

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
June 25, 2014

To: Members of the Coastal Conservancy  
From: Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer  
Mary Small, Deputy Executive Officer  
CC: Oversight Legislators  
Re: Adoption of Strategic Plan Update

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Adoption of State Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan Update.

**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [State Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan Update](#)

Exhibit 2: [Public Comments on Draft Update](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 et seq. of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby adopts the Strategic Plan Update attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 1.”

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Background**

Every five years, the Conservancy adopts a Strategic Plan that lays out the agency's priorities and specific, quantified objectives. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to communicate the Coastal Conservancy's overall vision and the specific goals it seeks to achieve. The current Strategic Plan 2013-2018 was adopted by the Conservancy on December 6, 2012.

## STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The Conservancy decided to complete an interim update to its current Strategic Plan to address significant changes that impact the Coastal Conservancy's priorities during the next few years. After the current plan was developed, the voters approved the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 ("Prop 1"). Prop 1 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 updated to reflect the success of the Conservancy's "Climate Ready Program" to fund projects that reduce 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.

In January 2015, SB1390 created the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program to address the resource and recreational goals of the Santa Ana River corridor. The update includes an additional objective related to implementation of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program.

### **Public Input and Revision**

The draft Strategic Plan update was posted on the Coastal Conservancy website with a public comment period of approximately six weeks. The Conservancy received 11 written public comments, attached as Exhibit 2. Most of the comments were supportive of the proposed update; many comments expressed support for specific identified priorities.

Where appropriate, staff made edits to the draft update to reflect the public input. These changes included rewording the Anadromous Fish priority, adding clarifying language related to the importance of in-stream flow. Staff added language about promoting ecosystem health and supporting implementation of the Sustainable Community Strategies and specifically the San Francisco Bay Area's Priority Conservation Area program.

The Conservancy considered the draft Strategic Plan update at its March 26, 2015 meeting and provided direction to staff to further revise the draft. Based on this direction, staff has also updated the objectives related to the provision of low cost visitor accommodations along the coast.

### **Proposed Strategic Plan Update**

The proposed Strategic Plan update is provided as Exhibit 1.

A new objective was added to Goal 2 that reflects the requirement under SB1390 that the Coastal Conservancy develop a Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan.

## STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

A new objective was added to Goal 3 to develop a statewide plan to increase low cost visitor serving accommodation along the coast.

The Strategic Plan update identifies four priority areas for Prop 1 expenditure. These priorities are:

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

These priorities were developed by analyzing overlap between the purposes of Chapter 6 of Prop 1, the programmatic authorities in the Conservancy's enabling legislation, and priorities in existing state plans, particularly the CA Water Action Plan. In addition, we considered priority issues within our jurisdiction and consideration of what sorts of projects are most likely to achieve multiple benefits, serve disadvantaged communities, and result in quantifiable outcomes. The Strategic Plan update revises numeric objectives for Goals 4, 5, 6 and 11 based on the additional resources available for these kinds of projects.

Numeric objectives for Goal 7 were increased to reflect the demand for climate adaptation projects and the success of the Conservancy's Climate Ready Grant Program.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA**

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a "project" consists of an action that can cause either a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment; and that is an activity directly undertaken or funded by a public agency, or an activity that involves the issuance of a permit or other entitlement. (Public Resources Code Section 21065). The CEQA Guidelines further define the term "project" and confirm that it does not include administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. (14 Cal Code Regs. Section 15378(b)(5)). Adoption of the proposed update to the Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan is an administrative activity that does not have the potential to cause a physical change to the environment. Accordingly, adoption of the update to the Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan does not constitute a project for purposes of CEQA.