

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
December 1, 2022

To: Members of the State Coastal Conservancy

From: Amy Hutzal, Executive Officer  
Mary Small, Deputy Executive Officer

CC: Oversight Legislators

Re: Adoption of the State Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan, 2023-2027

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Adoption of the State Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan 2023-2027

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [State Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#)

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

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**RESOLUTION**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000-31414 of the Public Resources Code:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby adopts the Strategic Plan 2023-2027 attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 1.

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**SUMMARY:**

Every five years, the Conservancy adopts a strategic plan that lays out the agency's priorities and specific, quantified objectives. The strategic plan communicates the Conservancy's overall vision and the specific goals it seeks to achieve. The Strategic Plan 2018-2022 was adopted by the Conservancy on November 20, 2017. For the past year, Conservancy staff have been developing a new plan. The Conservancy has discussed preparation and progress on development of the new strategic plan at each of its meetings in 2022. Today, staff recommends the Conservancy adopt the Strategic Plan 2023-2027 attached as Exhibit 1.

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The Strategic Plan 2023-2027 articulates our view of the future of the California coast and its watersheds over the next five years, including the goals and measurable objectives to prioritize our work. The plan identifies three critical issues that set the context for our work over the next five years:

**Addressing Inequity:** The Strategic Plan takes another step to integrate the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Guidelines (JEDI Guidelines) into the foundation of the Conservancy’s work by prioritizing equity throughout the plan and including specific, measurable metrics related to the goal of addressing inequity.

**Climate Crisis:** The Strategic Plan recognizes the existing climate crisis and the urgent need to implement nature-based adaptation measures.

**Funding:** The Strategic Plan is being adopted at a moment of unprecedented state and federal investment by the state in nature-based climate adaptation projects.

The Strategic Plan identifies three key strategies for achieving the Conservancy’s goals.

**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 and make real progress advancing climate resilience.

**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. This Strategic Plan calls on the Conservancy to invest funds and time to build capacity in systemically excluded communities and to improve collaboration with California’s Native American Tribes.

**Implement Existing Plans:** The Conservancy’s Strategic Plan implements California’s broader strategies as articulated in several recent state plans, such as: 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.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

The draft Strategic Plan was posted on the Coastal Conservancy website from August 15th until October 1st. Letters were sent to all the tribes within the Coastal Conservancy’s jurisdiction inviting consultation on the draft plan. Multiple notifications were sent to the Conservancy’s email list. We received extensive comments on the draft plan; all the written comments received are provided in Exhibit 2.

Many of the comments were supportive of the plan, expressed support for specific identified priorities, or asked for further clarification of proposed priorities. Conservancy staff made several edits to the draft plan in response to the comments. One change was to change the objective “Support Systemically Excluded Communities” to “Support Meaningful Engagement by Systemically Excluded Communities” to clarify the work under that objective. A second

change was to add additional information about our grant making process, project selection process, project tracking, and project reporting.

We received some comments about the need to fund operations, maintenance, stewardship, long term monitoring, and other ongoing costs. We included language recognizing the importance of these needs, but we do not believe that the Coastal Conservancy with its episodic and one time funding will be able to address these needs. We also received many thoughtful comments about changes to the proposed metrics. We acknowledge that no metrics are perfect, but we did not make some of the suggested changes because we felt the proposed metrics could create a burden on grantees or impact our ability to track and report.

Finally, we received some comments suggesting the Conservancy add additional topics or kinds of projects to the plan. We made many but not all of these changes. Typically, we did not add project types where the Governor and Legislature have directed state funding to other agencies. As an example, the state is making major investments to address extreme heat and urban greening, but that funding is not coming to the Coastal Conservancy.

#### **EXECUTIVE ORDER N-16-22:**

In September 2022, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-16-22, which provided direction to state agencies to advance equity and specifically addressed strategic plans. Paragraph 1 of the order stated:

All agencies and departments subject to my authority shall, for any strategic plans applicable during the 2023-24, 2024-25, and/or 2025-26 fiscal years:

- a. develop or update the strategic plan to reflect the use of data analysis and inclusive practices to more effectively advance equity and to respond to identified disparities with changes to the organization's mission, vision, goals, data tools, policies, programs, operations, community engagement, tribal consultation policies and practices, and other actions as necessary to serve all Californians; and
- b. as part of the development or updating of the strategic plans, engage and gather input from California communities that have been historically disadvantaged and underserved within the scope of policies or programs administered or implemented by the agency or department, and make the plans publicly available.

The Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan 2023-2027 is consistent with this Executive Order. As discussed above, the plan prioritizes equity and includes specific goals and quantified metrics to help the Conservancy more effectively advance equity through its work.

Throughout the development of this Strategic Plan, the Conservancy engaged and gathered input from more than 1,000 individuals representing both existing and potential new partner entities. The engagement included members of the public as well as community-based organizations, inclusive access advocates, tribes and tribal nonprofits, environmental groups, coastal cities and counties, other state and local agencies, and entities advancing workforce development. 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.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

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 Coastal Conservancy’s Strategic Plan is an administrative activity that will not result in physical changes to the environment. Accordingly, adoption of the Coastal Conservancy’s Strategic Plan does not constitute a project for purposes of CEQA.