

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

455 MARKET STREET, SUITE 300
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
VOICE (415) 904-5200
FAX (415) 904-5400
TDD (415) 597-5885



W6f

December 1, 2022

TO: California Coastal Commissioners and Interested Public

FROM: John Ainsworth, Executive Director
Madeline Cavalieri, Chief Deputy Director
Shana Gray, Deputy Director, Statewide Planning Unit & North Coast District
Brittney Cozzolino, Climate Change Analyst

SUBJECT: **2021 - 2025 Strategic Plan Implementation Update. Discussion only. No Commission action.**

Exhibit 1: 2021-2025 Strategic Plan Action Implementation Dashboard

Summary

This staff report presents a status and update on Commission staff progress in implementing the Coastal Commission's 2021 – 2025 [Strategic Plan](#) (Plan) since its adoption in November 2020. The summary report is followed by Exhibit 1, which includes a dashboard for all of the action items for each of the Plan's nine goals. Implementing the Plan has been very successful to date, with some action items complete and many action items that are underway or on-going. Major highlights and other Plan implementation accomplishments are discussed below. The report concludes with brief discussion on next steps and areas of focus for the next year of implementing the Plan.

Background

In November 2020, the Commission adopted a new five-year Strategic Plan that reorganized and built on the success of the Commission's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. The 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan provides a framework of nine goals, 50 objectives, and 199 specific actions to guide the agency's work for the next few years. Development of the Plan included proposed actions and objectives provided by all programs and units within the Commission; a review of the status of the actions under the 2013 – 2018 Strategic Plan for inclusion for items that were ongoing, incomplete or deferred; and significant public input including through an online portal on the Commission's website, through a dedicated Strategic Plan email address, and through testimony at the public hearings on the Draft and Final Strategic Plan.

All objectives and actions in the Plan are important for improving the overall functioning of the organization and benefiting the core mission and implementation of the policies of the Coastal Act. Thus, the Plan's objectives and actions are not listed in order of priority and the Commission plans to complete all actions during the five-year timeframe. Many of

these actions will be undertaken simultaneously during the five-year timeframe, as the tasks will be carried out by the relevant staff in the Commission’s program departments and district offices. The Plan also specifically acknowledges that implementation of many of the actions is contingent on securing additional funding and staffing. Nonetheless, the Commission is committed to achieving the goals identified in the Plan.

Highlights of Accomplishments

Despite interruptions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the resulting uncertain economic times, and agency capacity constraints, the Commission has made significant progress with Plan implementation since November 2020. The status of all Plan actions is provided in Exhibit 1 (the “dashboard”). As summarized in the table below, some actions have been completed (“complete”) or have entailed completion of major actions but have additional work to be done (“completed/on-going”). Many actions are noted as “in progress” if major objectives are yet to be completed, or “on-going” if the action is intended to be continued over the coming years (e.g., on-going coordination actions). Finally, some actions are “deferred” because they have not yet been initiated and/or the Commission does not have the resources necessary to undertake them.

Action Status	Number
Complete	7
Complete/On-going	7
On-going	144
In Progress	19
Deferred	22
TOTAL Actions	199

Below are highlights of some of the major Plan accomplishments to date. All accomplishments and statuses for each action are summarized in Exhibit 1. Additional accomplishment highlights can be found in the Commission’s annual Year in Review summaries which is published annually on the Commission’s February agenda.

Goal 1: Enhance Agency Capacity and Maintain an Effective and Diverse Workforce

The Commission has made significant strides with enhancing agency capacity and maintaining an effective and diverse workforce since Strategic Plan adoption. Noteworthy highlights include multiple new staff positions, availability of online exams and interviews, creation and implementation of the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Plan, and creation of the Peter Douglas Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs Coastal Planning Internship Program.

First, the Commission had the opportunity to expand agency capacity with the help of new funding sources and a renewed Caltrans Agreement, including additional positions in the Transportation unit, Accounting unit, Financial and Business Services unit, Legal unit, and Energy, Ocean Resources, & Federal Consistency unit. Multiple new positions were also created and recruited to support the Commission’s on-going climate resiliency work and special statewide projects including a Fire Resiliency Coordinator position, Coastal Resiliency Coordinator positions for each district office, and GIS and Transportation analyst staff dedicated to Caltrans’ statewide broadband installation project.

The Commission was able to recruit strong, diverse candidates for these positions and will continue to be able to do so with the conversion to online exams and interviews. The

Covid-19 pandemic initially necessitated an alternative to in-person exams and interviews, but recognizing the opportunity to reduce barriers moving forward, the Commission's Human Resources unit permanently converted the Coastal Program Analyst series to this online recruitment process in December 2021.

