



# Coastal Conservancy

STATE *of* CALIFORNIA

## **Draft Strategic Plan**

**2023-2027**

# Introduction

Welcome to the Coastal Conservancy's (Conservancy) Strategic Plan for 2023 through 2027. The plan presents our view of the future of the California coast and its watersheds over the next five years—including the steps needed to respond to climate change and promote environmental equity. The plan provides a roadmap for the years ahead and describes our role in implementing state and regional environmental plans, identifies measurable objectives to prioritize our work, and describes the key drivers shaping the context in which we work.

## **Mission Statement**

*The Coastal Conservancy's vision is of a beautiful, restored, and accessible coast for current and future generations of Californians. We act with others to protect and restore, and increase public access to, California's coast, ocean, coastal watersheds, and the San Francisco Bay Area.*



*Photo: Groundworks San Diego*

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# Purpose of this Plan

This Strategic Plan is intended to serve several purposes. The plan is a communication document from the Conservancy Board and its staff, providing the public with an overall vision and measurable objectives to track the outcomes of our work and set priorities. The plan provides an overview of the Conservancy's priorities in the context of California's coastal management program. It is also a reference to assist in the coordination of the Conservancy's work with other agencies and to clarify our role implementing state and regional environmental plans. Finally, the plan is intended to provide control agencies such as the Department of Finance, Legislative Analyst, and State Auditor with an explanation of the Conservancy's priorities and context for our projected staff and funding.

Updating our Strategic Plan creates an opportunity for the Conservancy to hear from partners – nonprofit organizations, tribes, local governments, community groups, state and federal agencies, private landowners, conservation organizations, and the public – about their vision and priorities for the Conservancy's work. During the spring of 2022, the Conservancy conducted an online survey and held more than 30 focus groups and listening sessions to get input into the plan. We heard from more than 1,000 individuals representing both existing and potential new partner entities. The engagement included members of the public as well as individuals representing community-based organizations, inclusive access advocates, tribes and tribal nonprofits, environmental groups, coastal cities and counties, other agencies, and entities advancing workforce development. A summary of the that engagement process is in Attachment 1.

## TERM DEFINITION:

### **“Coastal”**

In this plan, the term coastal broadly refers to the areas where the Coastal Conservancy works. This includes areas along the coast, in the entirety of the nine San Francisco Bay area counties, in coastal watersheds, in the jurisdiction of the Santa Ana River Conservancy, and along the Great Redwood Trail. When we state that “the Conservancy is committed to improving the ability of all Californians to access and enjoy the coast”, we mean access to recreational lands along the outer coast, in coastal watersheds, throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, along the Santa Ana River Parkway and the Great Redwood Trail.

# Plan Context

## Addressing Inequity

The Coastal Conservancy recognizes that we have not done enough to address inequities along the California coast and are committed to addressing injustices and inequities. In 2020, the Coastal Conservancy Board adopted Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Guidelines ([JEDI Guidelines](#)) that recognize the history of injustice, exclusion, displacement, and extractive processes towards California's Native Americans, Black people, people of color, and other frontline communities which has resulted in inequitable access to the coast and its resources that persists today.

The JEDI Guidelines identify ways that the Conservancy can work to promote more equitable outcomes for all Californians, especially systemically excluded communities, across all the Conservancy's activities, including its partnerships, funding programs, engagement practices, and its work with California's Tribes. The JEDI Guidelines also address the Conservancy staff and board (in regard to diversity and training) as well as transparency and accountability. This Strategic Plan takes another step to integrate the JEDI Guidelines into the foundation of the Conservancy's work by identifying specific objectives related to the goal of addressing inequity.

A major focus of the engagement effort was to hear ideas about how the Conservancy could change its practices to better serve systemically excluded communities. Many of the participants in the engagement were potential partners that had not worked with the Conservancy.

### TERM DEFINITION:

#### **“Systemically Excluded Communities”**

Systemically excluded communities, historically and often currently, are not afforded opportunities that are open to others, because they are discriminated against on the basis of their race, religion, gender, age, disability, or other social identity. Political and policy-making processes and government investments typically marginalize these communities. As a result, members of these communities have been denied full participation in economic, social, and civic life, and may have insufficient funds, resources, or other assets to address social, political, and environmental issues.

Systemically excluded communities include but are not limited to Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; low-income communities, non-English speakers, and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, pollution burden, or inequality.

