

2015 Coastal Conservancy Strategic Plan Update

The purpose of this document is to update the State Coastal Conservancy's (Conservancy) 2013 Strategic Plan to include funding priorities for Proposition 1 expenditure, to update our Climate Change objectives, and to include the newly created Santa Ana River Conservancy Program. This Strategic Plan will continue to guide the Conservancy's priorities through 2018.

When the Strategic Plan was written we did not predict the passage of Proposition 1, the water bond, which provides \$100.5 million to the Conservancy to support multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects. The Strategic Plan was also written before the Conservancy launched its "Climate Ready" grant rounds for projects reducing climate change or addressing its projected impacts. The response to the Climate Ready Program has been overwhelming and this update revises the numeric objectives for Goal 7 to better reflect the demand for climate adaptation projects. SB1390 created the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program to address the resource and recreational goals of the Santa Ana River corridor and this update includes additional objectives related to implementation of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program. As part of the update, staff was also asked to revisit goals and objectives related to providing low cost visitor accommodation along the coast.

Proposition 1

Proposition 1, approved in November 2014, will provide \$100.5 million to the Conservancy to fund multi-benefit water quality, water supply, watershed protection and restoration projects over the course of a decade. Proposition 1 funds will not implement projects related to the Conservancy's goals for public access, outdoor recreation or environmental education. Those goals are not being updated.

Funds for the Coastal Conservancy are included in Chapter 6 of Proposition 1. The purposes of that chapter are listed in Table 1. Proposition 1 directs the Conservancy to prioritize projects that benefit disadvantaged communities (as defined below), achieve multiple benefits, and result in quantifiable outcomes. Proposition 1 requires the Conservancy to administer competitive grants in an open and transparent process. The Conservancy has developed draft Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines to detail that process.

Table 1: Purposes of Chapter 6: Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams, Coastal Waters & Watersheds

1) Protect and increase the economic benefits arising from healthy watersheds, fishery resources and instream flow.
2) Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems.
3) Restore river parkways throughout the state, including but not limited to projects pursuant to the California River Parkways Act of 2004 ... and urban river greenways.
4) Protect and restore aquatic, wetland and migratory bird ecosystems including fish and

wildlife corridors and the acquisition of water rights for instream flow.
5) Fulfill the obligations of the state of California in complying with the terms of multiparty settlement agreements related to water resources
6) Remove barriers to fish passage.
7) Collaborate with federal agencies in the protection of fish native to California and wetlands in the central valley of California.
8) Implement fuel treatment projects to reduce wildfire risks, protect watersheds tributary to water storage facilities and promote watershed health.
9) Protect and restore rural and urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, protection of life and property, stormwater resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction.
10) Protect and restore coastal watershed including but not limited to, bays, marine estuaries, and nearshore ecosystems
11) Reduce pollution or contamination of rivers, lakes, streams, or coastal waters, prevent and remediate mercury contamination from legacy mines, and protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management.
12) Assist in the recovery of endangered, threatened, or migratory species by improving watershed health, instream flows, fish passage, coastal or inland wetland restoration, or other means, such as natural community conservation plan and habitat conservation plan implementation.
13) Assist in water-related agricultural sustainability projects.

Disadvantaged Communities in Coastal California

Proposition 1 defines a disadvantaged community as “a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income.” (CA Water Code Section 79505.5.) Chapter 6 of Proposition 1 does not require that a specific portion of funding go to disadvantaged communities. However, the Conservancy will strive to ensure that a significant portion of its Proposition 1 funding benefit these communities.

The Department of Water Resources has developed an online [map viewer](#) which enables the public to see the boundaries of the disadvantaged communities, based on census data including the American Community Survey. Communities are defined at different geographic scales, including county, census tract and census place. Appendix 1 is a series of maps showing disadvantaged communities within the jurisdiction of the Coastal Conservancy.

Coastal Conservancy Proposition 1 Priorities

The Conservancy will seek to prioritize multi-benefit projects for Proposition 1 grants, consistent with the language of the bond. Most state agencies have a statewide jurisdiction, but a relatively focused mission. The Coastal Conservancy has a more focused jurisdiction (about 33% of the state and 75% of its population) but a broad mission, including agricultural conservation, recreation, ecological conservation and climate change adaptation. This structure positions the Conservancy well to implement multi-benefit projects.