The recruitment process and job classifications themselves are also more equitable thanks to the on-going work of the Commission's Environmental Justice (EJ) unit and implementation of the JEDI plan. In 2021, the EJ Unit rebranded the Commission's former Racial Equity Action Plan as the JEDI Plan to better align with other state agencies who are also advancing JEDI plans, and made steady progress implementing its goals throughout the year. Working with the Commission's Human Resources Division and Senior Management Team, the EJ Unit drafted equity and inclusion language that is now added or being added to each employee's official duty statement. Duty statements for planners and enforcement analysts now also include a reference to EJ as part of their required policy analysis work. The EJ unit also developed training resources for hiring managers to consider equity in hiring decisions, all in alignment with Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan.

In December 2021, the Commission launched the Peter Douglas EJ and Tribal Affairs Coastal Planning Internship Program. The program offers paid internships for undergraduate college students, including those at community colleges. Named in honor of the Commission's late Executive Director who championed a similar program in the 1980's, this program aims to build a more diverse workplace that includes the perspectives and experiences of a wide variety of qualified applicants. The Commission welcomed the first intern to this program in Summer 2022, and following the three-month internship, the inaugural intern went on to work for Rep. Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara).

Goal 2: Maximize Public Access and Recreation for All

The Strategic Plan provides several objectives and actions that implement a pillar Coastal Act mandate to maximize public access and recreation opportunities for all people. While this is a core part of the Commission's daily work, a noteworthy highlight is the completion of a digital map that for the first time shows all the existing sections of the California Coastal Trail. The map is available as an interactive mapping tool or for download ([link here](#)) for members of the public to use for many purposes including finding public access points and connecting trails, determining which segments are multi-use or not, and zooming into trail alignments to see details such as parking, pathways and stairs. Planners can also see where it may be possible to address gaps in the trail via permitting and planning opportunities. The project was completed in collaboration with Caltrans, State Parks and many local agencies.

The Commission also continues its collaborative work in expanding the California Coastal Trail system under this Strategic Plan goal. A notable accomplishment towards this goal occurred in December 2021, with a conditional concurrence on the Federal Highway Administration's North Santa Cruz County Rail Trail project. When complete, this 7.5-mile addition to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail will provide for a contiguous 50 miles of spectacular California Coastal Trail that spans the length of Santa Cruz County, as well as enhanced parking areas to facilitate access. Another important Coastal Trail connection was approved by the Commission in April 2022: the Humboldt Bay Trail South project, a 4.25-mile-long Class 1 multi-use trail segment of the California Coastal Trail along Humboldt Bay between Eureka and Arcata, will connect an existing 6.3-mile-long

waterfront trail segment in Eureka to an existing 3-mile-long trail segment along the Arcata Bay waterfront to create a continuous 13-mile-long Coastal Trail route linking the region's two largest cities.

Goal 3: Protect and Enhance Coastal Resources

While many of the Commission's activities revolve around protecting and enhancing coastal resources, several important advancements have been made on this front since the Strategic Plan adoption. The first action of note is the completion of the [Aquacultural and Marine Restoration CDP Application Guidance](#). This guidance was developed in response to SB 262 with the goal of increasing state and federal agency coordination and regulatory certainty, and reducing duplicative information requests and the time and cost of obtaining a permit. In alignment with the California Natural Resources Agency's "Cutting Green Tape" initiative, the application guidance is intended to help applicants for marine aquaculture and restoration projects effectively navigate the CDP application process and provide partner agencies and other stakeholders with a better understanding of the Commission's CDP process as well as opportunities to coordinate with Commission staff.

The second accomplishment of note for Goal 3 is the Commission's efforts to advance wildfire resiliency in the coastal zone. Since November 2020, these efforts have included participation in the review of the California Statewide Vegetation Treatment Program; adoption of wildfire resilience and forest health-related Public Works Plans (PWP) for San Mateo County, Santa Cruz County, and the Upper Salinas Las Tablas Central Coast that will help to facilitate the planning, review, and authorization of vegetation treatment projects; certification of LCP amendments for the County of Ventura and the Santa Monica Mountains in Los Angeles that provide additional fire prevention policies; and continued coordination with public agencies including State Parks, Caltrans, and other special districts. These efforts all also align with the "Cutting Green Tape" initiative as they provide state and local agency partners with improved understanding on how to meet Coastal Act requirements and the opportunity for streamlined permitting processes.