Goal 1 in this Strategic Plan is *Prioritize Equity*. Under that Goal we have identified specific objectives and metrics to track our work over the next five years.

## Climate Crisis

California is already experiencing the impacts of a changing climate, including rising sea level, severe heat waves, variable precipitation, a succession of droughts, and intense wildfires. The Conservancy has worked for nearly 50 years to conserve California's incredible coastal resources; those resources face an unprecedented threat from impacts of a changing climate and there is an urgent need to take action to adapt to these impacts. Many reports identify the need to implement nature-based adaptation measures. There is a finite amount of time to act if we want to use nature-based adaptation measures such as living shorelines, habitat restoration, and other natural infrastructure to address climate impacts. The Baylands and Climate Change: What Can We Do; Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update (SFEI, 2015) concluded that tidal marshes established by 2030 are more likely to provide ongoing benefits when sea-level rise accelerates in the middle of this century.

Sea-level rise is already accelerating along the California coast and will continue to increase substantially over the 21st century, threatening coastal communities, natural resources, cultural sites, and infrastructure. Coastal wave events and rising sea levels are causing flooding, saltwater intrusion into coastal groundwater aquifers, and will increase coastal erosion, impacting beaches and cliffs throughout the state.

California is currently experiencing a multi-year drought caused by repeated years of low precipitation combined with high temperatures. January through March of 2022 was the driest on record dating back over 100 years, with just six inches of precipitation observed across the Sierra Nevada. Climate change will continue to exacerbate these conditions, even if some extreme precipitation events occur. Warming air temperatures increase moisture loss from soils, which will lead to drier seasonal conditions even if precipitation increases. Models predict a shrinking snowpack in California's mountains which will dramatically reduce surface and groundwater throughout the state.

Wildfires driven by multiple, interacting factors such as rising temperatures, drought, land use, and human activity are burning larger areas, hotter and more intensely than in recent history. The 2020 wildfires resulted in the largest wildfire season recorded in California's modern history. These fires, many of which were in coastal and Bay Area counties, had enormous impacts on Californians. Lives were lost, homes and property were destroyed, hundreds of



thousands of people had to flee their homes, and millions of residents were exposed to dangerously unhealthy air. Climate change will extend the periods of wildfire risk and increase the likelihood of future fires.

## Funding

The climate crisis in California is being met with unprecedented investment by the state in nature-based climate adaptation projects. In the Fiscal Year (FY) 22-23 Budget, the Coastal Conservancy received \$350 million for climate resilience, \$120 million for nature-based sea level rise resilience, and \$10 million for wildfire resilience. In addition, the Conservancy has about \$29 million in unspent bond funds and expects to receive additional annual appropriations of \$3.8 million from the Habitat Conservation Fund until 2029. The Conservancy expects to receive \$650,000 in appropriations for Explore the Coast annually.

The FY 22-23 California budget is a once in a generation public investment in resilience, outdoor access, and natural resources. In addition to the funding for the Coastal Conservancy, the budget includes significant funding for climate resilience. Much of this funding is being finally allocated in the budget process, but the broad proposals include:

- \$3.111 billion Climate Set Aside
- \$1.465 billion for Drought Resilience and Response
- \$ 773 million Funding for Nature-Based Solutions
- \$ 530 million for Wildfire and Forest Resilience
- \$ 300 million Addressing Extreme Heat
- \$ 50 million Opportunity Acquisitions: Nature-Based Solutions

As we developed the priorities in this Strategic Plan, we avoided duplicating programs established in other agencies and focused on the Conservancy's distinctive role within the State.

There are also significant federal funds available for Conservancy projects in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, through NOAA, US Army Corps of Engineers, US EPA, and other federal partner agencies.

The Conservancy's funding is typically intended for project planning, design, and implementation, including the regional planning, community engagement, environmental review, and scientific monitoring needed to move projects forward and gauge success. Given the one-time nature of our funding, the Conservancy cannot support ongoing operations and maintenance.



# Key Strategies

## Implement Existing State and Regional Plans

The Conservancy's Strategic Plan implements California's broader strategies for conservation and climate change adaptation as articulated in several recent state plans, including: [Pathways to 30x30](#); [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#); the [State Agency Sea-Level Rise Action Plan](#); the [Ocean Protection Council's Strategic Plan](#); the [California Climate Adaptation Strategy](#); and the [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#). This Strategic Plan builds off these plans to articulate the Conservancy's role advancing the goals and strategies in those documents. In preparing this Strategic Plan, staff reviewed these existing plans to identify priorities and objectives that the Conservancy could implement. Where appropriate, we have used language directly from those plans in describing our goals or objectives.

