



# Memo

Date: February 19, 2026

To: Members of the State Coastal Conservancy

From: Amy Hutzal, Executive Officer  
Evyan Borgnis Sloane, Deputy Executive Officer

CC: Legislative Oversight Members

Subject: 2026 Strategic Plan Progress Report

In December 2022, the Coastal Conservancy (“Conservancy”) adopted the [2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#). This is the third progress report on implementation of that Strategic Plan covering activities from January 2023 through January 2026, approximately 60% of the way through the five-year Strategic Plan timeframe.

In recent state budgets, the Governor and Legislature have appropriated substantial resources to the Conservancy primarily to fund nature-based climate adaptation. Thanks to these resources, the Conservancy has made significant progress on achieving the objectives of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, especially those targets related to sea level rise planning and conservation of land. We have also made excellent progress on our equity objectives. With the passage of the 2024 Climate Bond (Proposition 4) on November 5, 2024, the Conservancy anticipates continuing to achieve swift and significant progress in the coming years.

There are four goals in the Strategic Plan with measurable objectives under each goal. The fifth goal is qualitative and focuses on our organizational objectives. This report provides an update on progress towards each goal and all the objectives. There is a description of some example projects to illustrate how the Conservancy is achieving its objectives and a discussion of any challenges achieving the objectives.

## Goal 1 – Prioritize Equity

The Coastal Conservancy is committed to addressing injustices and inequities along the California coast. There are four objectives under this goal; the Conservancy has made significant progress on each of them, surpassing nearly every objective.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
1.1.1. Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities	40%	66%	---
1.2.1. Projects that Return Power to Tribes	35	32	91%
1.3.1. Projects with Meaningful Community Engagement	60	70	117%
1.4.1. Projects that Incorporate Workforce Development	40	41	103%

The Coastal Conservancy’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan targets spending 40% of the agency’s funding to benefit systemically excluded communities and California Native American tribes. To-date, more than two thirds (66%) of Conservancy funding supported projects that benefit systemically excluded communities. The Conservancy also set a target of implementing 60 projects that meaningfully engage systemically excluded communities and in 2025, the Conservancy exceeded that goal with a total of 68 projects.

The Conservancy is committed to improving and expanding our efforts to return power to tribes, including prioritizing tribal partnerships in our work. The Conservancy made significant progress on returning power to tribes over the past year with a more than 30% increase in the number of projects that advance this goal. The Conservancy has funded 32 projects since 2023 in collaboration with Native California tribes. This includes funding of \$400,900 to ytt Northern Chumash Tribe to initiate a Good Fire Promotion Program, including preparing a cultural burn management plan, training Tribal members, purchasing equipment and supplies for cultural burns, and conducting up to a 20-acre cultural burn.

The Coastal Conservancy has nearly achieved or surpassed every objective under Goal 1.

## Goal 2 – Enjoy the Coast

Improving the ability of all Californians to access and enjoy the coast is central to the Conservancy’s mission. This includes objectives related to Explore the Coast, Explore the Coast Overnight, and Coastal Stories programs that support coastal experiences to foster joy and belonging for people and communities who face challenges accessing the coast. It also includes accessibility improvements for people with disabilities, trail building, and amenity enhancements to reduce barriers and create new recreational resources so everyone can enjoy the coast.

The Strategic Plan has fourteen objectives under this goal. The table below shows progress to date on each of these objectives. As of January 2026, the Conservancy has exceeded targets for six of