Goal 4: Support Resilient Coastal Communities in the Face of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

The Commission's responsibilities for hazard planning, coastal resource protection, and public access preservation have become increasingly critical in the face of climate change and sea level rise. Although the Commission has a long history of factoring sea level rise into its decision-making process, the passage of SB 1 (Atkins) amended the Coastal Act to require the Commission to consider the effects of sea level rise in coastal resource planning and activities. The Commission's important regulatory role in sea level rise planning is thereby formalized and strengthened in this major win for coastal resources and public coastal access.

Additional noteworthy accomplishments towards this goal include the adoption of the Critical Infrastructure Guidance and several comprehensive LCP updates. First, the ["Critical Infrastructure at Risk: Sea Level Rise Planning Guidance for California's Coastal Zone,"](#) adopted by the Commission in November 2021, is an important advisory document that provides local governments and the public with information and recommendations for how cities and counties can address sea level rise issues related to transportation and water infrastructure in their Local Coastal Programs (LCPs). It includes consideration of nature-based solutions, environmental justice, and phased adaptation. This was a multi-

year planning effort funded by NOAA and was developed in close coordination with many state and local government partners.

Second, with the support of the Commission's LCP grant program, the Commission adopted comprehensive Land Use Plan (LUP) updates for the cities of Morro Bay and Half Moon Bay. Due to the extensive, up-front collaboration with city planners and Coastal Commission staff, both were approved as submitted with no suggested modifications. Half Moon Bay's LUP includes forward-thinking policies that anticipate sea level rise and focus on non-armoring alternatives that also protect and improve sensitive habitat. Morro Bay's LUP now includes hazard policies that explicitly define the date of "existing structure" as built before January 1, 1977, and not redeveloped since, further clarifying the definition of this much-debated term. These updates provide notable models for coastal jurisdictions across the state, both in their collaborative spirit and their strengthened approach to climate change and sea level rise planning.

Goal 5: Advance Diversity, Equity, Environmental Justice, and Tribal Relations

The Commission has made significant progress in advancing diversity, equity, EJ, and tribal relations since adoption of the Strategic Plan. Notably, the Commission created a new deputy director position to specifically oversee the agency's environmental justice and tribal affairs work at the highest levels of the agency. Other highlights include providing Spanish translation services, EJ and tribal outreach for major projects, Commission briefings on various equity topics, and creation of an internal tribal liaison group.

As of April 2021, the Commission started providing in-house Spanish translation services for documents and interpretation of public comment at Commission meetings because for the first time in the agency's history, two staff positions were reclassified to receive bilingual pay for providing Spanish language services. Thanks to two staffers with Spanish language fluency who were selected and passed state certification requirements, the Commission has created a new Spanish language access program. Members of the Spanish-speaking public who are unable or uncomfortable addressing the Commission in English now have the option to speak in their first language, which is very important for accessible public participation.

Staff recommendations are increasingly including provisions to help address structural inequities that affect EJ or tribal communities, as informed by extensive staff research and outreach. For instance, staff reports for the Belmont Pool and Aquatic Center in Long Beach, the amended operating permit for Oceano Dunes Vehicle Recreation Area, the Rancho Palos Verde automated license plate reader, and several desalination plant projects in recent years have all included extensive EJ review, discussion, and findings in the respective staff report. In the case of the Belmont Pool, the Commission added a special condition requiring the City to conduct extensive outreach and engagement with Long Beach's underserved communities and submit a revised equitable public access plan. In Oceano, the requirement to phase out OHV use on the dunes will provide significant air quality, traffic, and beach access improvements to the small rural town of Oceano that has been bearing those disproportionate burdens for decades. Commission staff also undertook extensive outreach to EJ groups and tribal representatives on a number of high profile projects to ensure that community voices were included in the process, such as the South Coast Water District desalination project in Dana Point (CDP 9-20-0691), the Poseidon desalination project in Huntington Beach (CDP 9-21-0488) and the desalination components of California American Water Company's (CalAm) Monterey

Peninsula Water Supply Project in Monterey County (CDP 9-20-0603 and De Novo CDP A-3-MRA-19-0034), which resulted in significant and diverse public input and participation in the Commission's review.

The Commission is also working to improve its understanding of systemic equity issues through staff research and trainings. In 2022, efforts on this front included Commission briefings on the historic roots of housing inequity in the coastal zone and on the equity analysis conducted for the FY 21-22 Whale Tail Grants Program. Affecting meaningful change in equitable coastal access and stewardship for all people requires an understanding of these historical inequities and present barriers, and this research will help to inform the Commission's decision-making and programming going forward.

