

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

45 FREMONT STREET, SUITE 2000
 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
 VOICE (415) 904-5200
 FAX (415) 904-5400
 TDD (415) 597-5885



January 11, 2017

TO: Coastal Commission and Interested Persons
 FROM: John Ainsworth, Acting Executive Director
 SUBJECT: **Significant Accomplishments and Highlights of 2016**

The California Coastal Commission 2016 Year in Review

2016 was a historic year for the California Coastal Commission and the California coast. In keeping with the spirit of the country's flagship coastal management law, the California Coastal Act, on its 40th anniversary, the Commission found numerous opportunities throughout the year to implement coastal protection policies in bold and creative new ways. From advancing women's equity in big wave surf contests, to levying the agency's first administrative fines for public access violations, to developing policy on short-term vacation rentals and exploring new ways to provide lower-cost visitor serving accommodations, the Commission continued to uphold traditional coastal protection principles while adapting to emerging social and cultural issues.

The Commission's Local Coastal Program (LCP) planning, enforcement, public access and legislative programs made significant progress protecting coastal resources with sound planning and regulatory decisions, enhanced partnerships with local government and other agencies, and valuable support from the Brown Administration and the Legislature, including a baseline budget augmentation for LCP work and new authority to consider environmental justice issues in permit decisions.

The Commission has also risen to its share of challenges in 2016. Senior staff worked closely with the Department of Finance over the last quarter in a fiscal management review which has resulted in a number of constructive recommendations regarding internal controls and operations. A

nationwide search for the Commission's new Executive Director has yielded a strong field of qualified candidates. And increased public interest in the Commission's ex parte disclosures has led to both litigation and needed clarifications regarding internal handling of disclosures.



Ventura County Government Center, December 2016. The Coastal Commission meets every month at various coastal locations.

Although final resolution of these issues will require additional time and attention, I am confident we will emerge from 2016 as a stronger and more resilient agency.

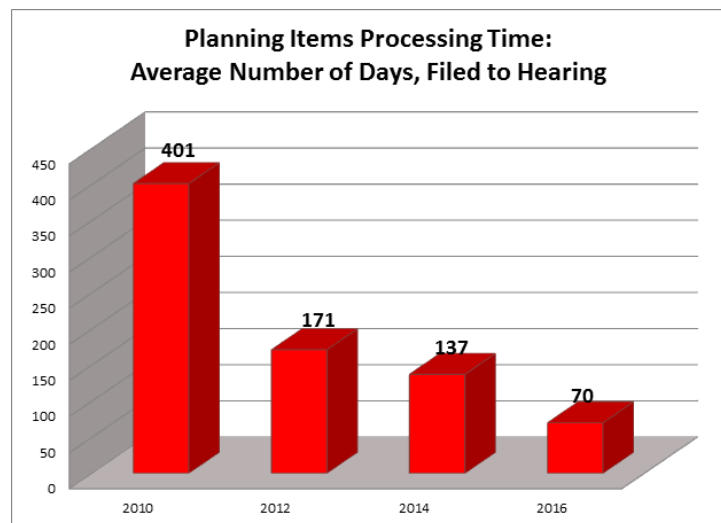
Coastal Protection by the Numbers

The Commission's recently launched Coastal Data Management System (CDMS) has enhanced the agency's ability to track workload data across the year, compare with past years and identify trends and anomalies.

Of the 672 permits the Commission acted on in 2016, the agency approved 668 and denied 4 (0.6%). The Commission received 83 appeals, out of 813 appealable local actions statewide. After considering the grounds for appeal, the Commission found that 24 raised a substantial issue under the Coastal Act, and 19 raised no substantial issue (NSI). By the end of the year, the Commission had taken final action on 34 de novo coastal development permits, as follows: 10 were denied, 5 were approved, and the rest were either withdrawn (16) or rejected for deficiencies.

This relatively high denial rate was due to the large number of appeals generated by demolitions and remodels in the Venice community. Venice is an uncertified segment within the City of Los Angeles, but has authority under the Coastal Act to issue CDPs, all of which are subject to appeal. The primary issues raised in these appeals relate to the size and scale of proposed new homes that are incompatible with Venice's unique community character. The City had been inappropriately reviewing some of these projects through an exemption process rather than through the coastal development permit process where all issues can be fully analyzed and addressed. The Commission staff has been actively working with the City of Los Angeles Planning Department to clarify the appropriate permitting process for demolition and rebuild residential development in Venice.

The Commission received 80 new planning-related submittals in 2016 (amendments, certifications and other submittals related to LCPs, Port Master Plans, Long Range Development Plans and Public Works Plans), 51 of which were filed as complete. The average time from filing to hearing was 70 days, continuing a 3-year trend of increasing efficiency, due to staffing augmentations and improved coordination and collaboration with our local government partners.