The Conservancy has long supported regional conservation planning and we will continue to use regional plans to identify and prioritize projects consistent with the larger statewide objectives. The metrics in this plan measure progress towards implementation of regional conservation plans including the [Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project Regional Strategy](#), the [San Francisco Bay Area Conservation Lands Network](#), the [Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report](#), the [San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Report](#), and others. The Conservancy will also continue to support regional planning, prioritizing inclusive partnerships that increase capacity in local and systemically excluded communities and tribes to ensure the costs and benefits of conservation are equitably distributed and shared. This work supports specific recommendations in the [Pathways to 30x30](#) and the [State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan](#).

## Accelerate Action

The urgency of the climate crisis combined with the exceptional investment of state funding create an opportunity for the Conservancy to take bold action over the next five years. Throughout the engagement process, we heard the need for the Conservancy to help meet this moment and make real progress advancing climate resilience. Project partners want to see us 'do big things'. Partners encouraged the Conservancy to continue to prioritize action and implement projects that have been planned over the past several years. The Conservancy was also encouraged to provide leadership advancing challenging projects, facilitate interagency coordination, and cut green tape. The Conservancy will prioritize regionally significant, multi-benefit, nature-based climate adaptation projects to address the climate crisis.

## Build Capacity and Invest in Meaningful Engagement

Accelerating action must be balanced with the need to improve engagement and build capacity with systemically excluded communities. Our engagement process and other state plans highlight the need for the Conservancy to invest funds and time to build capacity in communities so that those communities can develop their own plans for their future. As stated in the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#), the Conservancy will seek to “(p)rioritize and practice equity, including through meaningful community engagement and prioritizing implementation of nature-based solutions that benefit the communities most vulnerable to climate change.”

*“Support collaboration between conservation groups, community-based service groups and residents in under-resourced communities to build authentic relationships that help identify true barriers to access and work out projects from there. That level of relationship building takes time.”*

*- SCC Strategic Plan Survey Participant, 2022*

Intertribal focus group participants encouraged the Conservancy to develop an engagement strategy that goes beyond our existing Tribal Consultation Policy. In addition to the specific types of projects identified below to return power to tribes, the Conservancy will strive to communicate with tribes earlier, build relationships, have more face-to-face meetings, and make it easier for tribes to work with the Conservancy, both in terms of resources and time.

# How we work

## Support Our Partners

The Conservancy accomplishes its mission by working with other entities to get projects done. We rely on many partners, including other public agencies, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations to achieve our goals. This plan envisions that the Conservancy will continue to work with existing partners while also expanding our partnerships with better engagement and support for building capacity among potential new partners, including community based organizations, tribal non-profits, and tribes that we have not worked with in the past.

## Grantmaking Practices - Reduce Bureaucracy & Increase Transparency

The Conservancy was urged to make it easier to partner with us by reducing bureaucracy and increasing transparency. This plan envisions that the Conservancy will provide more assistance to potential partners, offering grant application webinars, and pre-application consultations, and explaining to unsuccessful applicants how to strengthen future proposals. We also intend to make our grant disbursement policies more workable for smaller, community based organizations through measures like revisiting our indirect cost policy and expanding our ability to advance funds rather than reimbursing grantees for past expenditures.

### TERM DEFINITION:

#### **“Community Based Organizations”**

An organization that is driven by community residents in all aspects of its existence, and meets most of the following criteria: the majority of the governing body and staff consists of local residents; the main operating offices are in the community; priority issue areas are identified and defined by residents; solutions to address priority issues are developed with residents; and program design, implementation, and evaluation components have residents intimately involved, in leadership positions.

## Support Planning & Project Monitoring

One of the most common comments we heard was the importance of the Conservancy's continued support for planning, including regional plans, conceptual plans, site specific design, and environmental review and permitting. Specifically, participants appreciated and urged the Conservancy to continue to fund early planning and to continue to support innovative and pilot projects.

The Conservancy will also continue to play a role coordinating other agencies to accelerate project review and to advance implementation of regionally important projects. The Conservancy will support application of the best available science in project planning, and subject projects to independent scientific review when appropriate. Where funding allows, the Conservancy will support project monitoring to ensure projects are meeting their intended purposes, evaluate effectiveness, and apply lessons learned to future projects.