Any project consistent with the purposes of Chapter 6 of Proposition 1 and located within the Conservancy's jurisdiction is eligible for Conservancy Proposition 1 grant funding. In evaluating projects for Proposition 1 funding, the Conservancy will consider how well each project achieves the purposes of Chapter 6 of Proposition 1, as well as implements the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the California Water Action Plan, and the Safeguarding California Plan.

In addition, the Conservancy has identified four priorities for Proposition 1 expenditures based on the priority issues within our jurisdiction, reviewing existing state plans, and screening for projects that achieve multiple benefits, serve disadvantaged communities, and result in quantifiable outcomes.

- Water Sustainability
- Protect and Enhance Anadromous Fish Habitat
- Wetland Restoration
- Urban Greening

Appendix 2 charts the synergy between these priorities, key state plans and the purposes of Chapter 6 of Proposition 1.

The Conservancy has authority to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within its jurisdiction. The Conservancy may undertake projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as projects that prepare communities for the unavoidable impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, erosion, salt water intrusion, flooding, and other coastal hazards. Consistent with this authority, the purposes of Proposition 1 and the priorities of the Safeguarding California Plan, the Conservancy will prioritize projects that help California communities prepare for the impacts of climate change. The Conservancy will also support implementation of sustainable community strategies within its jurisdiction, including the Priority Conservation Areas in the San Francisco Bay Area region.

The Conservancy will seek to align its funding and project priorities with those of other state agencies administering Proposition 1 funding for related objectives. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife will administer Proposition 1 grants for coastal wetland and watershed restoration, the Wildlife Conservation Board will administer grants to secure in stream flows, and DWR will administer grants related to water sustainability. The Conservancy and its partners may apply for some of these other Proposition 1 grants to complete project priorities. Along with supporting project implementation, the Conservancy will continue to support project planning, working with grantees to develop shovel-ready projects that can compete for grant funding from the Conservancy and other state and federal agencies.

Water Sustainability

Advance the sustainable use and management of water in coastal watersheds in order to achieve conservation benefits, improve ecosystem health, and increase climate resiliency.

Many coastal areas rely heavily on local water supplies, including groundwater and local storage. The Conservancy will seek to implement projects that improve water use and management to achieve multiple objectives: increasing water supply reliability while decreasing impacts to aquatic and riparian habitats, improving both ecosystem and water supply resiliency to impacts of climate change, protecting summer flows for salmonids and other aquatic species, increasing groundwater recharge, decreasing flood flows, and reducing polluted runoff. Multi-benefit water sustainability projects could include: floodplain restoration, implementation of agricultural best management practices to improve water quality, rainwater capture, groundwater recharge, off stream storage, irrigation improvement, instream flow dedication, and watershed land conservation.

Coastal agriculture is an important economic driver in some regions and the Conservancy is charged with implementing a program of agricultural protection. Conflicts can arise between water use for agriculture and natural resource protection. Agricultural water use may deplete flows in coastal streams and agricultural practices may impact water quality thereby degrading habitat for salmon, steelhead and other aquatic and riparian species. However, there are many opportunities to lessen the conflicts between “fish and farms” by implementing multi-benefit water storage, groundwater recharge, irrigation improvement projects and other best management practices. These solutions will help farmers prepare for climate change by providing greater certainty about their water supply, while also improving conditions in coastal streams and rivers. Some of these projects can help slow seawater intrusion into coastal aquifers.

Water sustainability projects are consistent with the purposes of Chapter 6 of Proposition 1. They will implement watershed adaptation projects to reduce the impacts of climate change, protect and restore coastal watersheds, assist in the recovery of listed species, and improve water related agricultural sustainability projects. These projects implement Actions #1, 2 and 6 of the California Water Action Plan and several actions in the Safeguarding California Plan. By protecting habitat, supporting coastal agriculture and preparing for climate change impacts; these projects advance the Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals 5, 6, 7, 11 and 13.

Protect and Enhance Anadromous Fish Habitat

Restore habitat, including flow needed for achieving the health of anadromous fish populations.

Coastal salmon and steelhead are important to coastal ecosystem health. These fish provide an important food source, are culturally important to tribes, and an important part of the local economy in some coastal areas. The Conservancy will support projects that protect important watershed lands, remove high priority fish passage barriers, restore riparian or estuarine habitat, and secure instream flows with appropriate volume and temperature to support anadromous fish populations. These projects will increase available habitat and increase resilience of these populations to the potential impacts of climate change.

The Conservancy has supported many efforts to identify priority projects and to implement restoration projects to restore anadromous fish habitat. Removing barriers to spawning grounds is one of the simpler steps that can be taken to increase available habitat. Prioritization of barrier projects will be informed by the California Fish Passage Forum and in the San Francisco Bay Area by the San Francisco Estuary Watersheds Evaluation. The Conservancy has coordinated and will continue to coordinate with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife on identifying priorities.

