds will aid in this effort.

#### Working Land Stewardship (Goal 6)

The Conservancy is close to meeting the objective to implement projects to support working land stewardship, and in 2015 authorized the Alameda County Rangeland Resilience project and the Pajaro Valley Agricultural Climate Change Resiliency project, among other projects. We are behind on the objective to develop plans to enhance working lands, and this will be an area of focus.

#### Climate Resilience (Goal 7)

The Conservancy created its Climate Ready Grant program in 2013 and seeks to support projects that are planning or implementing climate adaptation actions. There have been three solicitations for proposals. The first set of grants was authorized by the Board in 2013, the second round was authorized January of 2015, and the third round (made possible by a one-time appropriation into the Coastal Resilience Account in the FY 14/15 budget) was authorized in June of 2015. Project elements of funded projects included agricultural sustainability, sea level rise analyses and adaptation, drought adaptation, urban greening, living shorelines, groundwater recharge, flood risk reduction, and dune and wetland restoration. The response to each Climate Ready solicitation exceeded available funding. Thanks to these grant rounds, we are on track towards meeting most of our climate resilience objectives, except for the assessment and adaptation of upland habitats and the reduction of urban heat islands. We do not currently have plans to do another grant round as we have no funds available specifically for this work, but anticipate that there will be climate adaptation projects that come out of the Proposition 1 grant rounds, including urban greening projects that reduce heat islands.

## Reduce Conflicts Among Competing Uses (Goal 8)

The Conservancy has completed a few multi-benefit projects that resolve longstanding conflicts, including the Grape Creek Project, which funded construction of a 2-acre off-channel irrigation pond and associated pumping infrastructure on a privately-held agricultural property to eliminate summer water diversion and benefit salmonid habitat in Sonoma County.

## **Environmental Education (Goal 9)**

The Conservancy met or exceeded its objectives for Goal 9 related to promoting environmental education, primarily due to the overwhelming response to the Explore the Coast grant program. This program allowed us to fund 52 projects with grants under \$50,000. Based on the success of the first Explore the Coast grants, we have done a solicitation for a second round of these grants and will be bringing the recommended projects to the board in March, 2016.

# San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Goals

# Identify and Prioritize Resource and Recreational Goals (Goal 10)

The Conservancy made good progress identifying and prioritizing recreation and resource goals for the Bay Area. With many partners, we released the *San Francisco Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update*, which received significant media attention, including editorials in the San Francisco Chronicle and San Jose Mercury News.

## Land Protection and Habitat Enhancement (Goal 11)

The Conservancy is on track to achieve its objectives related to the protection and enhancement of habitats, corridors, watersheds, and other open space resources. The Conservancy approved funding for a number of acquisitions in 2015, including 5.2 acres at Corte Madera Marsh in Marin, the 45-acre West Hills Farms adjacent to the John Muir National Historic Site in Contra Costa County, the 21-acre Pillar Point Bluff adjacent to Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in San Mateo County, 1.14 acres in the Brisbane Acres adjacent to San Bruno Mountain Park in San Mateo County, and the 16-acre Sky Ranch in Marin County. Restoration design was authorized for Bel Marin Keys, restoration was authorized for Dutch Slough in Contra Costa County, and remediation of a fish passage barrier on the Napa River was authorized.

### Public Access and Recreation (Goal 12)

The Conservancy is making progress on its San Francisco Bay Area goals related to improving public access and recreation. In the past three years, twelve miles of Bay Trail and three miles of Ridge Trail have been constructed, and nine Water Trail sites designated. Bay Trail highlights include newly planned or constructed segments at Sears Point in Sonoma County and at Breuner Marsh in North Richmond. Eight projects have expanded barrier-free access to natural areas, and the Explore the Coast program helped us exceed our objective for educational or interpretive programs. Additional Ridge Trail and Water Trail projects are being developed now.

#### Working Lands (Goal 13)

The Conservancy is behind on its objectives under Goal 13 to protect and enhance working lands; but a large-scale working lands easement should be presented to the Board in 2016.

# **Organizational Goals**

The three organizational goals in the Strategic Plan describe what the Conservancy needs to achieve in order to implement the programmatic objectives of the plan. These goals do not have quantifiable objectives, but significant progress was made last year.

# Sustainable Funding Strategy (Goal 14)

The Conservancy made significant progress implementing the long-term funding plan last year but significant challenges remain. Since FY 08/09, the Coastal Conservancy has reduced our annual operating budget by 25% from \$11,882,000 to \$8,919,000 last year. The Conservancy has eliminated sixteen authorized positions, including eight Ocean Protection Council positions moved to the Natural Resources Agency and eight Conservancy positions that were voluntarily abolished. We have also reduced travel, communications and consulting expenses.