# Goals & Objectives

The Strategic Plan identifies five goals. Under each goal there are more specific objectives and under each objective, quantified metrics for the next five years. The metrics were determined through consultation with project staff, key stakeholders, project partners, and statewide and regional plans. During the engagement process, the public was invited to submit project ideas to the Conservancy, these ideas also informed the metrics. The metrics are based on what can be achieved in each region given the opportunities and constraints that exist. For example, acres of habitat restoration that can be accomplished are grounded in availability of restorable lands, regional restoration goals, and understanding of the schedules for specific projects in each region. The numbers were also based on grant applications already submitted to the Conservancy and the Conservancy's anticipated future commitments to ongoing, large-scale projects.

## Goal 1: Prioritize Equity

The Coastal Conservancy recognizes that we have not done enough to address inequities along the California coast and is committed to addressing injustices and inequities. Goal 1 of this Strategic Plan identifies specific objectives and quantified metrics to focus and track the Conservancy's work on prioritizing equity.

There are four objectives under this Goal:

- Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities
- Return Power to Tribes
- Support Systemically Excluded Communities
- Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects

### Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities

The Conservancy will commit 40% of its funding to projects that benefit systemically excluded communities.

Projects that benefit systemically excluded communities are projects where the community's interests and concerns are integrated into the project design and implementation and/or where benefits have been identified by the community that address its needs. Examples of benefits to communities include, but are not limited to projects that:

- Improve environmental or recreational conditions within the community or within a distance of 0.5 mile.
- Provide employment to people in the community or sustainable economic development in the community.
- Improve climate resilience of community.
- Reduce risk to the community (for example, from flooding, sea level rise, wildfire, or other climate change impacts).
- Reduce barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast for members of the community, including transportation.
- Elevate voices from the community; this could include interpretive storytelling elements, artistic or cultural styles in project design and educational materials.
- Include anti-gentrification and/or anti-displacement measures.
- Employ people from systemically excluded communities.
- Are led by people from systemically excluded communities.
- Include engagement with and participation by people from systemically excluded communities.

**Metric: Funding allocated to projects that benefit systemically excluded communities**

## **Target: 40% of funding**

### **Return Power to Tribes**

This objective will include projects that return control of ancestral lands to tribes or provide tribes access to land for cultural practice, ceremony, tribal management, and subsistence hunting and harvesting. The Conservancy will work with tribes to advance tribal co-management of lands and to incorporate tribal expertise and traditional knowledge in land management throughout our jurisdiction, including support for cultural burning.

#### **TERM DEFINITION:**

##### **“Co-management”**

A collaborative effort established through an agreement in which two or more sovereigns mutually negotiate, define, and allocate amongst themselves the sharing of management functions and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources. (Definition from the California Fish and Game Commission)

The Conservancy will support projects that provide tribal entities with capacity building support, including tribal workforce development. The Conservancy will support efforts identified in [Pathways to 30x30](#) and the [State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan](#), to build tribal capacity to prioritize acquisition of unprotected lands, protect cultural resources, sacred sites, and other important locations, and address both recreational access and tribal rights to access lands for cultural, subsistence, or ceremonial purposes.

## **Metric: Projects that return power to tribes**

**Target: 35**

### **Support Systemically Excluded Communities**

In addition to directing 40% of its funding to benefit systemically excluded communities, the Conservancy will also build capacity of community-based organizations that are rooted in and serve systemically excluded communities. The Conservancy will support community-based organizations to lead and participate in community engagement and planning processes; and provide technical assistance to build capacity of these organizations to plan and implement projects aligned with the Coastal Conservancy's program areas. This may include providing Conservancy staff assistance to community-based organizations in applying for and managing grants; or providing or recommending expertise necessary to get project concepts to implementation. The Conservancy will support projects that value and compensate community members' expertise.



**Metric: Projects that support systemically excluded communities**  
**Target: 60 projects**

### Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects

Conservancy grants create jobs, many of which require unique skills, training, and equipment. Incorporating workforce development into our projects and providing pathways for workers to get training in ecological restoration, wildfire resilience, trail construction, or other work funded by Conservancy grants will amplify the benefits of our project funding.