the fourteen objectives. Progress on Objectives 2.1.1 is slow mostly because there has been less one-time funding for access. While the number of Explore the Coast Grants has only reached 47% of our target to date, it's worth noting that we are well on-track for meeting our target for number of Explore the Coast Priority Community Members served.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
2.1.1. Number of Explore the Coast Grants	100	46	46%
2.1.2. Number of Explore the Coast Priority Community Members Served	35,000	21,064	60%
2.2.1. Number of Coastal Stories Program Grants	16	17	106%
2.3.1. Number of Projects that Expand Accessibility	35	46	131%
2.4.1. Miles Trail Planned	125	762	609%
2.4.2. Miles Trail Built	80	51	67%
2.4.3. Miles Great Redwood Trail Rail-banked	231	170	67%
2.5.1. Recreation Facilities & Amenities Planned	40	176	440%
2.5.2. Recreation Facilities & Amenities Built	30	44	147%
2.6.1. Pier and Waterfront Projects Planned	8	13	163%
2.6.2. Pier and Waterfront Projects Built	4	8	200%
2.7.1. Explore the Coast Overnight Projects Planned	8	4	50%
2.7.2. Explore the Coast Overnight Projects Built	4	3	75%
2.7.3. Pilot Projects that Expand Explore the Coast Overnight Projects Partnerships	2	1	50%

Since 2023, 46 Explore the Coast projects were awarded grants. An example project is a grant to Project Avary to provide 1,190 youth from lower-income households with incarcerated parents with day trips, monthly overnight trips, and a four-week long summer camp at locations along the Marin coastline. Another example includes a grant to Puente de la Costa Sur to provide 60 low-income, older adult farmworkers with 6-8 coastal day trips along the San Mateo coast to reduce social isolation, strengthen community bonds, and enhance well-being. Staff estimates that the proposed 2025-2026 ETC grant program will engage over 8,400 people through the proposed projects. Of these people, project partners estimate that the program will serve over 6,700 low-income Californians, 7,000 people of color, 660 youth who are houseless or in foster care, approximately 3,200 people for whom English is not their first language, and at least 1,600 people with physical, cognitive, and/or emotional disabilities.

The Conservancy awarded \$350,000 to the City of Ukiah to implement Phase 4 of the Ukiah Great Redwood Trail Project, consisting of constructing a 1.9-mile portion of the Great Redwood Trail between Plant Road and Commerce Drive in the City of Ukiah. This segment has completed the Great Redwood Trail through the City of Ukiah.

The Conservancy awarded \$2,646,000 to the East Bay Regional Park District to construct 1.25 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail from the San Rafael Bridge Trail to the City of Richmond's Point Molate Beach Park in Contra Costa County. The project will provide access to a previously

inaccessible stretch of the San Francisco Bay shoreline, transforming an isolated stretch of shoreline into an attractive recreational area for walking, bicycling, fishing, kayaking, and public enjoyment of a sandy beach park.

The Conservancy awarded \$4,377,389 to the Coastside Land Trust to construct an additional 1.6 miles of California Coastal Trail, build a new accessway to the beach, and improve parking and restroom amenities at Wavecrest in Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County. Also in the central coast, the Conservancy awarded \$1,000,000 for consultant services to complete the trail design, environmental review, and permit applications for the Pedro Point Headlands segment of the California Coastal Trail in San Mateo County. This will provide new access to Pedro Point Headlands with stunning views, fill a gap in the Coastal Trail connecting Pacifica to Devil's Slide, and increase safety by providing an alternate route for cyclists on Highway 1.

The Conservancy awarded a \$2,000,000 grant to the City of Anaheim for the construction of a 3.3-acre nature park to restore natural habitat and provide recreational opportunities along the Santa Ana River in the City of Anaheim, Orange County. For the Santa Ana River Trail, the Conservancy authorized a \$4,350,000 grant to the Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District for preparation of design, engineering and other documentation needed for environmental review for a 1.5-mile Santa Ana River Trail segment in Riverside County. Once completed, the Santa Ana River Trail will extend over 100 miles from the San Bernardino Mountains westward to the coast.

Explore the Coast Overnight projects continue to move forward. We hold periodic coordination meetings with Coastal Commission and State Parks staff to ensure program goals and project selection are aligned at all three agencies. This year, in Humboldt County we completed the Mattole Beach Campground Expansion project doubling the footprint of the campground to serve more visitors. In Santa Cruz, we completed the Santa Cruz Hostel Renovations project to provide additional accommodations and make improvements to a popular hostel near Santa Cruz Main Beach. In San Diego, we granted \$1,500,000 to State Parks to conduct planning and design to expand the campground at Silver Strand State Beach.

