

California Coastal
Commission

Year In Review 2022



Pelican, Catalina Island.
Photo by Paul Priebe.

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“When in
doubt, paddle
out.”

Nat Young, 1966 World
Champion Surfer



The Wedge, Newport Beach. Photo by Kevin Kielty.

2022 was the year when we collectively decided it was finally time to get back in the water. After a 24-month hiatus from public hearings, the Coastal Commission resumed in-person meetings in April, reuniting Commissioners, staff, and the general public at the Ventura County Government Center. The Commission marked the occasion by adopting a long-delayed [resolution committing to single-use-plastic-free Commission meetings](#) following an extensive briefing on plastic marine debris. By swearing off plastic water bottles, utensils, and food containers in Commission meetings, the resolution signaled the agency’s continued willingness to lead by example in an attempt to meet statewide goals for ocean health.

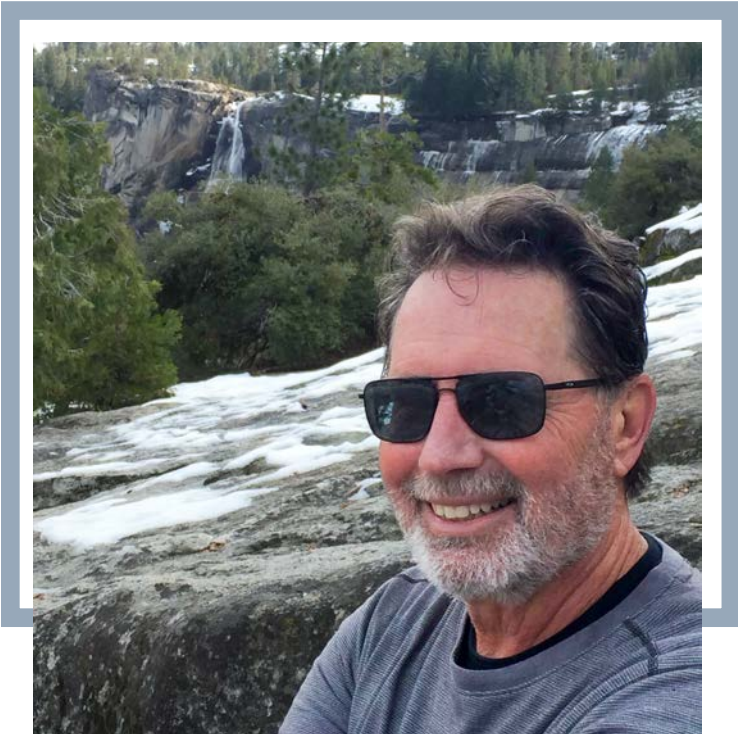
The teamwork, innovation, and flexibility required to instantly switch from live meetings to remote Zoom calls while maintaining the Commission’s demanding meeting schedule for two years required skills we never knew we had and formed bonds we may otherwise not have forged. April’s hybrid meeting was a test drive of the future, combining pandemic-era remote testimony with enhanced public health precautions for public gatherings. Hybrid meetings cut costs and reduce greenhouse gases while increasing opportunities for public participation and commissioner attendance. Nevertheless, the joy and relief at seeing one another, breaking bread together, and returning to a more normal cycle was palpable throughout the week.

But life is always rising up and falling away...

Three Commissioners stepped off the Commission this year to begin new life chapters. Former Commission Chair Steve Padilla handily won his State Senate race and will represent Southern San Diego County in the newly drawn Senate District 18. We look forward to working with him on coastal issues in Sacramento in the coming years. Commissioner Carole Groom hit her term limit after a long, successful career as San Mateo County Supervisor and is looking forward to enjoying life as a private citizen. Ex-officio Commissioner Mark Gold also left his seat representing the California Natural Resources Agency. We appreciate Mark Gold's service on the Commission and his valuable contributions to many important regulatory and planning decisions. Commissioners and staff will miss Mark, and wish him the best in his future endeavors. Although Commissioner Gold's expertise and perspective will be missed, the Commission was pleased to welcome Tom Gibson back as the CNRA ex-officio representative.