**TERM DEFINITION:**

**“Workforce Development”**

Workforce development typically refers to training programs that help workers acquire skills to get jobs and remain competitive. It can include utilizing existing job skills programs or developing new programs, such as apprenticeships, depending on an entity’s individual specialty and needs.)

The Conservancy will support pathways for local and systemically excluded communities to access skills and economic opportunities with jobs that include living wages and benefits, technical training, and job advancement opportunities. This objective implements one of the objectives of the [State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan](#). The Conservancy will support workforce development by including funding for

workforce development in its projects. Examples of workforce development tools and strategies could include:

- Project implemented by the California or local Conservation Corps.
- Contractors pay workers prevailing wage or a living wage and provide benefits.
- Project includes apprenticeship programs and hire apprentices on construction and restoration projects.
- Project Labor Agreement/Community Benefits Agreement in place for large public works projects.
- Project uses targeted contracting preferences to increase equity and diversity.
- Project hires employees locally when possible.
- Project partners with existing programs or institutions that provide training and skills such as community colleges, nonprofit organizations, tribes, public agencies, private companies, labor management partnerships, State-certified apprenticeship programs, and high school career technical academies.
- Project includes capacity building or training resulting in credentials (e.g., certifications, certificates, degrees, licenses, other documentation of competency and qualifications) to support long-term, stable employment and career development.

- Project works with the Ecological Workforce Initiative to train or find new hires.
- Leverage the resources of existing State and local employment programs such as the [high road training partnership](#) and the resources of the [California Labor and Workforce Development Agency](#) which includes the [Employment Development Department](#), the [California Workforce Development Board](#), the [Employment Training Panel](#), and the [Department of Industrial Relations](#).

**Metric: Projects that incorporate workforce development**

**Target: 40 projects**

## Goal 2: Enjoy the Coast

The Conservancy is committed to improving the ability of all Californians to access and enjoy the coast. There are four objectives under the Enjoy the Coast Goal:

- Explore the Coast – provide enjoyable coastal experiences for people and communities who face challenges or barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast
- Build Trails - including the California Coastal Trail, the Santa Ana River Parkway, the Great Redwood Trail, and the San Francisco Bay and Ridge Trails
- Increase recreational amenities including restrooms, parking, paths, interpretive centers, picnic areas, restrooms, and signage.
- Explore the Coast Overnight – Increase the variety and amount of lower-cost coastal accommodations and programs to connect lower-income Californians with those accommodations in order to reduce barriers to accessing and enjoying the coast.

This Goal directly implements the Resources Agency's [Outdoors for All](#) initiative and is consistent with the conservation priorities to expand access to nature identified in [Pathways to 30x30](#), including:

- Incorporate programming, education, outreach, and engagement that is accessible and representative of California's cultural diversity.
- Protect and restore natural areas and connections within and near urban and rural communities that have barriers of access to nature.
- Provide for a wide variety of outdoor recreation experiences across conserved areas.
- Increase access points and trails within existing natural areas including coastal areas and urban rivers.

The Conservancy will continue the Explore the Coast grant program to provide joyful coastal experiences for people and communities who face challenges accessing or enjoying the coast. These projects will provide an enjoyable experience at the coast; reduce economic, physical, operational, or societal barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast; and/or inspire an ongoing coastal resource stewardship ethic through active learning and interactive activities. Through this program we will continue to support the external advisory board for the Explore the Coast program and our accessibility advisory board and consider creating other advisory boards in the future.

*"My mother is now 85 and still loves the beach. She, however, is no longer able to make the walk. After a two-year hiatus, due to the specially designed wheelchairs available at Moro Beach and Crystal Cove, we were able to make three trips during my most recent visit this summer to Southern California. We stayed until 6:30 p.m. each time. Thank you so very much for supplying the beach wheelchairs. You brought us such joy! "*

- Colleen Jaques

### Explore the Coast Program Grants

The annual Explore the Coast grants will fund projects that provide participants with joyful and culturally relevant coastal experiences. These grants will support projects that reduce economic, physical, or societal barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast, including providing organized outings, mentorship and other support, overnight coastal experiences, providing transportation or promoting use of public transit to the coast.

**Metric: Number of Explore the Coast Grants**

**Target: 100 projects**

#### TERM DEFINITION:

##### **"Explore the Coast Priority Community"**

The Explore the Coast grant program seeks to provide enjoyable coastal experiences for people and communities who face challenges or barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast ("ETC Priority Communities"). ETC Priority Communities may include but are not limited to lower-income individuals and households, people with disabilities, people of color, indigenous communities, immigrant communities, foster youth, and other historically excluded communities who face societal challenges or barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast.

