

50 Years of Coastal Protection



California's identity is profoundly linked to the enjoyment and preservation of its 1,200-mile shoreline—from rugged, wild north coast to the scenic cliffs and sandy beaches in the south.

California's robust **\$51 billion ocean-based economy** proves that economic growth and environmental protection can be complementary. In fact, the state is widely regarded as having created the **most successful coastal management program in the history of the United States**.

History

Through the 1950s and 1960s, California's population was booming, as was offshore oil drilling and other industrial and commercial development along the coast that threatened community health, public access, wetlands and other sensitive habitats. In response, the voters of California passed Proposition 20 in 1972, a landmark citizen initiative to provide for sustainable coastal development while protecting the natural environment and public access along the coast.

Then in 1976, California reaffirmed its commitment to preserving its coastal resources by passing the Coastal Conservancy Act and the California Coastal Act. These landmark laws created the State Coastal Conservancy and the California Coastal Commission.



Californians rally in support of Proposition 20, the foundation for modern coastal protection.

Two Agencies, Complementary Missions

California Coastal Commission

The Coastal Commission, in coordination with local governments, plans for and regulates development in the Coastal Zone. That includes everything from hotels to resiliency plans to large commercial events and offshore wind development.

State Coastal Conservancy

The Coastal Conservancy works with partners to develop and fund projects that protect and restore coastal resources, expand public access, conserve open space, and address climate change impacts.

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Together, the Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy have supported:



Community Investment & Stewardship

- **1,000+ partnerships** formed with nonprofits, public agencies, Tribes, and community groups
- **3.7 million Californians** reached through Whale Tail and Explore the Coast programs
- Nearly **2 million volunteers** removed **26 million pounds** of trash through Coastal Cleanup Day

Public Access & Recreation

- **500,000+ acres** conserved as coastal open space
- **2,500+ public accessways and easements** created statewide
- **875 miles** of the California Coastal Trail opened
- **100+ urban waterfront projects** completed

Ecosystem Protection & Restoration

- **100,000+ acres** of coastal habitats restored
- **\$2+ billion** invested in coastal conservation, restoration, and climate resilience
- Long-term protection of sensitive coastal resources
- Advanced restoration science for dune, wetland and nearshore habitats

Today, California's golden beaches, rocky shores, and coastal habitats are the pride of our state. Nearly 80% of Californians say the condition of oceans and beaches is "very important" to the state's economy and quality of life.

Looking ahead to the next 50 years, the Coastal Commission and State Coastal Conservancy remain committed to their mission of stewarding a healthy, resilient, and accessible coast for all Californians.