Removal of fish barriers and restoration of fish habitat are specific purposes identified in Chapter 6 of Proposition 1. These projects will implement Action #4 in the California Water Action Plan's - protection and restore important ecosystems. Consistent with the Safeguarding Plan, these projects will protect and restore water resources for important ecosystems. These projects advance the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals #5 and #11 by enhancing habitats, natural resources and watersheds.

Wetland Restoration

Enhance wetlands and subtidal habitats to restore ecosystem function and provide multi-benefit flood protection, resilient shorelines and other ecosystem benefits.

The Coastal Conservancy has been a leader in planning and implementing coastal wetland restoration around the state for the past several decades. Proposition 1 funding will help continue this leadership, implementing tidal wetlands restoration, managed pond enhancement, eelgrass and oyster restoration, and construction of gently-sloping levees to protect shoreline communities while also providing transitional habitat. Projects will seek to restore habitat function from subtidal areas to the tops of levees and to increase community and agricultural land resilience to sea level rise and storm events, while simultaneously providing wildlife habitat for endangered species, migratory birds, and fish and other aquatic species, and improving water quality.

These projects will be in San Francisco Bay and also at other critical coastal wetlands. The San Francisco Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update, the San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Report, the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture's project list, and the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project Regional Strategy will inform the prioritization of these projects.

Wetland and subtidal habitat enhancement projects and multibenefit flood protection projects implement Action #4 of the California Water Action Plan- protection and restore important ecosystems. Consistent with the Safeguarding Plan, these projects will protect and restore water resources for important ecosystems; promote nature-based solutions for adapting to climate change, support cost effective green infrastructure. These projects advance the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Goals #5, #7 and #11 by enhancing habitats and helping prepare for climate change impacts.

Urban Greening

Build urban greening projects that increase groundwater recharge, reduce runoff, improve water quality and improve urban watershed health while creating public green-space and expanding urban forests.

In many urban areas, there are opportunities to create greener, more environmentally sustainable and livable communities by creating new parks, improving existing parks and green spaces, and planting trees. If designed correctly, these projects can infiltrate stormwater, improve groundwater recharge, and improve water quality. Projects may also provide additional benefits such as reducing urban heat island effects, improving air quality, increasing walkability and increasing neighborhood safety.

The Conservancy has helped plan and construct several multi-benefit urban greening projects in both the Bay Area and Southern California including projects in Compton, Richmond, and Los Angeles. In Compton, the Conservancy worked with the City, the School District, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to develop a park on the site of an elementary school yard that served both the community and the school, and was designed to capture rainwater that could be used for on-site irrigation. Landscaped largely with native species, it is a multi-purpose, multi-benefit project that demonstrates the effectiveness of this kind of investment. With Proposition 1 funds the Conservancy could implement more projects of this type that incorporate many green infrastructure elements, including water retention and storage, and shade trees for heat relief.

Urban greening projects advance several of the purposes of Chapter 6, including implementing watershed adaptation projects to reduce the impacts of climate change on communities, protecting urban watershed health and implementing urban river greenways. These projects implement Actions #2 and #6 of the California Water Action Plan by increasing integrated water management across all levels of government and increasing groundwater storage. The health section of the Safeguarding California Plan specifically identifies urban greening as a strategy to reduce the impacts of extreme heat events and urban greening projects implement Goals 2, 5, 7 and 11 of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan.

Climate Change Adaptation and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

The 2013 Strategic Plan is the first strategic plan that identified specific objectives related to the Conservancy's work on climate change. The plan was written before the Conservancy initiated its first Climate Ready Grant Rounds and it underestimated the capacity and demand for assistance in preparing for the impacts of climate change. The Conservancy has now conducted three Climate Ready Grant Rounds and for each round we have received approximately ten times as many applications as we are able to fund. The third Climate Ready Grant Round was made possible by a one-time appropriation from the Legislature. As a result, the Conservancy has revised the numeric targets for the objectives under Goal 7 to better reflect the need, capacity and urgency of coastal climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction work.