Conservancy staff have brought in multiple large-scale grants over the past year, including grants from Department of Fish and Wildlife for Invasive Spartina Project and South Bay Salt Ponds; from Department of Water Resources for Resilient Shorelines in San Francisco Bay; from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Bair Island Restoration, Elkhorn Slough tidal marsh restoration, Invasive Spartina Project, and the enhancement of Wood Creek in Humboldt Bay; from the U.S. EPA for sea level rise research in Humboldt Bay; and from the California Landscape Conservation Cooperative for climate change adaptation for the South Coast's wetlands. These grants support our project work and typically have a budget item for Conservancy staff support.

The Conservancy failed to obtain non-bond state funding for the agency's baseline operation. The Long Term Financial Plan assumed the Coastal Conservancy would be funded like all the other state conservancies, with funding from the Environmental License Plate Fund to cover a portion our operations. The Coastal Conservancy is the only state conservancy that does not have non-bond state funding for its baseline support budget.

#### Reorganize Staff Structure (Goal 15)

The management team continuously evaluates staff resources and shifts responsibilities to address the existing and future needs of the agency. Over the past year, several Conservancy staff have retired, including our Chief Deputy Executive Officer and Chief Counsel, as well as a few senior project managers. We hired several new entry-level project managers and have made a number of internal promotions. We are gradually reducing the total staff through attrition and, as mentioned above, have already voluntarily reduced our staff by eight positions (in addition to positions moved to the Natural Resources Agency).

#### Full Transparency and Accountability (Goal 16)

In 2015, the Conservancy made significant progress on the objectives related to external communication and reports:

We updated our web page this past year, made possible by a limited-term hire. The new
web page is significantly easier to navigate, has updated information about our programs
(including Prop 1, Climate Ready, and Explore the Coast), is viewable on tablets and smart
phones, and is more accessible for people with visual disabilities who use screenreaders.

- Last year, the Conservancy created a more visually-compelling format for its annual report.
   A draft of the 2015 annual report will be handed out at the January board meeting. The report summarizes the major accomplishments of 2015 and when completed, will be distributed to the Board, to the Legislature and to other project partners, and made available on our web page and via social media.
- We continue to expand our Facebook presence and now have more than 1,100 people and organizations following our page. We post at least once per day, primarily thanks to our Sea Grant Fellows. A CORO fellow at the Conservancy produced a Social Media Communications Plan, and we are increasing our presence on Instagram and Twitter.
- The Project Database, Project Viewer, and Map Collaborator aid us in understanding, reporting, and sharing information about our project work and these tools were presented to the Board in March of 2015.
- We have a brochure for each County as well as brochures on specific programs (including Climate Ready and Explore the Coast), all of which are available on our web site.
- We have improved and expanded our e-mail list and send out mass emails about grant rounds every few months.

# Strategic Plan Progress Report

Objective	Target	Unit	Percent Complete	North Coast Progress	Central Coast Progress	South Coast Progress	Bay Area Progress
1A. Promote California Coastal Trail	6	Projects	167%	2	5		1
1B. Install signs on 300 miles of Coastal Trail	100	Miles sign	1%		1		
1C. Design new CCT trail segments	28	Miles	43%	4	8	0	0
1D. Construct new CCT trail segments	29	Miles	14%	3	1	0	
1E. Secure property for development of CCT	6	Projects	67%	2	1		1
1F. Improve support and accessibility features at existing accessways	9	Projects	89%	2	5	1	0
2A. Expand barrier free access to coast	12	Projects	150%	8	8	2	0
2B. Open new coastal areas to the public	15	Projects	87%	8	2	1	2
2C. Design coastal recreational facilities	5	Designs	100%	2	2	1	
2D. Construct or reconstruct coastal recreational facilities	10	Facilities	160%	8	4	4	
2E. Design regional and river parkway trails that connect to coast	3	Plans	100%	1	1	1	
2F. Construct regional and river parkway trails that connect to coast	29	Miles	13%			4	0
2G. Acquire land for new coastal accessways	5	Projects	120%	2	1	3	
2H. Santa Ana River Parkway Plan	1	Plan					
3A. Develop waterfront revitalization plans	5	Plans	80%			2	2
3B. Implement waterfront revitalization projects	4	Projects	75%		1		2
3C. Design low cost coastal visitor accommodations	2	Plans					
3D. Construct low cost coastal visitor accommodations	2	Projects	50%	1			
3E`. Expand Low-Cost Visitor Accommodations on Public Land	1	Plan					

