



Coastal Conservancy

STATE *of* CALIFORNIA

Annual Report 2020



2020 was a year unlike any other. Throughout the many challenges our state faced, our coast and outdoor spaces have been an ongoing source of respite, recreation, and joy. As Californians turned to the outdoors for comfort, last year reaffirmed the importance of our work and the urgency of increasing equity in outdoor access and access to the outdoors in general.

Over the last two years, the Coastal Conservancy has developed Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) guidelines in consultation with environmental justice advocates, project partners, and community leaders. In February of 2020, our Board participated in a workshop with many of these stakeholders to discuss and revise these guidelines, which were finalized and formally adopted in September. The guidelines describe the approach the Conservancy will take to address injustices and inequities, and how we will prioritize this in our work. In 2021, the JEDI guidelines will steer an update to our Project Selection Criteria to embed these values in our grant programs.

Last Fall, in the midst of the pandemic, California was beset by the worst wildfires on record. In previous years, the Conservancy had allocated \$7 million for projects that strengthen fire resiliency and improve forest health. This funding was intended for wildfire preparation, not response, but, thanks to great partnerships and nimble work, money was quickly redirected to post-fire recovery projects. As life with fire becomes a reality, the Conservancy is working to expand our fire resilience program to protect coastal habitats from this growing threat.

Despite its many trials, I believe 2020 showed us at our best – an agency of individuals committed to serving all Californians and able to respond to the unexpected.

In 2021 California will continue to cope with COVID-19 as we welcome the Biden administration's renewed commitment to protecting our environment. The movement for social justice will continue, and the Coastal Conservancy will remain focused on bringing its lessons and voices into our work. 2021 will be a bittersweet year for me personally because it will be my last at the helm of the Coastal Conservancy. After 20 years, I will be retiring in the summer of 2021. Reflecting on the last two decades, I am astonished at the impact our agency of 67 people has had on the length of our coast and San Francisco Bay.

During the last 20 years the Coastal Conservancy has helped conserve over 400,000 acres of land; built over 200 miles of trails; restored over 33,000 acres of coastal habitat; taken down one very large dam and countless smaller impediments to healthy watersheds; and brought thousands of first time visitors to our coast. While all of this “quotidian” conservation work went on, we also got started on the generational effort to prepare California for the effects of climate change, added an entirely new Conservancy program in the Santa Ana River watershed, began a new chapter in our relationship with California's native peoples, and strove to incorporate justice and equity into everything we do. It has been a busy couple decades, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of this story.

From land and water conservation, to grants to get people to the beach who have never been before, the Conservancy and its partners have been and will continue to be a tremendous force for keeping the California coast a treasure for everyone.

- Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer

January 2021

2020 In Numbers

- \$48 million in funding authorized.
- 81 Projects funded in 20 counties.
- 21 Explore the Coast projects for coastal field trips for over 8,000 people; most of whom are low-income, people of color, and/or are people with disabilities.
- Funded projects that will restore 9.5 miles of streams in coastal watersheds.

Coping with COVID-19

As the pandemic struck, the Conservancy helped partners by staying flexible and making accommodations, including:

- Switching out grantees when the original grantee had capacity concerns.
- Extending timelines, allowing budget revisions, and other changes to work plans.
- Authorizing new funding to pay for unanticipated costs caused by the pandemic.

2020 Accomplishments

Statewide

- Awarded nearly \$700,000 to fund 21 Explore the Coast programs that will take over 8,000 Californians to the coast, many for the first time.
- Adopted Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Guidelines that will shape our hiring, programs, and project selection going forward.
- Expanded our Climate Ready program, funding adaptation planning and implementation projects including community-based resiliency planning and recreational amenities that incorporate tree planting, carbon sequestration and flood control.
- Allocated \$4 million in Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program for projects to increase the wildfire resilience of coastal habitats, and \$3 million for redwood forest health (2019).
- Authorized funding to construct nearly 6 new miles of the California Coastal Trail.

North Coast

- Opened the restored Samoa Dunes to public access. The Conservancy supported the acquisition of 366 acres of wetland and dune habitat in 2018 and has helped to fund the subsequent management and clean up.
- Opened the Old Smith Ranch Trail to public access, providing parking, a picnic area, and 2.1 miles of trails along the 10 Mile River and connecting to the Coastal Trail at Mackerricher State Park.
- Funded the expansion of the Mattole Beach Campground, doubling the number of available overnight camping sites.
- Provided restoration funding for Prairie Creek in the Redwood Creek watershed and 100 acres of tidal marsh at the mouth of Elk River, both in Humboldt county.

San Francisco Bay Area

- Completed construction of Phase I of the 1,500 acre Bel Marin Keys Unit V restoration in Marin County, which will become a mosaic of wetlands to increase wildlife and migratory bird habitat and improve flood protection.
- Helped permanently protect the open space of the Coyote Valley, a critical linkage between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range for water resource, recreational, and species/habitat corridor values
- Closed on two acquisitions to expand public access and recreation: The 54-acre Cooper Creek addition to the Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County; and the 32-acre Buck's Landing shoreline property in San Rafael by Marin County Parks.

Central Coast

- Funded the acquisition of the 58 acres coastal bluff and beach property at Tunitas Creek Beach in San Mateo county, which will become a new county park.
- Supported upgrades at Avila Pier and Capitola Wharf that will help these piers survive for several more decades.
- Helped to secure conservation easements over the 1779-acre Hill Ranch and 717-acre Nicholson Ranch, both in northern San Luis Obispo County.

- As part of the Conservancy's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, funded the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to build a program to bring cultural burning back to their ancestral lands.

South Coast

- Funded the Ventura Harbor District to install a new crane and storage facilities to support the commercial fishing industry.
- Supported the restoration of three additional historic cottages at Crystal Cove State Park, one of the few lower cost coastal accommodation options in Orange County.
- Funded the acquisition of 23.7 acres in the Santa Monica Mountains adjacent to the Ramirez Canyon Campground to provide public access to the campground and a new connection to the Coastal Slope Trail, and the acquisition of the 191-acre Newland Marsh, the last remnant of the Huntington Beach Wetland Complex to be protected and restored.
- Completed final engineering of the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing, which will allow wildlife to safely cross Highway 101 in Los Angeles.