Santa Ana River Conservancy Program

SB1390 created the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program within the Conservancy to address the resource and recreational goals of the Santa Ana River corridor. The legislation requires the Conservancy to complete a number of activities in implementing this program, including:

- a) Create an advisory group to offer advice, expertise, support, or service to the conservancy, without compensation.
- b) Prepare a Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan that shall, at a minimum:
 1. Determine the policies and priorities for conserving the Santa Ana River and its watershed.
 2. Identify underused, existing public open spaces and recommend ways to provide better public use and enjoyment in those areas.
 3. Identify and prioritize additional low-impact recreational and open-space needs, including additional or upgraded facilities and parks that may be necessary or desirable.
- c) Give priority to river-related projects that create expanded opportunities for recreation, greening, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat along the corridor of the river and in parts of the river channel that can be improved without infringing on water quality, water supply, and necessary flood control.
- d) Implement the program in conformance with all relevant general and specific plans and zoning regulations of local agencies within the territory.
- e) Provide for program property interests and facilities to be operated and maintained in accordance with the purposes of this chapter.

The Conservancy has been working on the completion of the Santa Ana River Parkway since 2006. Proposition 84 included a \$45 million allocation from Proposition 84 to the Conservancy to support projects to complete this regional trail. The Conservancy's existing Strategic Plan includes objectives related to the implementation of Santa Ana River Parkway projects. The one new objective (#2H) added to the Strategic Plan is the completion of the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan as required by SB 1390.

Low Cost Visitor Accommodation

In December 2014 and March 2015, the California Coastal Commission held two workshops about access to low-cost overnight visitor-serving accommodations along the coast. The workshops provided an overview of the issues and opportunities related to protecting and providing these accommodations. At its March meeting, the Conservancy directed staff to revisit the goals related to low cost accommodation as part of this Strategic Plan update, based on the information developed for those workshops and in recognition of this issue's importance.

The Strategic Plan contains specific objectives for planning and implementing low cost accommodation projects, and staff is working on a number of projects, but the planning takes a long time. Some of these projects have been in development for more than a decade. To speed up

the development of these projects, staff recommends that the Conservancy develop a statewide plan to increase low cost accommodation on public lands along the coast. This plan would identify opportunities, priorities, strategies and potential partners to expand low cost accommodation on public lands along the coast. This plan would help focus staff efforts to increase our ability to develop these projects in the future.

Revised Numeric Objectives

Goal 1: No Change

Goal 2: Expand the system of coastal public accessways, open-space areas, parks and inland trails that connect to the coast.

New Objective:

Objective 2H: Complete the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan

Goal 3: Revitalize coastal and inland waterfronts that provide significant public benefits and promote sustainable economic development.

New Objective:

Objective 3E: Complete a plan to expand low cost visitor serving accommodations on public land along the coast.

Goal 4: Protect significant coastal resource properties, including cropland, rangeland and forests.

Objective 4A: Protect significant coastal and watershed resource properties.

Objective 4B: Protect working-lands through conservation easements and other agreements.

Objective 4C: Implement projects that preserve and restore fish and wildlife corridors between core habitat areas along the coast and from coastal to inland habitat areas.

	North Coast		Central Coast		South Coast	
	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal
4A: # Acres	21,000	30,000	2,000	9,600	300	1,000
4B: # Acres	7,000	25,100	6,000	6,000	0	0
4C: # Projects	5	16	2	3	0	2

Goal 5: Enhance biological diversity; improve water quality, habitat, and other natural resources within coastal watersheds.

- Objective 5A: Develop plans for the restoration and enhancement of coastal habitats, including coastal wetlands and intertidal areas, stream corridors, dunes, coastal terraces, coastal sage scrub, forests, and coastal prairie.
- Objective 5B: Restore or enhance coastal habitats, including coastal wetlands and intertidal areas, stream corridors, dunes, coastal sage scrub, coastal terraces, forests and coastal prairie.
- Objective 5C: Develop plans to preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains.
- Objective 5D: Implement projects that preserve, enhance, coastal watersheds and floodplains.
- Objective 5E: Implement projects to improve fish habitat including projects to remove barriers to fish passage, ensure sufficient instream flow, and provide in stream habitat and favorable water temperatures.
- Objective 5F: Complete plans to improve water quality to benefit coastal and ocean resources.
- Objective 5G: Implement projects to improve water quality to benefit coastal and ocean resources.
- Objective 5H: Implement projects to support the recovery of the southern sea otter.

	North Coast		Central Coast		South Coast	
	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal
5A: # Plans	3	22	9	12	3	6
5B: # Acres	825	900	140	140	0	50
5C: # Plans	3	5	4	5	5	7
5D: # Projects	3	6	2	14	7	7
5E: # Projects	5	24	3	22	1	2
5F: # Plans	5	7	3	5	3	10
5G: # Projects	1	10	1	12	2	10
5H: # Projects	0	0	3	11	0	0

Goal 6: Enhance coastal working lands, including cropland, rangeland and forests.