**Metric: Number of Explore the Coast Priority Community Members served**

**Target: 35,000 community members served**

### Coastal Stories Program

The Coastal Stories Program will support projects that plan, develop, and implement storytelling installations or materials (such as murals, signage, monuments, or guides) that represent communities and voices that have been historically excluded from accounts of California's coast and publicly accessible lands. These communities may include but are not limited to systemically excluded communities.

**Metric: Number of Coastal Stories Program Grants**

**Target: 16 projects**

## Expand Accessibility

The Conservancy will support accessibility projects that reduce barriers to coastal access for people with disabilities. Projects include planning and construction of accessible staging areas, parking lots, trails, restrooms, signage, and other recreational amenities, as well as funding beach mats, beach wheelchairs, and other accessibility devices to maximize barrier-free access to the coast. Accessibility projects also include increasing access to information about the accessibility of recreational facilities and amenities.

**Metric: Number of Projects that Expand Accessibility**

**Target: 35 projects**

## Build Trails

The Conservancy will support projects to plan and build trails that increase access to and along the Coast, for both recreation and active transportation purposes. This objective includes projects to help complete five flagship trails. The **Coastal Trail** will be a continuous trail along the coast from the Oregon border to the Mexican Border. The **Great Redwood Trail** will be a trail from San Rafael to Humboldt Bay along a former railroad right of way. The **Santa Ana River Trail** will be a multi-use trail from the crest of the San Bernardino Mountains to the Pacific Ocean near Huntington Beach. The **San Francisco Bay Trail** will be a continuous walking and biking trail around the San Francisco Bay and across its major bridges. The **Bay Area Ridge Trail** will be a 550-mile long trail connecting along the ridgeline above San Francisco Bay. In addition to these trails, the Conservancy will also support other regional trails that expand access to and along the coast. The Conservancy will work with collaboratives and find new multi-benefit opportunities such as integrating trails with wildfire fuel breaks or other wildfire resilience work.

**Metric: Miles Trail Planned**

**Target: 125 miles**

**Metric: Miles Trail Built**

**Target: 80 miles**

**Metric: Miles Great Redwood Trail Rail-banked**

**Target: 252 miles**

## Recreation Facilities & Amenities

The Conservancy will support enhancement of facilities, such as picnic areas, parking lots, restrooms, and other amenities to enhance coastal recreational opportunities. The Conservancy will support educational and interpretive facilities that enable people to enjoy natural, cultural, and historical resources. These projects may also include pilot programs to support shuttles or other programs that increase transportation options to access the coast.

**Metric: Recreational facilities & amenities planned**

**Target: 40 projects**

**Metric: Recreational facilities & amenities projects built**

**Target: 30 projects**

### Piers and Waterfronts

The Conservancy recognizes the value of piers and waterfronts for tourism, recreation, and fishing. The Conservancy will support multi-benefit, coastal resilience projects that revitalize waterfronts. Examples of these projects could include renovation of piers, waterfront parks, or fishing docks to adapt to sea level rise or projects that demonstrate innovation in sensitively integrating man-made features into the natural coastal environment, like living sea walls.

**Metric: Pier and waterfront projects planned**

**Target: 8 projects**

**Metric: Pier and waterfront projects built**

**Target: 4 projects**

### Explore the Coast Overnight

The cost of staying overnight at the California coast is a major barrier to equitable access. The Conservancy will support projects to increase the supply of lower-cost overnight accommodations. This will include projects to plan and construct a variety of affordable accommodations, including campsites, hostels, cabins, and other affordable lodging. The Conservancy will also support pilot projects and partnerships that help make those opportunities available to low-income Californians.

**Metric: Explore the Coast Overnight Projects planned**

**Target: 8 projects**

**Metric: Explore the Coast Overnight Projects built**

**Target: 4 projects**

**Metric: Pilot projects that expand Explore the Coast Overnight  
Projects partnerships  
Target: 2 projects**



## Goal 3: Protect & Restore the Coast

The Conservancy works to ensure the coast is protected and restored for existing and future generations. The overall goal is to support projects and activities that protect and enhance the coast's scenic, natural, and agricultural resources. These natural and scenic resources of the coast are vital to the state's economy and quality of life, as well as to the wildlife that depends upon them. Climate change will be a driving factor affecting all resource conservation activities in the future and is further addressed under the *Climate Ready* goal.