In 2016 the Commission's enforcement unit sent out 27 letters referencing the agency's authority under Section 30821 to impose fines for public access violations, and amicably resolved 21 cases at the district level. The Commission also opened and investigated over forty new public access violation cases in 2016. Since Section 30821 was enacted in 2014, the added incentive for

property owners to avoid fines has enabled the Commission to amicably resolved a total of 51 public access cases, with 10 more essentially resolved but pending full implementation (e.g., final installation of all public access improvements).

The Commission also considered 60 Federal Consistency matters, and issued 58 emergency permits and 412 exemptions.

Baseline Funding for Local Coastal Planning

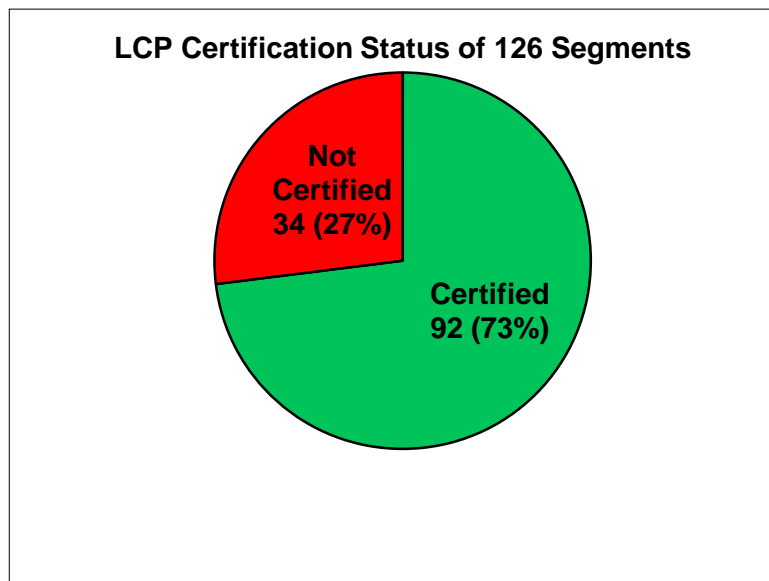
LCPs are the core implementation mechanisms for Coastal Act policies and a vital link between the state and local governments. The Coastal Commission works closely with 76 coastal local governments (15 counties and 61 cities) to manage the coast across 126 planning segments. Sixty-one (61) jurisdictions are now issuing permits under a Commission-approved LCP.

However, 15 communities, totaling 34 segments, have yet to finish an LCP and assume coastal permitting authority.¹ In addition, many LCPs are significantly out-of-date. Unfinished and out-of-date LCPs lead to conflict and delays in development approvals, and ultimately, less effective resource protection and management.

In June, Governor Brown approved the 2016-17 Budget, authorizing a \$3 million baseline augmentation to the Commission’s budget for LCP planning, with an emphasis on sea level rise.

This was the culmination of a three-year pilot project aimed at updating existing LCPs and completing plans for the uncertified jurisdictions. The baseline funding augmentation has enabled the Commission to retain its limited-term staff, and strengthen our ability to follow through on long-term planning commitments with local governments.

This baseline funding is critical to completing LCPs for the remaining 34 segments, updating existing LCPs, and on-going coastal resource management.



To help accomplish this task, the Commission has awarded \$4.5 million in local government assistance grants from a variety of funding sources to 29 jurisdictions statewide. Staff is working closely with these local jurisdictions to ensure high-quality deliverables.

¹ **Remaining Local Governments not yet issuing coastal permits:** Cities of Fortuna, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Goleta, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Hermosa Beach, Torrance, Seal Beach, Costa Mesa, Newport Beach (*effective certification pending on January 2017 agenda), Aliso Viejo, San Clemente, Solana Beach, and San Diego.

In August of 2016, the Commission awarded 14 [LCP planning grants totaling \\$2.5 million](#) to initiate or continue SLR planning work. All of the Commission's grants include technical and/or planning work related to shoreline hazards and sea level rise. Significant progress has been made completing local vulnerability assessments, detailed inundation maps, regional collaborations and engaging the public in policy formation.

The state's investment in the Commission's LCP program paid solid dividends in 2016, as the Commission effectively certified a comprehensive LUP update to the [City of San Diego Ocean Beach Segment](#) and the Santa Barbara County LCP for the [Summerland Community Plan](#).

Out of 88 planning actions approved by the Commission in 2016, some major milestones include the [Local Implementation Plan for the City of Newport Beach](#) (approved September 2016) along with a [Categorical Exclusion Order](#) (approved November 2016), the approval of a Comprehensive update of [the Marin County land use plan and implementation plan](#), (approved November 2016), and components of [Ventura County's LCP](#) with suggested modifications (approved December 2016) that are still pending local government action.

Enforcing the Public's Right to Coastal Access

2016 was a triumphant year for public access along California's coast. Most significantly, the Commission utilized its long-sought administrative penalty authority for the first time in a pair of public access enforcement actions. In 2014, the Legislature amended the Coastal Act to add Section 30821, which enables the Commission to levy fines of up to \$11,250 a day for violations of Coastal Act public access policies. Since that time the Commission has settled dozens of cases amicably with property owners seeking to avoid penalties under the new authority. Along with deterrence, this is one of the significant benefits to administrative penalty authority.