And finally, beloved Executive Director Jack Ainsworth announced his plan to begin his retirement at year's end, after seven years leading the agency through a critical generational change and capping a 34-year career with the Commission. Initially hired as a coastal program analyst in the Long Beach office in 1989, Jack worked his way up through the ranks as a Supervisor and Deputy Director. Jack stepped in as interim E.D. in 2016 to lead the agency out of a tumultuous and challenging period. To the great relief and gratitude of all, he accepted the position permanently in 2017. During the next six years, he earned the confidence and respect of Commissioners, staff, stakeholders, and activists as a steady, clear-eyed, and compassionate leader. His focus on strengthening relationships with our local government partners significantly advanced statewide planning efforts on long-simmering issues related to sea level rise, vacation rentals, and affordable housing. His support for significant budget augmentations in 2021 and 2022 dramatically increased grant funding for statewide planning, the Whale Tail Grant Program, and Coastal Act enforcement. His boundless optimism, humility, and deep empathy for others made him precisely the right leader for the moment. But his ethical compass also allowed him to stand firm on the fundamental principles of coastal protection. Jack's clarity of conviction set the stage for the permanent protection of Newport Banning Ranch, the potential for a vehicle-free Oceano Dunes, and the rejection of outdated desalination technology that would have harmed marine life across thousands of acres of open ocean waters. He exceeded every

expectation during his tenure. Director Ainsworth takes his place on history's short list of Coastal Commission Executive Directors who have dedicated their careers to public service and have left the coast better than they found it. He leaves exceptionally large flip-flops to fill.



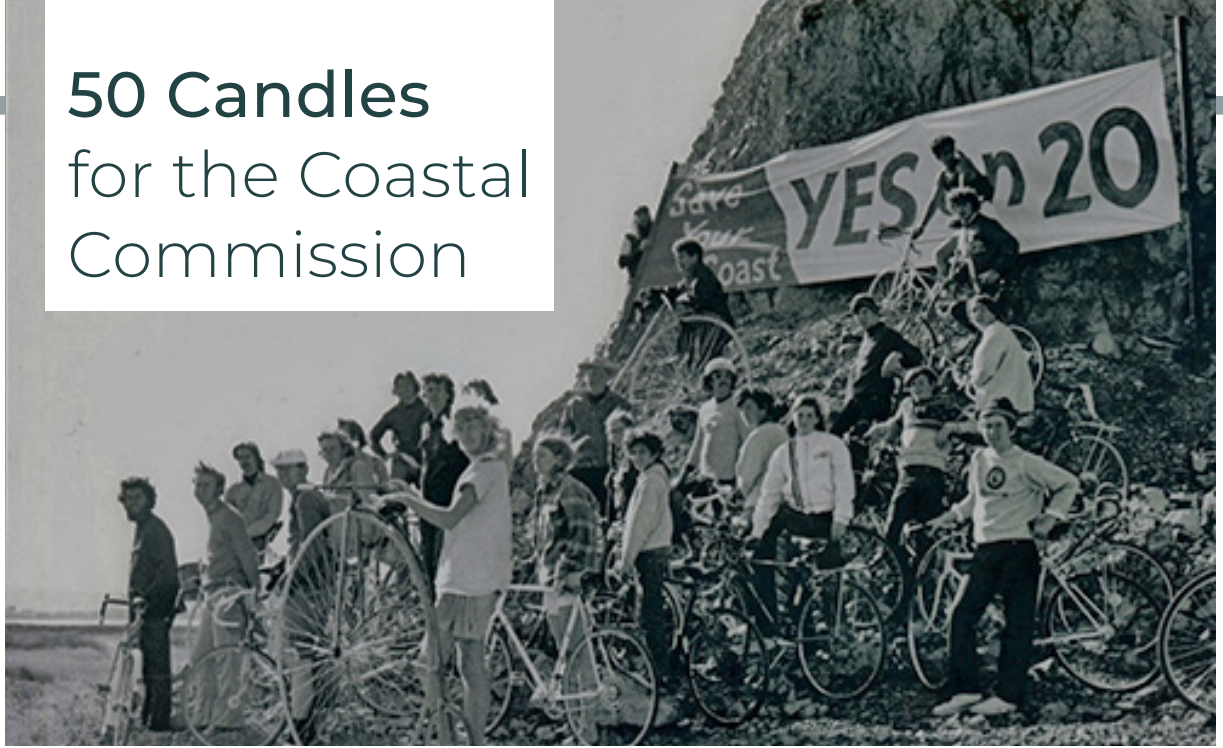
Executive Director Jack Ainsworth, pictured left, led the Commission for 7 years, retiring at the end of 2022.