In terms of tribal affairs, Commission staff formed an internal team of tribal liaisons representing each District and Unit with the purpose of improving communication and consistency related to tribal consultation practices in 2021. The team meets monthly to discuss tribal issues that arise in regulatory and planning work, develop and share best practices and collaborate on policy issues. This team also successfully developed and implemented a staff training program on the Commission's tribal consultation policy in 2022 and developed internal guidance for staff.

Staff has also continued to conduct formal tribal consultations on proposed projects to ensure that tribal voices are considered in the process. The Reservation Ranch Settlement Agreement in 2022, addressed a vast and complicated series of violations, involving harm to significant habitat for salmon and other species, impacts to public access, all of which occurred on land of great significance to a number of Native American Tribes. In addition to restoring large swaths of very significant habitat, the settlement provides for public access to the sloughs, provides for cultural resources surveys, and protection and transfer to public or non-profit entities of both easements and fee title of some very significant parcels of land.

Goal 6: Continue to Enhance the LCP Planning Program and Refine Implementation of the Regulatory Program

Goal 6 includes many on-going actions as the Commission continually seeks to enhance the LCP planning program and refine implementation of the regulatory program. Much of this on-going work is made possible through the FY 2021-2022 budget augmentation for the Commission's LCP grant program.

One particular effort to implement this goal is driven by the Local Government Working Group, which has worked together since July 2019 to explore challenges and develop solutions to better address sea level rise planning for California's coastal communities. The group consists of representatives from the California State Association of Counties, the League of California Cities, and a Coastal Commission subcommittee (Commissioners Groom and Wilson). The group produced a [Joint Statement on Adaptation Planning](#) in November 2020, which provides a set of guiding principles and identifies challenges, opportunities, and actions associated with proactive and effective sea level rise adaptation. Building on that foundation, the group has continued to meet and develop materials that respond to the actions identified in the Joint Statement. In December 2021, the Commission adopted four such products published by the working group including a framework for a phased approach to LCP updates for sea level rise, a call for regional approaches to resiliency and adaptation, an elevation and concurrence process to support

efficient LCP updates, and a “quick links” reference document (all available on the Commission’s website [here](#)). Together, these products demonstrate the group’s growing commitment to work collaboratively on sea level rise planning throughout the state and provide a path forward for both the Commission and local governments to advance work on sea level rise planning.

Goal 7: Expand and Enhance the Enforcement Program

The Commission’s ability to expand and enhance the enforcement program took a giant leap forward thanks to SB 433 (Allen), which took effect on January 1, 2022. Previously, the Commission could only assess penalties for violations relating to public access. This new law extends the Commission’s administrative penalty authority to apply to all types of Coastal Act violations, providing both a significant incentive for violators to quickly resolve existing violations, as well as a strong deterrent for creating new ones. Although the Commission will need additional staff to bring the full effect of this policy to bear on many of the unresolved violations in the nearly 3,000 case backlog, the ability to assess administrative penalties will help resolve high priority enforcement cases going forward. The Commission’s Long Beach office will be able to make progress on reducing this backlog for the South Coast District with the help of new FY 2022 funding secured for five new enforcement positions, and funding resources are being sought to support new positions elsewhere.

Goal 8: Continue to Develop and Maintain Partnerships and Enhance Public Presence

The Commission has continued to develop and maintain partnerships and enhance its public presence, even through the challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. Particular highlights include the continued success of the Whale Tail Grant Program, resumed in-person California Coastal Cleanup Days, debut of a public educational podcast, significant social media outreach, continued coordination with multiple coastal working groups, and progress associated with a renewed interagency agreement with Caltrans.

The 2020/21 Whale Tail Grants cycle was slower than usual due to the pandemic, with the approval of eleven targeted grants and no competitive grants. However, with the help of the significant FY 2021 General Fund budget allocation of \$10 million, the 2021/22 competitive Whale Tail Grants cycle was by far the largest in the program’s history. As described in the [2022 equity analysis](#), the 2021/22 Whale Tail grant cycle funded 90 projects total including 77 projects that focus on the inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, 42 that offer translation services or bilingual resources, 27 that support dual language learners, thirteen that engage people who identify as having a disability, twelve that engage Designated Rural Regions, eleven that engage inland communities, five that engage unhoused communities, four that engage carceral system impacted people, four that engage LGBTQ+ youth, four that primarily engage female and/or gender expansive individuals, and four that engage youth in the foster system.

As public health restrictions began to lift across the state, the annual California Coastal Cleanup Day was able to resume in person in many locations in September of 2021 and 2022. The 37th annual event (2021) included over 450 cleanup sites with over 36,000 volunteers, while the 38th annual event (2022) included approximately 619 cleanup sites with over 35,500 volunteers. The Commission also continued to encourage the neighborhood cleanup model that began in response to Covid-19 and partnered with California State Parks to host a Coastal Cleanup Day Facebook Live event to further promote statewide participation.