Another ongoing challenge is the limited availability of funding for management of habitat restoration and land acquisition projects. Management needs should be addressed upfront in our projects. Long-term, sustained conservation will continue to require partnerships with public agencies and nongovernmental organizations to manage lands and reduce operational costs.

### Conserve Land

Coastal land in California is under increasing pressure from developers and private interests. The Conservancy will fund acquisition of land and conservation easements to protect resource lands, working lands, and public access properties. This objective could include acquisition of lands to support inland migration of habitat with sea level rise. This objective directly the goals of the [Pathways to 30x30](#).

**Metric: Acres of land conserved**

**Target: 50,000 acres**

### Restore or Enhance Habitats

The Conservancy will support projects to restore or enhance habitats including subtidal habitats, wetlands, riparian, and other important wildlife habitat, including projects to protect and restore healthy sea otter populations. The Conservancy will support wildlife corridor projects and projects that reduce barriers to fish migration. The Conservancy will also support projects to restore coastal watersheds, including dam removal projects. This objective directly implements many actions identified in the [Pathways to 30x30](#) and [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#), including:

- Identify and prioritize restoration projects on degraded landscapes and waterways most important to protecting biodiversity or restoring natural systems. In coordination with implementation of the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#) and other relevant state climate change initiatives, identify areas where environmental restoration will achieve the most significant climate benefits, including protecting carbon stores, sequestering carbon, and buffering human and natural communities from the impacts of climate change.
- Implement watershed-scale restoration projects that connect land and coastal water habitats; fish and wildlife corridors to connect already conserved landscapes and waterways. Utilize natural flood protection tools and remove unnecessary or obsolete barriers from waterways to restore connectivity and fish passage of impaired waterways, meadows, riparian areas, floodplains, and wetlands.
- Restore and enhance coastal wetlands in a manner that ensures these habitats can keep pace with future sea level rise, such as conserving and restoring inland areas to allow for upland migration and through sediment augmentation.
- Identify and prioritize wetland restoration near communities most vulnerable to climate change and where climate smart land management can improve groundwater and water quantity, protect communities from flooding, and increase access to nature.
- Restore rivers, floodplains, and estuaries and facilitate their natural function and connectivity
- Identify opportunities to reconstruct wetlands and saltmarshes where possible, for example during construction projects in areas where these nature-based solutions could deliver climate and other beneficial outcomes to communities.

**Metric: Habitat restoration or enhancement projects planned**

**Target: 85 projects**

**Metric: Acres of habitat restored or enhanced**

**Target: 11,000 acres**

**Metric: Wildlife corridor protection or enhancement projects**

**Target: 15 projects**

**Metric: Anadromous fish habitat or watershed enhancement projects**

**Target: 30 projects**

[Working Lands](#)

The Conservancy will support projects to protect working lands, including farmland, ranchland, and forests. This will include acquisitions and easement projects to ensure continued protection of agricultural and grazing lands. The Conservancy will support agricultural practices that improve carbon sequestration, minimize water use, and protect sensitive habitats. We will also support projects to increase water storage on working lands for food production and drought resilience. Finally, we will support working forest projects including habitat protection, carbon sequestration, and where possible, public access.

**Metric: Projects to support working lands**

**Target: 30 projects**

### Cut Green Tape

The Conservancy will support projects that accelerate permitting and environmental review for habitat restoration, nature-based adaptation, wildfire resilience, public access, and other environmental projects. The Conservancy will support regulatory pre-application coordination and information exchange among regulatory agencies to share lessons learned and examples of success for streamlining permitting. We will also support the development and use of tools such as programmatic permits.

**Metric: Projects to cut green tape**

**Target: 8 projects**

## Goal 4: Climate Ready

The Conservancy's Climate Ready Program funds and provides technical support to local communities, nonprofits, agencies, and other partners to plan multi-objective climate change adaptation strategies along the coast and to implement nature-based adaptation projects. The Conservancy, through its Climate Ready Program, is focused on climate resilience projects that help to protect natural resources and public access into the future; use natural infrastructure as an adaptation strategy; and demonstrate, through pilot projects, techniques that can be used by other entities up and down the coast. We will support planning and project development as well as implementation, prioritizing communities that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts and have limited capacity to plan and implement adaptation projects.