Objective 6A: Develop plans for projects that foster the long-term viability of coastal working lands, including projects to assist farmers, ranchers, and timber producers to reduce impacts of their operations on wildlife habitat and water quality.

Objective 6B: Implement projects that foster the long-term viability of coastal working lands, including projects to assist farmers, ranchers, and timber producers to reduce impacts of their operations on wildlife habitat and water quality.

	North Coast		Central Coast		South Coast	
	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal
6A: # Plans	4	13	3	15	1	2
6B: # Projects	4	8	1	12	0	2

Goal 7: Enhance the resiliency of all coastal and San Francisco Bay Area communities and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and implement greenhouse gas reduction projects.

Objective 7B: In cooperation with public agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations and local residents, use the best available science to conduct site-specific, regional and landscape-level sea level rise, flooding and extreme storm event vulnerability assessments, and develop adaptation plans and strategies that address threats to coastal communities and public infrastructure in ways that protect natural resources and provide maximum public benefits.

Objective 7C: In cooperation with public agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations, use the best available science to conduct site-specific, regional and landscape-level vulnerability assessments of upland ecosystems and waterways, and develop adaptation plans to address predicted climate change impacts to natural resources, streamflows, biodiversity, and critical habitat.

Objective 7D: Implement adaptation projects that reduce hazards from sea level rise, flooding and extreme storm events, and which maximize protection of natural resources and public benefits.

Objective 7E: Implement adaptation projects that address climate change impacts to upland natural resources, ecosystems, stream flows, biodiversity and critical habitat.

Objective 7F: Implement projects that reduce greenhouse gases by increasing carbon sequestration, or by supporting land uses that reduce energy consumption including vehicle miles traveled.

Objective 7G: Implement tree and vegetation planting and other projects that reduce urban heat islands and provide multiple benefits including reduced energy and water use,

improved air and water quality, enhanced stormwater management, recreational resources, and improved quality of life.

	North Coast		Central Coast		South Coast		SF Bay Area	
	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal	2013 Goal	Revised Goal
7B: # Plan	0	4	1	3	1	5	1	8
7C: # Plans	1	3	1	2	1	5	0	4
7D: # Projects	1	4	1	3	0	3	0	6
7E: # Projects	1	2	0	4	0	3	0	2
7F: # Projects	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	11
7G: # Projects	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	4

Goal 8: No Change

Goal 9: No Change

San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Goals

Goal 10: No Change

Goal 11: Protect and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance in the Bay Area.

Objective 11A: Protect tidal wetlands, managed wetlands, seasonal wetlands, riparian habitat, and subtidal habitat.

Objective 11B: Protect wildlife habitat, connecting corridors, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional significance.

Objective 11C: Develop plans for enhancement of tidal wetlands, managed wetlands, seasonal wetlands, upland habitat, and subtidal habitat.

Objective 11D: Enhance tidal wetlands, managed wetlands, seasonal wetlands, upland habitat, and subtidal habitat.

Objective 11E: Develop plans for enhancement of riparian and riverine habitat or other watershed functions and processes for the benefit of wildlife or water quality, including removal of barriers to fish passage or projects that ensure sufficient instream flow.

- Objective 11F: Enhance riparian and riverine habitat or other watershed functions and processes for the benefit of wildlife or water quality, including removal of barriers to fish passage or projects that ensure sufficient instream flow.
- Objective 11G: Develop plans to eradicate non-native invasive species that threaten important habitats in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Objective 11H: Eradicate non-native invasive species that threaten important habitats in the San Francisco Bay Area.

	SF Bay Area	
	2013 Goal	Revised Goal
11A: # Acres	500	2,000
11B: # Acres	2,000	4,500
11C: # Acres	3,000	7,000
11D: # Acres	1,500	4,000
11E: # Plans	2	5
11F: # Projects	2	8
11G: # Plans	0	0
11H: # Projects	1	1

Goal 12: No Change

Goal 13: Protect Bay Area working lands and support farmers and ranchers in implementing stewardship of the natural resources on their lands.

- Objective 13A: Protect working lands, including farmland, rangeland and forests.
- Objective 13B: Implement projects that assist farmers and ranchers to steward the natural resources on their lands.

	SF Bay Area	
	2013 Goal	Revised Goal
13A: # Acres	1,000	1,000
13B: # Projects	1	4