

Greening Our Cities

Southern California



VOLUNTEER WORK CREW IN SWAN CANYON, CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Almost 95% of California's 37 million people live in urban environments, the densely populated cities and towns that have grown large in less than 200 years. These environments largely define California today, but there is no pure urban environment—nature never completely gives up its hold. Cities that learn to incorporate the natural environment into the fabric of their daily lives find themselves thriving with healthier residents, cleaner water and air, and increased economic opportunities. They become better places to live and do business.

The Coastal Conservancy has worked with California's cities for more than 35 years to improve the lives of their residents. It will continue this work to:

- Clean urban rivers and streams and keep pollution away from public beaches
- Build trails and bikeways that link homes to schools, businesses, parks, and natural areas
- Restore natural areas with projects that offer jobs to local residents and provide career training for youth
- Develop parks in densely populated neighborhoods to provide families with opportunities for outdoor recreation
- Assure that low-income residents have access to natural areas and help them become better acquainted with their community's and region's natural environment
- Re-integrate waterfront areas into the lives of residents
- Help communities meet the challenges posed by a changing climate.

Beaches, Parks, & Trails

The Coastal Conservancy has helped many cities develop neighborhood parks, construct trails and bikeways, build stairways and pathways to beaches, and install visitor-serving facilities at parks and playgrounds.

- **River parkways** along major waterways connect communities, provide parks, and restore habitats for wildlife. Examples include Otay River Valley Regional Park, the San Diego River Parkway, the Santa Ana River Parkway, and the Los Angeles River Greenway.
- To make **public beaches** safer and more accessible, stairways and pathways have been built in many communities including Huntington Beach, Redondo Beach, Long Beach, San Pedro, and Manhattan Beach.
- New **neighborhood parks** include Compton Creek Natural Park in Compton and Maywood Riverfront Park and the Los Angeles State Historic Park at the Cornfield on the Los Angeles River; in planning is Milton Street Park on the Ballona Creek Trail.
- **Trails and bikeways** increase mobility, reduce air pollution, and provide recreational opportunities. Examples include the Bayside Birding & Walking Trail along San Diego Bay, the Tijuana River Valley Trail System, the Ballona Creek Trail, the Hermosa Beach bike path, and the Long Beach 54th Street & Peninsula boardwalks.

Water Quality & Conservation

The Conservancy is helping urban communities reduce water pollution and is supporting innovative projects for storm water capture to reduce flooding and recharge groundwater for later use. Projects include:

- Retrofitted **storm drains** in Culver City, Los Angeles, and Manhattan Beach to keep trash from entering waterways.
- The **Dominguez Gap storm water basin** in Long Beach, which employs wetlands to manage floodwaters and improve water quality while providing habitat for wildlife and parklands for people.
- City of Los Angeles **Green Streets** initiative projects that demonstrate how rainwater can be captured on streets and lawns for reuse.

Natural Lands

Natural areas are never far removed from even the densest urban environments. The Conservancy has been a leader in protecting and restoring natural lands that are havens for wildlife and offer people a breather from the daily stresses of urban life. Projects include:

- Restoration of large areas of **coastal wetlands** including the South San Diego Bay Wetlands, the Huntington Beach Wetlands, the Bolsa Chica Wetlands, the Los Cerritos Wetlands on either side of the San Gabriel River, and the Ballona Wetlands south of Marina del Rey.
- Support for communities looking to restore and reclaim **watershed lands** such as those in Swan Canyon and along Chollas and Rose creeks in San Diego, along the Arroyo Seco in Los Angeles, and along Compton Creek in the City of Compton.
- Restoration of **coastal bluffs and dunes** including the Redondo Beach bluffs and the El Segundo dunes.





FAMILY DISCOVERY DAYS AT SAN ELIJO LAGOON



COMPTON CREEK NATURAL PARK

Jean Castellino



VOLUNTEERS AT WORK IN THE BALLONA WETLANDS

Joy Kennedy



HERMOSA BEACH BIKE PATH

Piers & Urban Waterfronts

The Conservancy has helped restore or improve most of southern California's public piers and has long worked to revitalize the region's working waterfronts. Projects include:

- Major retrofitting and other improvements to **municipal piers** in Huntington Beach, Seal Beach, Belmont, Hermosa Beach, and Manhattan Beach.
- Revitalizing of commercial fisheries at **Driscoll's Wharf** in San Diego Bay, improved commercial and recreational uses for the **Imperial Beach** waterfront, and development of the **San Pedro Promenade**.
- **Tall ships festivals** in San Diego, Orange, and Los Angeles counties that have made thousands of visitors aware of the heritage and importance of working waterfronts

Education & Career Training

The Conservancy supports environmental education and training programs that help young people learn about the natural sciences and train for future careers. Conservancy-supported construction of visitor centers and displays in museums and aquariums have also introduced many people to the wonders of the natural world. Projects include:

- Funding for **educational facilities and programs** including the Ocean Discovery Institute's Living Lab environmental education center in San Diego, the LA Conservation Corps SEA Lab facilities, and the National Hispanic Environmental Council's environmental training institute.
- **Community programs** that bring students and families to areas where they can experience and learn about the natural environment, including National City's Ocean Connectors, San Diego's Ocean Science Explorers, and San Elijo Lagoon's Family Discovery Days.
- Construction of **visitor centers** in natural areas including the Tijuana River National Estuary Visitor Center; the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista, and the White Point Interpretive Center in San Pedro.

Climate Change

The Conservancy has been a leader in helping California's coastal communities prepare for the effects of climate change, in particular the threats posed by sea level rise and more severe storms.

- Conservancy-funded studies are helping Imperial Beach and Hermosa Beach determine how their coastal areas can **adapt to rising seas** and Los Angeles County learn how it can protect its iconic beaches.
- The Conservancy is helping to fund development of a **coastal storm model** to assess southern California's vulnerability to sea level rise and ocean storms.
- Conservancy-supported analyses of **Living Streets** programs will inform the City of Los Angeles about ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, capture rainwater, and reduce temperatures generated by street surfaces.



MANHATTAN BEACH PIER

The Coastal Conservancy is a State agency, established in 1976, that protects and improves natural lands and waterways, helps people get to and enjoy coastal areas, and sustains local economies along California's coast. The Conservancy works along the entire length of the coast, within the watersheds of rivers and streams that extend inland from the coast, and throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The Conservancy is non-regulatory and achieves its goals by joining forces with local communities, nonprofit organizations, other government agencies, businesses, and private landowners.

CONSERVANCY PROJECTS :

- Protect, restore, and improve natural areas and wildlife habitats
- Help people get to and enjoy the outdoors by building hiking and biking trails, acquiring and improving parks and beaches, and creating campgrounds and hostels
- Keep our waterways clean and healthy for people and wildlife
- Help communities revitalize their waterfronts
- Support floodwater management and integrate flood-control projects into the life of a community
- Conserve commercial fisheries, working farmland, and forests.

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