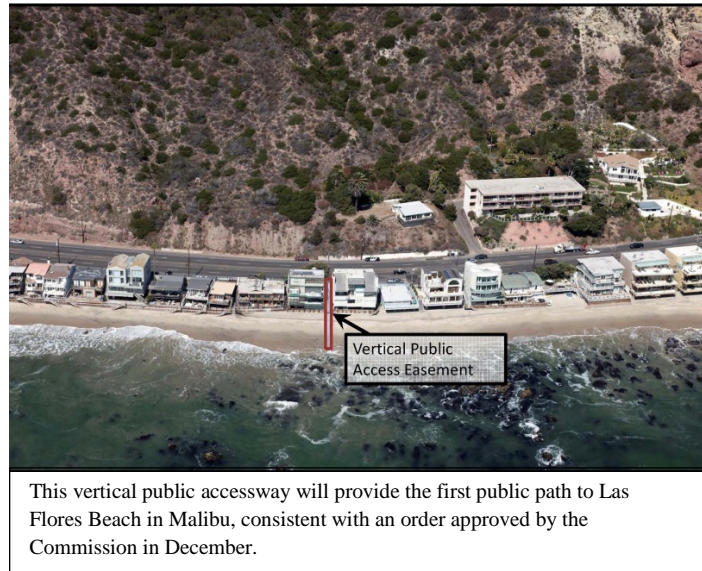
Since getting this new authority, the Commission has resolved 56% of identified public access cases. Commission enforcement actions to-date under Section 30821 have resulted in the removal of 26 sets of "no parking" signs that discouraged public access and 25 other encroachments such as gates, fences, and unpermitted development; the installation of 25 public access amenities and signage; and required the cessation of several on-going instances of public access intimidation.



This illegal fence was removed from a Malibu Beach, in accordance with an agreement negotiated consistent with Section 30821.

In December, the Commission approved a [consent order](#) and administrative penalty action that included a commitment for projects and payments totaling \$925,000. Much of this will be used for constructing access improvements and implementing management responsibilities for two new stairways at Carbon Beach adjacent to the Malibu Beach Inn. Property owners worked collaboratively with staff as soon as they were notified of the pre-existing violations on their newly-purchased property, but the complexity of the restoration required authorization by the Commission.

Also in December, the Commission levied a \$4.185 million dollar fine and Cease and Desist Order to another [Malibu property owner](#) who has been preventing public access across a deeded easement to Las Flores Beach. Commission staff had been in contact with the property owner since 2007 to resolve the violations, and was also coordinating with the Coastal Conservancy and MRCA to open and manage the pathway. Once open, this path and stairway will provide the only public access point to over 2 miles of previously inaccessible sandy beach.



In April the Commission issued a [Consent Cease and Desist Order](#) to the City of Dana Point, addressing public access closures and associated activities at Strands Beach. The order also included provisions for public benches, signage and bike racks. In December the Commission rejected the City's [proposal to retain gates](#) across the trail. The gates were removed the next day, under the terms of the Consent Order.

Expanding Access For All



In October, the Commission received a [report](#) on the status of the state's vertical Accessways in Central and Northern California. This report revealed that the Commission has required 196 vertical access ways statewide, from 1973- present. To date, 120 of these (61%) have been opened to the public. The remaining 76 are in various stages of planning for completion, and remain a high priority for the coming years. Many of these are some the more challenging sites for a variety of reasons, and as a result, the Commission is working collaboratively with sister agencies such as the Coastal Conservancy, State and Regional Parks, State Lands Commission, Caltrans and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, who have a shared mission for public access.

The most recently opened vertical access way was completed in June, along Malibu Road. This stairway, which also provides parking spaces and viewing platforms, was created from a permit condition imposed by the Commission in 1981 that required the dedication of a 100 ft. long