The Boating Clean and Green Program (conducted in partnership between the Commission and the California Division of Boating and Waterways) debuted the Dockside podcast in 2022 to engage more recreational boaters, boating facilities operators and water enthusiasts. The podcast is produced in partnership with the San Francisco Estuary Partnership and the California State Parks Safe Boating Education and Outreach Unit. Since April 2022, six episodes have been published on various topics that promote clean and safe boating practices with over 1,000 combined downloads.

The Commission's Public Education Program continues to engage the public and enhance awareness of coastal resource issues through social media. This included 515 posts on the @TheCACoast Twitter account in 2021 and 480 posts to date in 2022, as well as 257 posts on the @CA_king_tides Twitter account in 2021 and 121 posts to date in 2022.

Commission staff also continues to develop and maintain its partnerships through participation in multiple interagency and other coastal-focused working groups, including those listed in Appendix B of the Strategic Plan. This on-going coordination allows the Commission staff to provide technical and policy input on upcoming projects and studies, improve the efficiency of permitting processes, enhance relationships with agency partners and other stakeholders, and achieve better outcomes in our work to protect the California coast and ocean. Of note, the Commission commenced a partnering effort with California State Parks in 2022 that will provide agency managers the opportunity to collaborate on State Parks project planning and build interagency coordination.

Another important highlight for Goal 8 is the renewal of the interagency agreement between the Commission and Caltrans in 2020 and renewal of the partnership agreement between the Commission and Caltrans in 2022. These renewed agreements have allowed the continued enhancement of the Commission's Statewide Transportation Program with additional staffing and coordination efforts. This has resulted in approximately 50 coastal development permits, emergency permits, and waivers processed for Caltrans projects since November 2020. The Commission also has and will continue to participate in a number of Caltrans' state planning efforts, including active transportation planning to broaden multi-modal transportation and coastal access opportunities, climate action and adaptation planning to promote critical infrastructure resiliency and smart growth principles, 1282/STEPPE and other interagency efforts to promote early coordination and better CDP processing, working groups for advanced mitigation programs, wildlife corridor improvements, Aquatic Resources Connectivity, and other efforts as needed.

Goal 9: Enhance Information Management and E-Government

To highlight one of the Commission's many recent efforts to enhance information management and e-government, a public version of the Commission's Coastal Data Management System was finalized and published online in 2022 as the [Public Data Portal](#). The Public Data Portal provides members of the public with easy-to-access information

related to the Commission's local coastal planning, development permitting, and other activities along California's coast since approximately 1980. Commission staff will be working to add additional historic records and to continually improve this online service as resources allow.

Conclusion/Next Steps

The Commission has made strong progress on the Strategic Plan's goals, objectives, and actions since adoption of the Plan in November 2020. The Commission will continue these efforts in the coming years, through the planning horizon of 2025. Anticipated priorities for 2023 include (in no particular order):

- Completion of a wildfire resilience Public Works Plan for Monterey County.
- Continued LCP grant work, including offering Round 9 of competitive grants.
- Adoption of 309 grant deliverables including the Public Trust Guiding Principles and Action Plan and the Sustainability Principles.
- Continued coordination with Caltrans on significant efforts including the Broadband Middle Mile Network project.
- Continued work on expanding equity in sea level rise planning, including by developing policy guidance in coordination with local governments, environmental justice groups, California Native American tribes, and other stakeholders.
- Continued efforts to expand language access to Commission meetings, workshops, and other events including through building out the Commission's Spanish webpage and resources, and seeking additional funding and other opportunities.
- Continued outreach and coordination with California Native American tribes, environmental justice communities, and other stakeholders including through regular quarterly meetings.
- Strengthening of the interagency partnership between State Parks and the Coastal Commission to ensure informed and efficient project planning and development review at State Park facilities.
- Initiation of a new partnering agreement with the State Water Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards.
- Continued progress on offshore wind, including engagement with lessees and stakeholders on surveys and project development, interagency work on California's Strategic Plan for Offshore Wind and further development of a statewide strategy for addressing impacts to fishing and an environmental monitoring and adaptive management working group.
- Progress on building the agency's digital archives for efficient and improved responsiveness.
- Pursuit of creative funding opportunities to enhance staffing resources.

Commission staff intends to continue to provide periodic Plan implementation updates to the Commission, including through annual updates such as this one and through Executive Director reports at monthly hearings as needed.