



Memo

Date: April 18, 2024

To: Members of the State Coastal Conservancy

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

CC: Legislative Oversight Members

Subject: 2024 Strategic Plan Progress Report

In December 2022, the Coastal Conservancy ("Conservancy") adopted the [2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#). This is the first progress report on implementation of that Strategic Plan covering activities from January 2023 through April 2024, approximately 25% 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. Due to these substantial resources, the Conservancy has made significant progress 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.

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 against 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 progress or 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.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
1.1.1. Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities	40%	63%	---
1.2.1. Projects that return power to tribes	35	13	37%
1.3.1. Projects with meaningful community engagement	60	35	58%
1.4.1. Projects that incorporate workforce development	40	15	38%

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. Almost two thirds (63%) of Conservancy funding supported projects that benefit systemically excluded communities.

The Conservancy is committed to improving and expanding our efforts to share power with tribes, including prioritizing tribal partnerships in our work. The Conservancy has funded 13 projects this year in collaboration with Native Californian tribes. This includes funding \$4,500,000 to the Hoopa Valley Tribe to acquire the 10,300-acre Hupa Mountain Conservation Property in the Klamath River watershed to protect and restore water quality, anadromous fish habitat, wildlife habitat, wildlife connectivity, and forest health, and for tribal and public access.

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, 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. Progress on these objectives is more variable, in part because there has been less one-time funding for access projects.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
2.1.1. Number of Explore the Coast Grants	100	16	16%
2.1.2. Number of Explore the Coast Priority Community Members served	35,000	6,898	20%
2.2.1. Number of Coastal Stories Program Grants	16	6	38%
2.3.1. Number of Projects that Expand Accessibility	35	27	77%
2.4.1. Miles Trail Planned	125	26	21%
2.4.2. Miles Trail Built	80	17	22%
2.4.3. Miles Great Redwood Trail Rail-banked	231	173	75%
2.5.1. Recreation Facilities & Amenities Planned	40	19	48%
2.5.2. Recreation Facilities & Amenities Built	30	21	70%
2.6.1. Pier and waterfront projects planned	8	7	88%
2.6.2. Pier and waterfront projects built	4	4	100%
2.7.1. Explore the Coast Overnight Projects Planned	8	1	13%
2.7.2. Explore the Coast Overnight Projects Built	4	0	0%
2.7.3. Pilot projects that expand Explore the Coast Overnight Projects partnerships	2	1	50%

In September 2023, 16 Explore the Coast projects were awarded grants, including a block grant to Justice Outside to sub-award block grants to community-based organizations. Staff estimates the 2023 grants will serve almost 7,000 priority community members. In 2023, the Conservancy worked with the Great Redwood Trail Agency to prepare the draft Master Plan for the Great Redwood Trail. The Conservancy also awarded funding to start planning and constructing individual trail projects that will be part of the Great Redwood Trail.

The Conservancy awarded \$5,100,000 to the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department to redevelop the 900 Innes property in the underserved Bayview- Hunters Point neighborhood into a mixed-use shoreline park with recreational amenities and enhanced habitat with climate change adaptation features.

The Conservancy authorized over \$4,600,000 for several projects along the Santa Ana River in Riverside County to develop the Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway. Once completed, the Trail will extend over 100 miles from the San Bernardino Mountains westward to the coast.

Explore the Coast overnight projects continue to move forward, but progress continues to be slow. We are working with State Parks and the Coastal Commission to advance additional projects in the coming years and will be updating the Explore the Coast Overnight Assessment Report in 2024.

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, the Conservancy has made significant progress on many of these objectives.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
3.1.1. Acres of land conserved	50,000	65,366	131%
3.2.1. Habitat restoration or enhancement projects planned	85	26	31%
3.2.2. Acres of habitat restored or enhanced	11,000	1,911	17%
3.2.3. Wildlife corridor protection or enhancement projects	15	6	40%
3.2.4. Anadromous Fish Habitat or Watershed Projects	30	10	33%
3.3.1. Projects to support working lands	30	7	23%
3.4.1. Projects to cut green tape	8	1	13%

We have already exceeded our five-year objective for acres of land conserved. In Trinity County, the Conservancy supported The Wildlands Conservancy with funding to complete the acquisition of Lone Pine Ranch, protecting 8,085 acres for fish and wildlife habitat and public access in the Eel River Watershed. The Conservancy also awarded \$2,000,000 to The Wildlands Conservancy to acquire 11,692 acres of the Rana Creek Ranch located in upper Carmel Valley between Salinas Valley and the Santa Lucia Range. Rana Creek Ranch will be operated as a preserve by the Wildlands Conservancy in partnership with the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County.