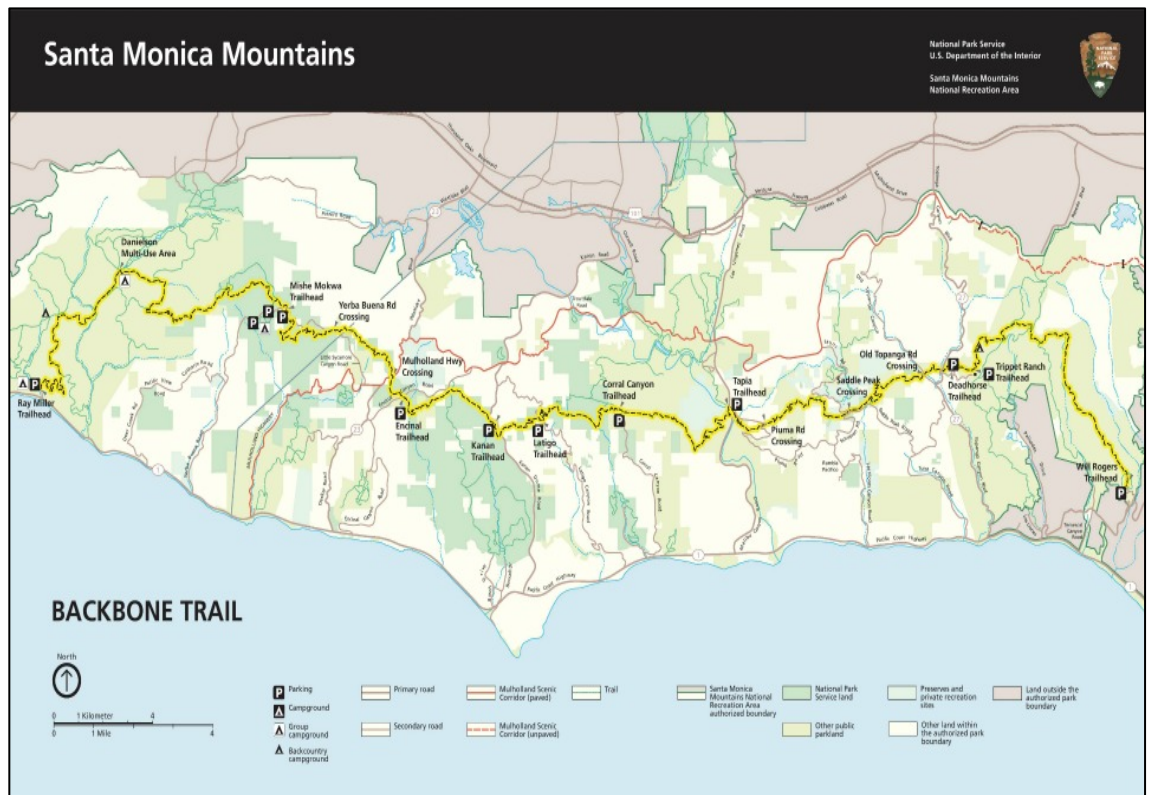
parcel to the State of California. Locating an entity capable of constructing and operating the access way took many years, but the MRCA stepped up and has taken on management responsibility as well, further establishing the agency as a very important partner with the Commission and the Conservancy in providing beach access in Malibu.

Another popular beach access point near Half Moon Bay, known as Surfer’s Beach, was recently re-opened thanks to a partnership between Caltrans, the Coastal Commission, the City of Half Moon Bay and the County of San Mateo. A creative interim solution to both the loss of access to the beach as well as erosion threatening Highway One resulted in a repaired stairway to the beach along with temporary rip rap which not only protects Highway One but also a segment of the California Coastal Trail (which runs over 10 miles in this stretch).



A surfer uses the repaired beach access stairs at Surfers Beach in Half Moon Bay.

In May, Commission and staff attended a celebration commemorating the completion of the last link in the 67-mile Backbone Trail, a project 40 years in the making. Connecting the City of Los Angeles to Ventura County, the trail offers sweeping views of the Santa Monica Mountains and



of the distant shoreline and ocean. The Backbone Trail, which includes several OTD Trail, Open Space and Conservation Easements required by the Commission, offers 500 miles of trails and

campgrounds in the rugged mountainous region that is the “backyard” for millions of Los Angeles County residents.

The Coastal Commission also continued to protect public access and recreation through various monthly planning and regulatory decisions throughout the year. In May, the Commission issued a [permit](#) to the City of Eureka to construct 3.75 miles of Class 1 multi-use trail, as part of California Coastal Trail, including boardwalk, 7 bridges, trailheads, interpretive signs, playgrounds, outdoor workout equipment, landscaping, street crossing(s), lighting, fencing, drainage improvements, and restoration of 1.28 acres of salt marsh along the Humboldt Bay waterfront.

In October the Commission approved the [City of Arcata’s](#) request to construct approximately 3 miles of Class 1 multi-use trail along the city’s waterfront, including multiple bridges, a trailhead, viewing platform, and interpretive signs as part of the California Coastal Trail. Also in October, the Commission finally secured the OTDs for vertical access to a previously inaccessible beach near La Jolla Cove across private property in La Jolla. The access path is not yet built, but getting the OTDs recorded was a multi-year legal battle.



Surfer Sarah Gerhardt surfing Mavericks, Half Moon Bay.
Photo credit: Mathew Summer

The Commission took a strong stance on gender equity in the sport of Big Wave surfing, requiring equal access to the waves. As a condition of a 1-year permit to the organizers of the [Mavericks Surf Contest](#) in Half Moon Bay, the Commission required event sponsors to add a women’s heat. Because the contest is held in waters of the state, and requires temporary restrictions to public trust lands, the Commission made gender equity a condition of moving forward. The Commission also advised the organizers to further integrate female contestants and planners in future contests, which will be reviewed by the Commission through subsequent permits.