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Objective	Target	Unit	Percent Complete	North Coast Progress	Central Coast Progress	South Coast Progress	Bay Area Progress
4A. Protect significant coastal and watershed resource properties	40,600	Acres	97%	28,360	9,519	836	785
4B. Protect working-lands	31,100	Acres	87%	22,649	4,450		
4C. Implement projects that preserve and restore fish and wildlife corridors	21	Projects	57%	6	2	3	1
5A. Develop restoration and enhancement plans for coastal habitats,	40	Plans	78%	6	19	6	
5B. Restore or enhance coastal habitats	1,090	Acres	129%	1,256	86	51	10
5C. Develop plans to preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains	17	Plans	71%	6	4	2	
5D. Implement projects that preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains	27	Projects	63%	3	9	3	2
5E. Implement projects to improve fish habitat	48	Projects	69%	15	17	1	
5F. Complete plans to improve coastal water quality	22	Plans	32%	2	5	0	
5G. Implement projects to improve coastal water quality	32	Projects	56%	7	8	3	
5H. Implement projects to support the recovery of the southern sea otter	11	Projects	91%		10		
6A. Develop plans to enhance working lands	30	Plans	23%	3	4		
6B. Implement projects to enhance working lands	22	Projects	95%	3	16		2
7A. identify significant climate-related threats, management challenges and technical assistance needs	1	Study	1600%	3	1	5	7
7B. Conduct vulnerability assessments from sea level rise and extreme storm events	20	Plans	75%	5	2	2	6
7C. Conduct vulnerability assessments of uplands and waterways	14	Plans	36%	2	1	1	1
7D. Implement adaptation projects that reduce hazards from sea level rise and extreme storm events	16	Projects	69%	2	2	2	5
7E. Implement adaptation projects that address climate change impacts to uplands	11	Projects	55%	1	2	2	1

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Objective	Target	Unit	Percent Complete	North Coast Progress	Central Coast Progress	South Coast Progress	Bay Area Progress
7F. Implement projects that reduce greenhouse gases	20	Projects	80%	3	2	4	7
7G. Implement projects that reduce urban heat islands	8	Projects	38%			3	
8A. Implement projects that resolve land-use conflicts	1	Projects	200%	1	1		
8B. Implement projects that accomplish multiple objectives and resolve longstanding conflicts	6	Projects	50%	2	1		
9A. Support programs and events that improve public understanding of coastal resources	27	Program	193%	7	11	24	7
9B. Support the design and installation of interpretive or educational displays	8	Exhibits	275%	4	8	7	1
9C. Construct or improve regional environmental education centers	1	Centers	300%	1	1	1	
10A. SFBay: Identify and prioritize resource and recreational goals,	2	Plans	200%				4
11A. SF Bay: Protect wetlands, riparian habitat, and subtidal habitat	2,000	Acres	55%				1,096
11B. SF Bay:Protect wildlife habitat, connecting corridors, scenic areas, and other open-space resources	4,500	Acres	71%	330	21		2,851
11C. SF Bay: Develop plans for enhancement of wetland, subtidal, and upland habitat	7,000	Acres	67%				4,685
11D. SF Bay: Enhance wetland, subtidal, and upland habitat	4,000	Acres	29%				1,175
11E. SF Bay: Develop plans for enhancement of rivers, creeks and watersheds	5	Plans	60%				3
11F. SF Bay: Enhance riparian and riverine habitat or other watershed functions and processes	8	Projects	63%				5
11G. SF Bay: Develop plans to eradicate non-native invasive species	0	Plans					
11H. SF Bay: Eradicate non-native invasive species that threaten important habitats	1	Projects	100%				1

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Objective	Target	Unit	Percent Complete	North Coast Progress	Central Coast Progress	South Coast Progress	Bay Area Progress
12A. SF Bay: Develop plans for projects that provide recreational facilities	4	Plans	100%	1	1		2
12B. SF Bay: Implement projects that provide recreational facilities	3	Projects	233%				7
12C. SF Bay: Acquire land for public access or to provide trail corridors	1,000	Acres	281%				2,811
12D. SF Bay: Develop plans for completing segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail	22	Miles	67%				15
12E. SF Bay: Construct segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail	5	Miles	240%				12
12F. SF Bay: Plan segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail	15	Miles	371%				56
12G. SF Bay: Construct segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail	9	Miles	38%				3
12H. SF Bay: Develop plans for regionally significant public access trails and community connectors	2	Plans	50%	1			
12I. SF Bay: Construct regionally significant public trails and community connectors	2	Projects	50%				1
12J. SF Bay: Designate launch sites for the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail	15	Sites	60%				9
12K. SF Bay: Enhance designated launch sites for the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail	6	Sites	33%				2
12L. SF Bay: Implement projects that expand opportunities for barrier-free access to natural areas	3	Projects	267%				8
12M. SF Bay:Implement projects that create or improve environmental educational or interpretive programs,	10	Projects	170%		1		15
13A. SF Bay: Protect working lands	1,000	Acres	33%	330			
13B. SF Bay: Implement projects that enhance working lands	4	Projects	50%				2
14A. Conduct annual evaluation of agency's budget against its longterm financial plan	5	Annual Evaluation					

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Objective	Target	Unit	Percent Complete	North Coast Progress	Central Coast Progress	South Coast Progress	Bay Area Progress
14B. Develop and evaluate progress towards achieving annual funding targets	0	N/A					
15A. Develop and continue to adapt the organizational structure	0	N/A	#Div/0!			1	
16A. Maintain and consistently upgrade the Conservancy project database	0	N/A					
16B. Improve and expand our web presence	0	N/A					
16C. Develop better mapping tools	0	N/A					
16D. Prepare and disseminate compelling summary reports of our accomplishments	0	N/A					

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