The Conservancy successfully removed the derelict Terminal 4 Wharf in the City of Richmond in Contra Costa County, to improve success of Pacific herring, pilot innovative shoreline protection techniques, and protect and enhance eelgrass beds and other biological resources. Before demolition, it was the largest derelict wharf in San Francisco Bay.

The Conservancy has made less progress on wildlife corridor projects and habitat enhancement projects. Staff will focus on these objectives in the coming years.

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 April 2024 (including projects considered today), the Conservancy Board will have authorized nearly \$400 million of General Fund and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds for coastal protection and sea level rise adaptation projects. We have made significant progress on our Climate Ready objectives.

Objectives	Target	Progress	% Done
4.1.1. Sea Level Rise Projects Planned	50	39	78%
4.1.2. Sea Level Rise Projects Implemented	30	19	63%
4.1.3. Sea level rise adaptation interpretive or educational projects	8	2	25%
4.2.1. Wildfire Resilience Projects Planned	20	9	45%
4.2.2. Wildfire Resilience Projects Implemented	5,000	5,757	115%
4.3.1. Multi-benefit, nature-based climate adaptation projects planned	20	18	90%
4.3.2. Multi-benefit, nature-based climate adaptation projects implemented	15	12	80%

Around Humboldt Bay, which is experiencing the fastest rates of relative sea level rise in California, the Conservancy authorized \$5,552,800 to the Redwood Community Action Agency to restore 350 acres of coastal dune habitat to increase sea-level rise resiliency on the north spit of the bay, and funded living shoreline and sea level rise adaptation planning in Humboldt Bay. Adaptation planning efforts are focused on King Salmon and Fields Landing, two priority underserved communities that are heavily impacted by flooding.

In 2023, the Conservancy obtained \$4 million in external grants to augment support the Regionally Advancing Living Shorelines Project, which will develop an innovative programmatic approach to nature-based climate adaptation that uses techniques such native oyster restoration, eelgrass bed plantings, sand and gravel beach restoration, and green-with-grey solutions such as living seawalls and enhanced rock slope levees.

The Conservancy also granted the City of Santa Barbara nearly \$3,000,000 to prepare technical studies and feasibility reports and to conduct community outreach for adapting waterfront areas at-risk to sea level rise; and to prepare conceptual designs and environmental review documents for relocation of wastewater and water system infrastructure.

The Conservancy has made significant progress achieving its objectives under the wildfire resilience program and implementing multi-benefit nature based climate adaptation projects.

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 objectives under this goal, they are not quantified. Below each objective there is a brief description of progress during the first year 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. We have held 10 internal staff trainings, including a session on working with community-based organizations and another of experiences with tribal advisory committees. In addition, staff are encouraged to participate in our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee. Finally, our Equity and Tribal Liaison held open "office hours" for staff to consult on specific questions related to their work.

All Conservancy staff are encouraged to participate in the Secretary of Natural Resources speaker series, and we have sent staff to various conferences such as the Trails and Greenways Conference. Finally, we obtained funding from NOAA to develop tribal training for the staff of the Conservancy and the other state Coastal Zone Management Agencies in the future.

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 offered in-house training on subjects including Information Technology skills, Conflict of Interest Code, and travel reimbursement processes. Staff attend CalHR training.

The most recent SEIU contract included a salary adjustment for the project staff which kept salaries aligned with our sister agencies, the Coastal Commission and Bay Conservation Development Commission. We are actively implementing our workforce plan.

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 2023, 55% of the project managers were white.

The second objective 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.

We will prepare our first annual JEDI report later this year. Staff are collecting information and input for the review of our tribal engagement lessons learned.

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 2023. It is posted on the Conservancy’s website:

https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccbb/2023/2311/20231130Board04B_Financial_Report.pdf

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

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