The Commission continued to look out for the public interest when reviewing local actions related to parking regulations, fees and curfews. In March, the Commission denied an [appeal](#) of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes’ preferential parking program. The City’s permit would have created a 24 hour “residents only” parking zone that would have prevented non-residents from parking along a 750-foot stretch of public street very near the shoreline. The area is popular with the public who seek access to bluff top trails, tide pools and visitor-serving amenities. And the Commission continues to work with State Parks and Sonoma County in a constructive and collaborative effort to refine the details of a parking program along the Sonoma coast that will be fully consistent with Sonoma County LCP and Coastal Act policies. This will ensure appropriate access for all, including visitors from more inland population centers, to this very special place.

Resource Protection: Careful Planning for Healthy Habitats

Coastal habitats come in many forms: wetlands and grasslands, dunes and forests, sage scrub and dune scrub, riparian corridors and intertidal zones. Protecting and restoring sensitive habitat is



Stilts foraging at Ballona Creek Marsh.
Photo Credit: Tim Hammond

central to the Coastal Act and crucial for wildlife survival. Furthermore, preserving the earth's biodiversity is ultimately the key to human health and resilient communities.

The Coastal Commission took several important actions to protect sensitive habitat in 2016. The agency worked closely with applicants to approve significant wetland restoration projects, many of which also enhance public access. These include removal of invasive ice plant at the [Ballona](#)

[Wetlands Ecological Reserve](#) in Playa del Rey; a 136-acre tidal wetland and upland restoration of a former golf course at [Devereux Slough](#) which is now part of the UCSB campus; invasive plant removal, native revegetation and public trail improvements at Zedler Marsh in the [Los Cerritos Wetlands](#); removal of non-native eucalyptus trees and oak woodland restoration at the [Elkhorn Slough](#) National Estuarine Research Reserve in Monterey County; [restoration of 29 acres of salmonid rearing habitat](#) from diked wetlands along Wood Creek and Freshwater Slough in Humboldt County; habitat restoration, wetland creation, water quality improvements and public access enhancements on six acres [Big Canyon](#) in Newport Beach, and a major restoration of the entire [San Elijo Lagoon](#).



The Elkhorn Slough in Monterey Bay supports the state's largest sea otter population.
Photo Credit: John C. Bruckman

In September, the Commission denied the controversial [Newport Banning Ranch](#) proposal to construct 895 homes, condominiums, a hotel, a 20-bed hostel, 45,000 square feet of retail space and 324 acres of open space and trails on 401 acres near the Santa Ana River in Newport Beach.

After numerous, lengthy hearings spanning more than a year, the Commission finally found the proposal inconsistent with Coastal Act policies protecting habitat for burrowing owls, California gnatcatcher and other sensitive species. Commissioners also had concerns about Native American cultural resources. The applicant is currently pursuing litigation in this matter.



Area of unpermitted grading that will be restored pursuant to a Commission enforcement action.

In March, the Commission resolved a serious, longstanding violation involving unpermitted grading and vegetation removal in the Santa Monica Mountains. Through the approval of Consent Cease and Desist and Restoration Orders, the property owner has agreed to restore approximately 20 acres of damaged Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area. The orders also require the property owner to pay a penalty of up to \$700,000, which could result in further resource protection and habitat restoration in the area.

The Commission also took steps to protect groundwater in a time of historic drought, denying several permits for private wells in Montecito. After commissioning a study from UCSB that demonstrated the wells would contribute to overdraft and sea water intrusion, the Commission rejected the applications, which would have been used for landscape irrigation.

The ever-popular [Coastal Cleanup Day](#) completed its 32nd year, and enjoyed the support of 53,575 volunteers who removed 649,759 pounds of trash from coastal and inland waterways. By August, the Commission had received \$276,027 in contributions in voluntary tax contributions for its public education grant work through the [Check the Coast](#) campaign. This ensures that the tax check off will continue on the 2017 tax forms, but every year the Commission must receive at least \$250,000 to remain on the tax forms. So please *Check the Coast* on your taxes if you would like to support the Commission's public education work!

Implementing Sea Level Rise Guidance

Throughout 2016, the Commission has actively engaged with local governments and other stakeholders to address sea level rise and implement the Commission's Sea Level Rise Guidance. This occurred through three main avenues: coordination of the LCP Local Assistance Grant Program, outreach and training events, and ongoing coordination with various agencies and stakeholder groups. The Commission is also working on several ongoing federally funded grant projects related to sea level rise and continues to identify data gaps, information needs, and next steps as sea level rise adaptation planning work continues to evolve.

Since the adoption of the Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance in August 2015 and throughout 2016, Commission staff have participated in 31 different outreach and training events. This includes 20 different events for external audiences and 11 for Commission staff. External events have included a variety of presentations at local or regional climate change and sea level rise adaptation planning events (e.g., workshops hosted by AdaptLA and the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative) and environmental and legal conferences/symposia (e.g., UC Davis Environmental Law Symposium, California State Association of Counties Legislative Conference, Ocean Climate Summit, Continuing Legal Education Conference on California Coastal Law) as well as training events with other state agencies (e.g., Caltrans, BCDC, Coastal Conservancy) and practitioners' organizations (American Planning Association, American Council of Engineering Companies).