## Goal 3 – Protect & Restore the Coast

The Conservancy works to ensure the coast is protected and restored for existing and future generations. We support projects and activities that protect and enhance the coast's scenic, natural, and agricultural resources, which are vital to the state's economy and quality of life, as well as to the wildlife that depends upon them.

There are seven objectives under this goal. With the significant one-time funding from the General Fund in 2023, the Conservancy has made major progress especially in terms of acres of land conserved, exceeding our target by more than 25,000 acres. While habitat restoration objectives are on track, there was slow progress made in 2025 due to a lack of funding availability. Staff strategically decided to provide large grants in 2024 to accelerate restoration implementation on a couple large-scale projects, especially in southern California, including \$30,000,000 for the Los

Cerritos Wetland Restoration Project and \$30,000,000 for the Tijuana River Estuary Tidal Restoration Project. These decisions meant that funds were not available for new authorizations in 2025.

The Conservancy is also making slow progress in achieving the objective to support working lands. This objective is currently 50% achieved, but there are limited funds that can be utilized solely to support working lands. The 2024 Climate Bond (Prop 4) does not specifically include working lands or agriculture, so to use Prop 4 funds, the working lands project would also have to be a climate resilience project. With this limit on available funding, the Conservancy recognizes objective 3.3.1 may not be achieved by 2027.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
3.1.1. Acres of Land Conserved	50,000	75,330	151%
3.2.1. Habitat Restoration or Enhancement Projects Planned	85	48	57%
3.2.2. Acres of Habitat Restored or Enhanced	11,000	7,375	67%
3.2.3. Wildlife Corridor Protection or Enhancement Projects	15	21	140%
3.2.4. Anadromous Fish Habitat or Watershed Projects	30	21	70%
3.3.1. Projects to Support Working Lands	30	15	50%
3.4.1. Projects to Cut Green Tape	8	6	75%

We have already far exceeded our five-year objective for acres of land conserved and will continue to support land protection and restoration projects with 2024 Climate Bond funds. In Humboldt County, the Conservancy awarded \$1,272,250 to the City of Fortuna and the Wiyot Tribe on two related acquisitions to develop a riverfront park and restore floodplain and riverine habitat. The City of Fortuna will acquire 7 acres of land to be developed into a riverfront park, and the Wiyot Tribe will acquire 230 acres to restore cottonwood gallery forest, a rare habitat type, and enhance instream habitat for salmonids.

The Conservancy awarded \$36,000,000 to the East Bay Regional Park District to complete its \$40 million acquisition of 82 acres at Point Molate in Richmond in August 2025. The East Bay Regional Park District will create a regional shoreline park that will protect open space and provide compatible public access, including recreational and visitor-serving amenities with sweeping open space views of the shoreline and Bay, Mt Tamalpais, the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, and the East Brother Light Station.

For the first time, the Conservancy has authorized a tribal land back project in the central coast. The Conservancy awarded \$2,000,000 to the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County to acquire 1,720 acres of the historic Rana Creek Ranch along Tularcitos Creek in Upper Carmel Valley to return land to a local tribe and protect water quality, natural and cultural resources, and wildlife habitat.

The Conservancy awarded \$1,400,000 to the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District to restore 49 acres of wetland in Waduhl Lagoon on the Mad River Slough on Humboldt Bay. The project will restore nationally declining wetland types, including estuarine and palustrine, increase

adaptation to sea level rise, and provide habitat and wildlife protection in perpetuity under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge ownership and management.

## Goal 4 – Climate Ready

The Conservancy is funding and supporting local communities, nonprofits, public agencies, and other partners to plan multi-objective climate change adaptation strategies along the coast and implementation of nature-based climate adaptation projects to mitigate the current and future impacts of a changing climate including rising seas, intense storms, and catastrophic wildfires.