### TERM DEFINITION:

#### **“Natural Infrastructure”**

Natural infrastructure, also referred to as green infrastructure, uses existing natural areas (and engineered solutions that mimic natural processes) to minimize flooding, erosion, and runoff. (Definition from NOAA)

## SLR Adaptation Projects

The Conservancy will support adaptation planning and pilot projects to protect coastal resources and increase the resiliency of the natural and built environments to the impacts of sea level rise. The Conservancy will support living shoreline projects and nature-based sea level rise adaptation. Consistent with the [Natural and Working Lands Strategy](#) and the [State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan](#), the Conservancy will “plan, implement, and fund nature-based solutions, strategies, and actions to increase coastal resiliency through flood reduction, habitat restoration, and protection of cultural resources and public access infrastructure, especially at the most vulnerable coastal recreational facilities”. We will support shoreline retreat where appropriate, especially where that retreat enhances public resources. The Conservancy will support projects that allow space for upland and inland migration of coastal habitats. As identified in the [State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan](#), the Conservancy will also work with museums, aquariums, and community based organizations to promote public education about sea level rise.

### TERM DEFINITION:

#### **“Living Shorelines”**

Living shorelines use plants or other natural elements – sometimes in combination with harder shoreline structures – to stabilize estuarine coasts, bays, and tributaries. (Definition from NOAA)

**Metric: Sea level rise adaptation projects planned**  
**Target: 50 projects**

**Metric: Sea level rise adaptation projects implemented**  
**Target: 30 projects**

**Metric: Sea level rise adaptation interpretive or educational projects**  
**Target: 8 projects**

### Wildfire Resilience Projects

Through its Wildfire Resilience Program, the Conservancy will support local partners to develop and implement projects that improve ecological health of natural lands and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in areas where people live. The Conservancy will also support the goals of the [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#) by funding planning to identify priority projects, technical assistance, permitting and environmental review costs so that multiple projects are ready to implement throughout our jurisdiction. The Conservancy will support projects that include grazing, prescribed burns, forest thinning, and other implementation projects to reduce wildfire risk. The Conservancy will fund demonstration and pilot projects such as biomass utilization projects to reduce the costs and increase sustainability of wildfire resilience work.

**Metric: Wildfire resilience projects planned**  
**Target: 20 projects**

**Metric: Acres of wildfire resilience projects implemented**  
**Target: 5,000 acres**

### Multi-benefit Nature-Based Climate Adaptation

The Conservancy will support nature-based climate adaptation projects that increase resilience and address extreme heat, drought, regenerative agriculture, or biodiversity, particularly in urban settings. Projects may include capacity-building, planning and design, technical assistance, implementation, or developing pilots or proof-of-concept projects that can then be scaled up via partner implementation funding.

**Metric: Multi-benefit, nature-based climate adaptation projects planned**  
**Target: 20 projects**

**Metric: Multi-benefit, nature-based climate adaptation projects implemented**  
**Target: 15 projects**

## Goal 5: Organizational Goals

The Conservancy needs to build and maintain an organization with the capacity and skills to achieve the goals in this Strategic Plan. The key to the Conservancy's success is its staff. The first objective of this goal is to support staff development and retention. The second objective under this goal relates to transparency. The Conservancy will strive to be transparent and accountable, sharing information about our work and accomplishments with stakeholders and the public.

### Support our Staff

The Conservancy will support recruitment, hiring, and training efforts to ensure staff have the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to accomplish our work. A critical element to achieving our equity goals is ensuring our staff have the training and ability to support this work.

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

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

**Metric: 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.**

### Transparency

As an agency whose projects and staff are funded with public dollars, we strive to be transparent and accountable, sharing information about our work and accomplishments with stakeholders and the general public through multiple outreach tools. The Conservancy will continue its practice of providing an annual financial report to the Board and the public. We will also develop an annual internal audit of our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) work to continually evaluate and improve our practices related to JEDI work and tribal engagement. We will also use our website, social media presence, annual progress reports, and other outreach tools to ensure transparency and improve external communications about the Conservancy's work and accomplishments.

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

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

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



# Appendices

1. [Strategic Plan Engagement Report](#)
2. [Conservancy Authorities](#)
3. [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Guidelines \(JEDI Guidelines\)](#)
4. [Project Selection Criteria](#)
5. [Financial Report](#)