Audiences for these events have included a mix of federal and state agency staff, elected officials, local government planners, those working in the field – including lawyers, engineers, researchers, and staffs of various environmental non-profits – students, and members of the public. Between coordination of the LCP Grant Program and other outreach and training events, the Commission has presented its Sea Level Rise Guidance and/or discussed related planning issues throughout the state over the past year, including in several noncoastal counties as well as through webinars available to interested parties across the state and country.

In addition, the Commission has engaged in ongoing coordination with a variety of regional, state, and federal partners. For example, throughout 2016, Commission staff, along with partners from the Coastal Conservancy, NOAA, USC Sea Grant, and USGS, have been working with FEMA Region 9 to develop workshops designed to engage local government staff and other relevant stakeholders in a discussion about community resilience to hazards and climate change. Also in 2016, the Commission worked with Caltrans to identify strategies for working together to better align ongoing Federal, State, regional, and local SLR vulnerability assessments and to improve integration of land use and transportation plans for dealing with the expected SLR and other climate change challenges.

Protecting and Providing Lower Cost Overnight Accommodations

The California Coastal Act requires that new development protect and provide lower cost visitor and recreational facilities where feasible – a challenging goal in the coastal zone, where property values are exceedingly high. Providing for visitor-serving and recreational land uses, particularly lower-cost overnight facilities, has been a high priority for this commission. In 2016 the



Youth group enjoying the new Puerco Canyon Camp.

Commission took actions that support lower cost overnight opportunities.

For example, the Commission secured \$4 million in in-lieu fee funds for development of tent cabins and a camp for foster youth at Puerco Canyon through a partnership with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

In July, the Commission required modifications to strengthen proposed policies in the [Channel Islands Harbor Public Works Plan](#) to ensure lower cost overnight accommodations are adequately protected, provided and

encouraged. The plan will facilitate expansion and redevelopment of an existing moderate-cost hotel with a new moderate-cost hotel and includes a broader policy that protects the Harbor’s existing stock of low and moderate cost overnight accommodations by prohibiting their removal or conversion to higher cost accommodations unless an equivalent number of low or moderate cost accommodation units are replaced on-site.

In December, the Commission certified an [LCP amendment](#) from the City of Carpinteria that addresses the reasonable regulation of short-term rentals in a manner that protects overnight accommodation opportunities and community character.

Throughout 2016, the Commission coordinated closely with the State Coastal Conservancy and California State Parks on efforts to develop new lower-cost overnight accommodations, including the potential for new cabin projects on State Parks property. In January, State Parks installed a demonstration cabin at an existing campsite in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. The demonstration cabin is open to the public at a rate of \$75 per night. In addition, State Parks and Commission staff has been working together on a



Lower-cost cabin in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for use of Commission in-lieu fees. The goal is to use the MOU as a model framework for collaboration on future projects where Commission in-lieu fees are used to fund lower-cost overnight accommodations in State Parks.

In November the Commission held the third in a series of public workshops discussing challenges and opportunities for protecting and providing [lower cost overnight accommodations](#) along the coast. In collaboration with industry professionals, staff provided draft recommendations to the Commission, heard public testimony, and received feedback from commissioners. This valuable dialogue has greatly informed the agency's understanding of how to better provide for this critical form of public coastal access.

Synthesizing several years of Commission deliberation and action, the Commission provided critical policy guidance to local communities on the subject of short-term rentals. The popularity of on-line booking sites has led to a proliferation of vacation rental homes nationwide. The trend has increased the number of relatively affordable accommodations, but it has also caused some friction within local communities. As local governments struggle to respond to these changes through ordinances and other mechanisms, the Commission has sought to protect both public access and community character. In December, the Commission sent a detailed [letter](#) to local planning directors throughout the coastal zone, reminding them of the need to incorporate short term rental ordinances into their LCP, or receive a CDP for short-term rental ordinances for uncertified jurisdictions, and offering technical advice as well as examples of local ordinances that have been approved by the Commission.

Outreach to Underserved Communities

The coast belongs to everyone, but fully realizing that vision requires ongoing effort. Too many California citizens are unable to experience what others take for granted. The Commission's Whale Tail grants program seeks to correct that injustice. In 2016, the Commission approved 39 grants totaling over \$781,000.

Twenty-seven of those projects (70%) focused entirely on underserved and inland communities, providing opportunities for school children and families to visit, learn about, and fall in love with their coast regardless of their situation or where they live.

Another seven grants included specific outreach to underserved groups while also serving the general population. The remaining five focused on the public at large. Funding for these grants comes from sales of the Whale Tail License Plate and from voluntary contributions to the Protect Our Coast and Oceans Fund on the state tax return form.



Students on a Santa Barbara Channel Keeper Seafari, supported by a Whale Tail grant.