Between July 2022 and February 2026 (including projects being considered today), the Conservancy Board will have authorized more than \$570 million of General Fund and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds for coastal protection and sea level rise adaptation projects. That said, most of the General Fund and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund were authorized in 2023 and 2024, so there was limited funding in 2025. Conservancy staff were planning to utilize the 2024 Climate Bond funds for Coastal Resilience and Coastal and Combined Flooding starting with the November 2025 Board meeting, but due to the lack of an Administrative Procedures Act exemption in the bond, the Board needed to first adopt Emergency Regulations. In early December of 2025, the Office of Administrative Law informed staff that our emergency regulations package was going to be rejected and we withdrew our submission. If there is not legislation in early 2026 to exempt the 2024 Climate Bond from the Administrative Procedures Act, staff will start revising our grant program processes in coordination with the Board and resubmit a new emergency regulation package by the end of 2026.

We have made significant progress on all our Climate Ready objectives with five of the seven objectives already exceeding targets.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
4.1.1. Sea Level Rise Projects Planned	50	65	130%
4.1.2. Sea Level Rise Projects Implemented	30	29	97%
4.1.3. Sea Level Rise Adaptation Interpretive or Educational Projects	8	5	63%
4.2.1. Wildfire Resilience Projects Planned	20	27	135%
4.2.2. Acres of Wildfire Resilience Projects Implemented	5,000	13,514	270%
4.3.1. Multi-benefit, Nature-based Climate Adaptation Projects Planned	20	25	125%
4.3.2. Multi-benefit, Nature-based Climate Adaptation Projects Implemented	15	22	147%

The Conservancy provided an augmentation of \$2.7 million for the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project: Mountain View Ponds and A1 and A2W. Pond A2W was breached in January 2026. In addition to restoring 710 acres of tidal wetland habitat, the project includes repair and improvement of a long section of levee that was eroding and creation of a wetland-to-upland

transition slope (habitat transition zone) along the closed landfill levee, as well as construction of 1.2 mile of San Francisco Bay Trail spur with three viewing areas.

The Conservancy awarded \$500,000 to the City of Santa Cruz to assess the feasibility of using living shorelines (e.g. restore sand dune habitat), nature-based solutions, and sand management techniques to address coastal hazards and advance climate adaptation planning along 3.2 miles of Santa Cruz coastline.

The Conservancy has made significant progress achieving its objectives under the wildfire resilience program and implementing multi-benefit nature based climate adaptation projects. The wildfire resilience program has built organizational capacity and workforce development at the local and regional level to implement forest health and fire risk reduction projects that include activities such as prescribed burns, fuel break construction, and clearing ladder fuels. For example, the Conservancy authorized \$850,000 to the City of Albany to implement forest management activities on 8.5 acres within the Albany Hill and the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area. The cities will partner with Urban Tilth, a Richmond-based nonprofit, to train and employ local youth to conduct the forest management. The cities will build support for the removal of dead and dying eucalyptus trees and native plant restoration by hosting community workdays with milling demonstrations on-site and showcasing projects that have previously utilized reclaimed wood for public amenities.

Additionally, the Conservancy authorized a \$2,900,000 grant to the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians to implement a multi-faceted approach to fire resilience centered on active land stewardship in northern San Diego County. The project's core activities are the strategic fuel treatment of 516 acres and cultural burns of 219 acres of land.

## Goal 5 – Organizational Goals

The fifth goal relates to building and maintaining an organization with the capacity and skills to implement the Strategic Plan. There are six qualitative objectives under this goal. Below each objective there is a brief description of progress during the first three years of the Strategic Plan.

The first objective of this goal is to support staff development and retention. The Conservancy's staff is our most important resource.

**Objective 5.1.1** Provide training for staff to expand skills and knowledge related to tribal engagement, access for people with disabilities, and equity.

The Conservancy continues to provide staff training to expand skills and knowledge related to equity, tribal engagement, and access for people with disabilities. The Conservancy partnered with the Coastal Commission and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission to provide numerous tribal, meeting facilitation, and community outreach trainings throughout 2025. In total, we held six trainings for the staff of our three agencies. A subset of the trainings included topics such as:

- Tribal Engagement for Coastal Management
- Going Beyond Land Acknowledgements
- Building Relationships that Last: Working with Grass-Tops Leaders
- Virtual Meetings that Stick: Tips & Tricks
- Public Engagement that Holds Up: Planning for the “What Ifs,”

In addition, staff are encouraged to participate in our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee.