On December 15, the Commission unanimously appointed Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, previously the agency's Senior Deputy Director, as the first woman to lead the Commission. Dr. Huckelbridge has held several different roles since joining the agency in 2009, including as a senior environmental scientist and the Deputy Director of the Energy, Ocean Resources, and Federal Consistency Unit. Since coming to the Commission, she has worked on a wide range of projects related to oil and gas development, power plants, wind energy, wetland and marine habitat restoration and mitigation, mitigation banking, transportation, and more. In announcing the selection, Chair Donne Brownsey stated, “Dr. Huckelbridge is an exceptional environmental engineer and scientist with years of experience at the Commission. “Given the challenges ahead for the California coast, we are confident that Dr. Huckelbridge is the right leader for these times.”



Dr. Kate Huckelbridge, pictured left, will serve as the Commission's new Executive Director starting in 2023. Dr. Huckelbridge is the first woman to hold the position in the agency's history.

50 Candles for the Coastal Commission



Supporters of Proposition 20, 1972. Photo courtesy of the Coastal Commission.

November 7, 2022, marked the 50th anniversary of Proposition 20, the grassroots ballot initiative that created the Coastal Commission and established the foundational structure and policies of the Coastal Act. The agency has learned a lot of lessons since 1972. Fifty years of coastal planning, permitting, litigation and conservation have led to ground-breaking case law, created countless new public access ways, and established lofty precedents for coastal protection on the part of the public. As each passing year brings a new crop of career staff retirements, it's critical that we capture that valuable history to inspire new generations of coastal managers and advocates on the art of the possible. Their stories are an incredible repository of important information that remains relevant today as we continually confront new twists on old fights. To ensure that the agency's institutional wisdom isn't lost as our institutional stalwarts move on, the Commission is partnering with an oral historian at the Bancroft Oral History Center to interview the folks who were part of the Prop 20 campaign and the early days of the Coastal Commission. The interviews will be part of a 30-minute documentary released in the Spring of 2023.



Environmental Justice



Photo by Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

The Environmental Justice unit continued to make steady progress toward integrating EJ and equity into the fabric of the Commission's day-to-day work. To oversee this ongoing effort, the agency established a new Senior Management position in May. Noaki Schwartz was tapped as the Commission's first Deputy Director of Communications, Environmental Justice, and Tribal Affairs, an important reaffirmation of the Commission's commitment to prioritizing inclusion and diversity.

In an effort to encourage more participation from Spanish-speaking members of the public, staff created a [Spanish language landing page](#) on the Commission website, featuring important resources that have been translated into Spanish. Currently, these resources include staff reports, FAQs, Commission contacts, a subtitled video on how to sign up to speak at hearings, and instructions on how to translate our entire website using Google Translate into Spanish and other languages.

The Commission also implemented live interpretation services from English to Spanish for the first time for a hybrid meeting in May in an effort to improve language accessibility to the decision over a controversial [Huntington Beach Desalination](#) facility proposed by Poseidon Water. The Commission provided a separate Zoom channel where remote participants could follow the

entire hearing in Spanish. In-person participants had the option of listening through headsets in the hearing room. At the request of EJ groups, the staff report and related materials were also translated into Spanish. EJ groups, tribal representatives, community members, and ocean advocates welcomed the Commission's unanimous denial of the proposed project, which would have significantly raised water rates while harming marine life through open-ocean intakes.



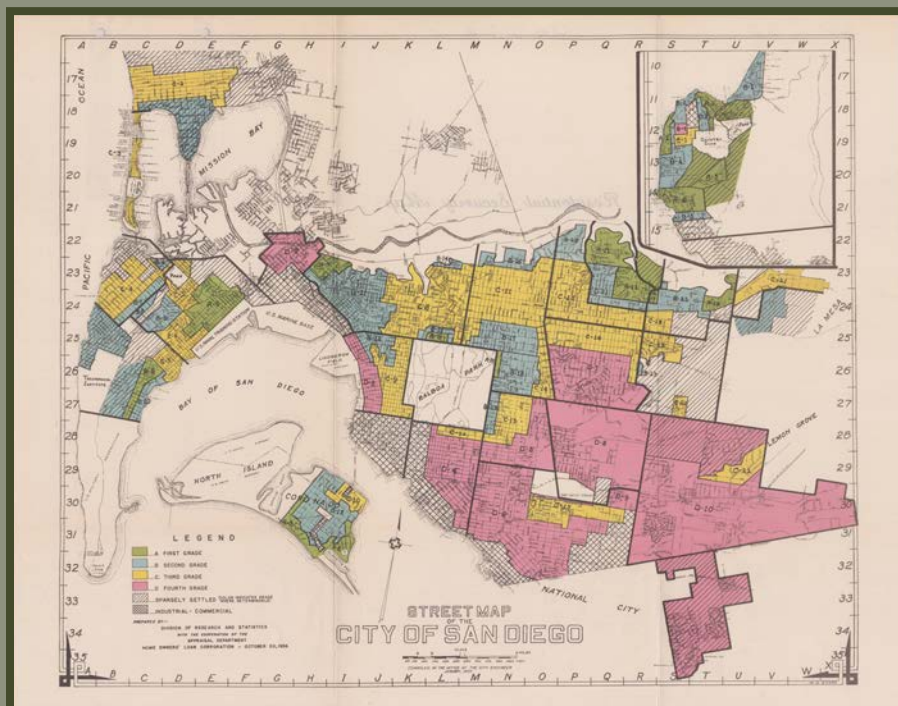
Noaki Schwartz, pictured left, became the Commission's first Deputy Director of Communications, Environmental Justice, and Tribal Affairs in May 2022.