The 34 grantees whose projects specifically targeted members of inland and underserved communities included:

- ❖ Action Network (southern Mendocino and northern Sonoma counties)
- ❖ Algalita Marine Research and Education (Los Angeles and Orange counties)
- ❖ Amigos de Bolsa Chica (Orange and southern Los Angeles counties)
- ❖ California Exposition & State Fair (Sacramento)
- ❖ California State Parks, Monterey District (Asilomar State Beach)
- ❖ Camp Ocean Pines (Cambria)
- ❖ Children's Maritime Foundation (Long Beach)
- ❖ City of Arcata (Arcata)
- ❖ City of Pacifica (Pacifica)
- ❖ Crystal Cove Alliance (Orange County)
- ❖ Fresno Chaffee Zoo (Fresno)
- ❖ Friends of the Dunes—2 projects (Humboldt County)
- ❖ Friends of the Napa River (Napa)
- ❖ I Love A Clean San Diego (San Diego County)
- ❖ Los Angeles Waterkeeper (Riverside and Los Angeles County)
- ❖ Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education (Los Angeles County)
- ❖ Marine Science Institute (San Francisco and Marin counties)
- ❖ Museum Foundation of Pacific Grove (Central Valley and Monterey Bay)
- ❖ National Fisheries Conservation Center (statewide)
- ❖ O'Neill Sea Odyssey (Santa Cruz)

- ❖ Orange County Coastkeeper (Orange County)
- ❖ Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (Greater Los Angeles)
- ❖ Parkview Elementary School (Port Hueneme, Ventura County)
- ❖ Rural Human Services (Del Norte County)
- ❖ San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy (northern San Diego County)
- ❖ Santa Barbara Channelkeeper (Santa Barbara)
- ❖ Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (Santa Barbara)
- ❖ Sierra Club Foundation, Los Angeles ICO (Los Angeles County)
- ❖ Sierra Streams Institute (Nevada County)
- ❖ Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods (Sonoma County)
- ❖ The Ocean Foundation (National City, southern San Diego County)
- ❖ Vida Verde Nature Education (San Francisco Bay Area)
- ❖ WiLDCOAST (San Diego County)

The Commission filled 8 vacancies in 2016, and efforts to recruit a diverse and qualified professional work force continued. Human Resources staff attended three job fairs, at UC Berkeley, UC Davis, and the Bay Area Career Fair. Exam postings for the two Coastal Program Analyst I/II exams were sent to 11 UC campuses, 20 CSU campuses, the California Maritime Academy, and both Polytechnic Universities. Inland academic institutions included UC Riverside, UC Merced, UC Davis, CSU Bakersfield, CSU Fresno, CSU Sacramento, CSU Dominguez Hills, CSU Fullerton, CSU Stanislaus, and several others.

In the 2016 legislative session, the Commission strongly supported and advocated for the passage of [AB 2616 \(Burke\)](#), a bill to give the Commission and local governments new authority to consider environmental justice concerns when acting on coastal development permit items. An earlier version of the bill included a provision that would have reinstated the Commission’s original authority over affordable housing as well. Unfortunately, that section was amended out in committee. But it has raised awareness of the issue, and may be the subject of a future measure.

But even though the Coastal Act no longer gives the Commission direct authority over affordable housing, the Commission continues to be supportive of local efforts to address the critical shortage. In 2016 the Commission certified numerous LCP amendments from multiple jurisdictions to update affordable housing provisions of LCPs such provisions for density bonuses, second units and special needs housing (e.g. Monterey County, Santa Cruz County, Santa Barbara County, Humboldt County, City of Pismo Beach, City of Oceanside, City of Carpinteria, City of Encinitas, City of San Diego, and City of Imperial Beach).

Advancing Caltrans Partnerships

Multiple years of planning investment with Caltrans paid off in 2016. Working with the Center for Collaborative Policy at CSU Sacramento during the spring and summer, both agencies explored ways to promote earlier coordination in pursuit of a sustainable, resource-sensitive transportation system that serves all modes of travel within the coastal zone. The team mapped out areas of shared and complementary missions in their strategic plans, especially surrounding sea level rise and completing the California Coastal Trail.

The process culminated with the approval of the *Plan for Improved Interagency Partnering between Caltrans and the Coastal Commission*, endorsed by both agencies' Directors in December of 2016. With the signing of an accompanying Partnership Agreement, both agencies now have a clear blueprint to follow as they move forward together with actions laid out in the Plan. The agreement also recognizes the correlation between healthy, accessible coastal resources and enhancing California's economy, livability and long-term sustainability. Staffs from both agencies plan to make a full report to the Coastal Commission and the California Transportation Commission in early 2017.

Several significant Caltrans projects were reviewed and approved in 2016, including a major bridge replacement and restoration project at [San Elijo Lagoon](#). After a decade of planning and study, the Commission approved a project that will widen and lengthen the bridges, while also improving tidal flow, accommodating the addition of HOV lanes and expanded rail service, and enhancing public access via a pedestrian bridge suspended underneath the new I-5 bridge. These projects will be constructed concurrently over a four-year period by a single contractor which allows for better coordination among all the project components.