All Conservancy staff are encouraged to participate in the Secretary of Natural Resources speaker series, and staff have attended various workshops and conferences on wetlands restoration, fisheries restoration, land conservation, trails and greenways, and working with tribes.

**Objective 5.1.2** Support retention efforts including opportunities to increase salaries, professional growth opportunities, and continued growth of an inclusive workplace.

The Conservancy supports training and professional growth for its employees. In addition to the training discussed under Objective 5.1.1, we provide training opportunities for all employees. We have run in-house trainings on subjects such as Advance Payment Program, Increasing Equitable Access to Grant Programs, Meeting Facilitation Skills, and Communicating Environmental Projects as well as trainings run by the California Natural Resources Agency such as Making State Funding Accessible to All. We also continue to share culturally relevant videos during all-staff meetings for each national cultural month, such as the recent Native American Heritage month.

In December 2025, we completed the Conservancy’s 2026-2030 Workforce and Succession Plan which includes a quantitative Action Plan for achieving the plan’s goals. Actions from the plan include developing a mentorship program and maintaining outreach strategies to attract a diverse hiring pool. We are now actively implementing the plan, including promotional opportunities, wellness activities for staff, and exit interviews with departing staff.

**Objective 5.1.3** Support recruitment and hiring efforts that ensure the candidate pools for Conservancy jobs reflect California’s diversity, and implicit bias in hiring processes is addressed.

The Conservancy has made extensive changes to our recruitment and hiring practices to increase the diversity of our candidate pools. There are ongoing efforts to review and continue to improve our hiring practices. One specific strategy has been to change the entry level classification we use when hiring project managers. In 2020, 82% of the Conservancy’s project managers were white. In 2025, 56% of the project managers were white. In support of this objective, we also hosted hiring webinars for vacancies at the Conservancy to help applicants develop successful job applications.

Objective 5.2 under this goal relates to transparency and accountability, sharing information about our work and accomplishments with stakeholders and the public.

**Objective 5.2.1:** Provide annual JEDI Report that includes an audit and review of lessons learned from our tribal engagement and other JEDI initiatives.

At the end of 2024, the Conservancy's Environmental Justice and Tribal Liaison left the Conservancy for another position in the federal government. Quickly following that loss, the Conservancy lost 4 vacant positions as a part of the fiscal year 2025 budget. With that, we are behind in developing and presenting our JEDI Progress Report to the Board. We provided our first JEDI Progress Report to the Board in June 2024 covering the period 2018-2023. Once we can hire a new Environmental Justice and Tribal Liaison again, we will bring the next report to the Board. Staff continue to collect information and input for the review of our tribal engagement lessons learned.

The 2024 JEDI Progress Report is posted on the Conservancy's website here:

[https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2024/2406/20240606Board04A\\_JEDI\\_Report.pdf](https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2024/2406/20240606Board04A_JEDI_Report.pdf)

**Objective 5.2.2:** Provide annual Financial Report to the Conservancy Board and the public.

The most recent annual financial report was presented to the Conservancy Board in November 2025. It is posted on the Conservancy's website:

[http://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2025/1120/SCC\\_Financial\\_Report.pdf](http://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2025/1120/SCC_Financial_Report.pdf).

**Objective 5.2.3:** Provide annual report on Strategic Plan progress, with qualitative metrics and highlights of major accomplishments.

The first annual progress report under this Strategic Plan was presented to the Conservancy Board in April 2024. It is posted on the Conservancy's website:

[https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2024/2404/20240418Board4B\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Progress\\_Report.pdf](https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2024/2404/20240418Board4B_Strategic_Plan_Progress_Report.pdf).

The second annual progress report was presented to the Conservancy Board in February 2025. It is posted on the Conservancy's website:

[http://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2025/0213/20250213Board04A\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Progress\\_Report%20final.pdf](http://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccb/2025/0213/20250213Board04A_Strategic_Plan_Progress_Report%20final.pdf).

This report is the third annual progress report under this Strategic Plan.