The Commission's EJ Unit, pictured from left to right: Korrin Davis, Jessica Reed, Javier Padilla, Sumi Selvaraj, Eric Martinez, and Noaki Schwartz.

Working with the Commission's Human Resources Division and Senior Management, the Environmental Justice unit crafted language reflecting the agency's diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities to be included in the duty statements of all employees, allotting a certain percentage of staff time to furthering these goals. Duty statements for planners and enforcement analysts will also reference EJ and tribal work as part of their job requirements. Updating these documents reflects the Commission's expectation that Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles will be honored and upheld at every level of the agency.

In June, the Commission's 2021 Sea Grant Fellow, Hanna Payne, capped her year-long fellowship with a presentation to the Commission on her research on the [historical roots of housing inequity in the coastal zone](#). By delving deeply into several revealing case studies, her report helps shed light on the systemic reasons why California coastal communities are, on average, whiter and wealthier than the state overall. The report provides important scholarship for the evolving conversation about how to address the state's affordable housing crisis.



A redlining map of San Diego from the mid-1930s, created by the Home Owner's Loan Corporation. Coastal and hilly regions were typically rated 'A' or 'B', while bayfront and inland locations were typically given ratings of 'C' or 'D'.

The Commission welcomed its first Peter Douglas Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs Coastal Planning Internship participant in June. Diana Garcia, a recent graduate of U.C. Berkeley, was selected for the inaugural summer internship in Long Beach. This new opportunity offers paid internships for undergraduate college students, including those enrolled at community colleges. Named in honor of the Commission’s late Executive Director, who championed a similar program in the 1980s, the program aims to help build a more diverse workplace that includes the perspectives and experiences of a wide variety of qualified applicants. After her internship ended, Diana accepted another internship with Representative Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) in Washington, DC.

In October, the Public Education Unit presented an [equity analysis of the Commission’s Whale Tail Grants Program](#). This report presents an overview of recent efforts to advance equity, accessibility, and inclusivity in the WHALE TAIL® Grants Program, with a focus on the 2021/22 grants round. This work is related to the Commission’s Environmental Justice Policy, adopted in March 2019, which integrates the principles of environmental justice, equality, and social equity into all aspects of the Commission’s programs and operations. Commission staff worked with a California non-profit organization, Justice Outside, to analyze the grant application experience and revise materials, guidelines, and processes. Justice Outside works to remove the barriers that have historically prevented communities of color from accessing meaningful experiences in nature and professional opportunities in the outdoor sector. As a result of expanded outreach and improvements to the application, scoring and selection process, the number of Whale Tail grant applications in 2022 increased significantly in both overall numbers, as well as the diversity of proposals and geographic areas.