In other parts of the State, the Commission also approved protection strategies along Highway 1 at Waddell Beach Parking Lot in Santa Cruz County during the year. Combining rock revetment with careful beach replenishment that buries the rock and builds the beach, this project protects public access and an array of recreational uses. Further north at Estero Americano, on the border of Marin and Sonoma, Commission and County staff worked with Caltrans to ensure that their approved bridge replacement project will improve coastal access by including space for cyclists, enhance habitat connectivity for wildlife, and improve flood management through anticipated climate change impacts over the life of the project.

The Commission approved a similar CCT partnership project led by the City of Arcata, Caltrans, and the Humboldt Council of Governments in 2016. Approximately three miles of a Class 1 multi-use trail will be constructed as one segment of the CCT along the railway and Highway 101 corridor, including bridges and interpretive signs. Humboldt County is planning a connecting project to the south. In combination, these two trail projects will help provide the public access components that the Commission previously found necessary to comply with Coastal Act policies in a federal consistency decision for a future Highway 101 safety improvement project.



New Section of the Coastal Trail along Humboldt Bay in Arcata and Eureka are part of a major Highway 101 improvement project.

Other Notable Commission Briefings, Events and Activities

The Commission held a number of informative public workshops and also received topical briefings on a variety of important coastal management concerns in 2016. These included topical briefings on various aspects of the program, including:

- [Identifying Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas](#)
- [The Science Behind Wetland Delineations](#)
- [Status of Vertical Accessways from Monterey County to Del Norte County](#)
- [Public Workshop: Lower Cost Visitor Serving Facilities](#)
- [Local Government Workshop](#)
- [Budget Briefings in July and August](#)
- [Public Education Annual Report](#)
- [Annual Conservation Open Space OTD Report](#)
- [Briefing and Update on Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance](#)

All of the Commission's actions and related reports may be viewed at the Commission's [website](#). A video archive of each entire meeting is also available at the [Cal-Span](#) website.

Challenges and Opportunities in 2017

The Commission's highest priority for 2017 will be continuing our work with our 29 local government LCP grant recipients on timely deliverables. As part of this effort, the Commission will continue outreach efforts to implement the Commission's Sea Level Rise Guidance document, by developing web-based guidance, technical support, sample policy and ordinance language and information-sharing for local governments and the public.

Staff has already begun to develop an action plan to implement recommendations from the Commission audit in accordance with deadlines provided by the Department of Finance. This will include improving accounting and billing practices, as well as seeking additional funding through the budget process to support the Commission's administrative, legal, planning and regulatory work.

Another high priority for 2017 is to increase efforts to improve and open more public access easements throughout the State, including working with the MRCA/Coastal Conservancy on a Public Works Plan to open and manage the unopened public access easements in Malibu.

In partnership with the Coastal Conservancy, State Parks and other local and other entities we look forward to forging agreements that direct existing low-cost overnight accommodation in-lieu fees to appropriate lower-cost projects. We will also seek opportunities to direct existing and new in-lieu fees to overnight, outdoor education and outreach programs for underserved and low-income youth and families.

We have the opportunity and the obligation to advance the interests of underserved and Native American Communities in 2017 by developing formal procedural guidance on Native

American/Tribal consultation, implementing the Commission's new authority to consider environmental justice issues in Commission's permitting actions and expanding recruitment efforts targeting diverse candidates for Commission employment. Our agency has demonstrated a whole-hearted commitment to these principles, and we will continue to make progress in the year ahead. One of the most meaningful opportunities to further integrate these values into the fabric of the agency will be through the 5-year update to the Commission's strategic plan.

As sea levels continue to rise, the Commission will continue to address the need to better understand the vulnerability of beaches, dunes and wetlands and the public access opportunities and ecosystem services these resources provide. A more detailed analysis of how these will change over time is required to understand how and when existing development patterns will need to change if beaches and other coastal resources are to be protected for future generations.

And furthering the agency's commitment to public transparency, 2017 will see the roll-out of the Coastal Data Management System public portal, so applicants and the public can track regulatory and planning items through the Commission process.

Like some of the Commission's greatest accomplishments, sometimes the greatest opportunities are the things you don't see -- until you do. We can never know what unexpected events or ideas might come our way in 2017 for better or worse, we just know they will. As we embark on our journey together into the "next 40 years," we carry with us a renewed commitment to the Coastal Act's founding principles of coastal protection, as seen through a 21st Century lens. Habitat loss has made remaining open space ever more important; public access must be protected and expanded in culturally relevant contexts; our Federal Consistency authority takes on added significance in the light of national events, and sea level rise prediction seem to get revised upwards with every new discovery. What will enable the agency to persevere through charted and uncharted waters ahead is the strength of the Coastal Act, the embrace of science, continued public support, and the passion, integrity and commitment of commissioners and staff working collaboratively in common cause.

###