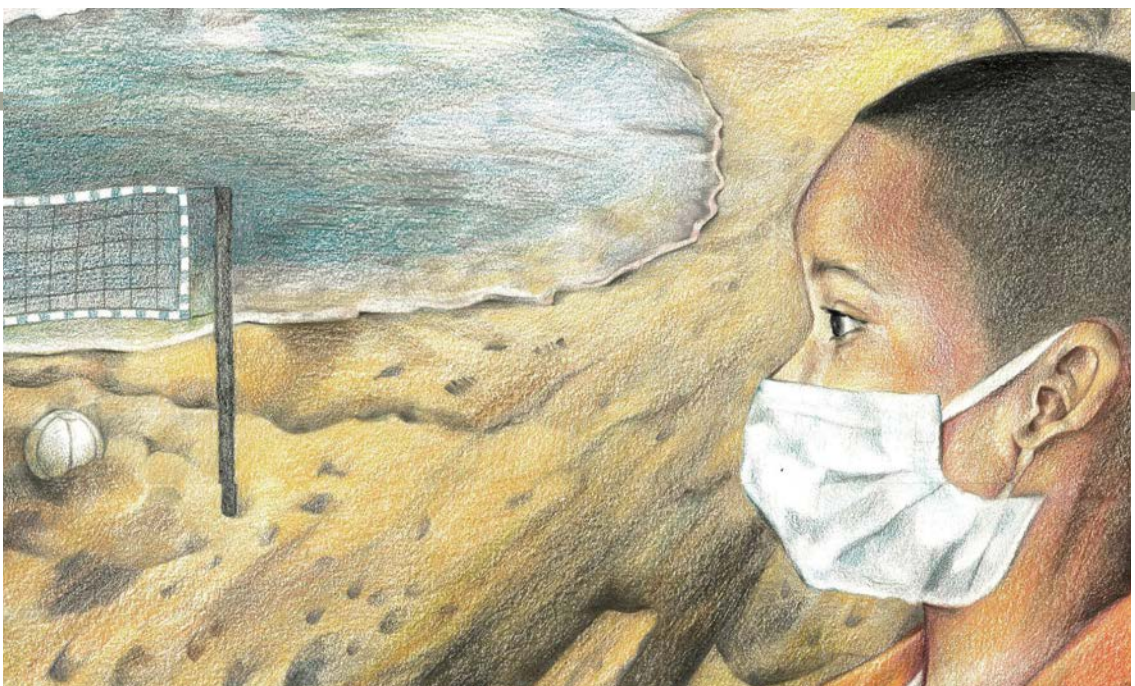


Above: Un Mar De Colores, 2021 Whale Tail Grant recipient. Below: A Malibu beach outing organized by the EmpowerHer Institute, another 2021 Whale Tail Grant recipient.



The equity analysis found, among other things, that out of 90 grant projects:

- 77 proposals focus on the inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC);
- 75 focus on youth programming;
- 67 applicant groups identify as part of the community they are engaging;
- 61 engage low-income communities;
- 42 offer translation services and/or bilingual resources;
- 27 support ESL (English as a second language) students and parents
- 13 engage people who identify as having a disability;
- 12 engage Designated Rural Regions;
- 11 engage inland communities;
- 8 support a tribe or tribal entity or tribal programming;
- 5 engage unhoused communities;
- 4 engage people impacted by the carceral system;
- 4 engage LGBTQ+ youth;
- 4 primarily engage female and/or gender-expansive individuals; and
- 4 engage youth in the foster system.



Oil Spill Destruction. By Ashley Shin, Grade 9.

Tribal Collaboration



Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chief Fred Collins, who passed into spirit on October 1st, 2021, at Lisamu' (Morro Rock). He is succeeded by his daughter, Violet Sage Walker. Photo courtesy of San Luis Obispo Tribune.

The Commission continued to implement its Tribal Consultation Policy throughout the year. An internal staff team of tribal liaisons representing each District office and Unit facilitates improved communication and consistency related to building relationships with California coastal tribes. Early in the year, the team developed and conducted an all-staff training program on tribal consultation accompanied by internal guidance resources for staff. The team continues to meet monthly to discuss tribal issues that arise in regulatory and planning work and collaborate on policy issues.

Staff also continued to conduct formal tribal consultations on proposed projects to ensure that tribal voices are considered in the process. In April, staff from the Commission, State Coastal Conservancy, State Lands Commission, and State Parks joined Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot at Hollister Ranch in Santa Barbara County to meet with and listen to Tribal representatives with ancestral ties to the Gaviota Coast. Respecting Tribal concerns and protecting cultural resources will be central to the State's process for providing public access to the Hollister Ranch coastline.

In May, the Commission cleared the way through a [federal consistency determination](#) for sacred stones from the Port San Luis breakwater to be returned to Morro Rock, known as Lisamu' by the first peoples of San Luis Obispo, the Northern Chumash, Salinan and yak titu titu yak tilhini (ytt). The joyous reunification took place in August with the Army Corps of Engineers barging approximately 10,000 tons of rocks 15 miles upcoast, to be deposited about 1,500 feet west of Morro Rock. Violet Sage Walker, Chairwoman of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, dropped the first of these sacred stones into the water from a traditional canoe as part of a ceremonial celebration. The plan approved by the Commission calls for stacking the stones in a modular design which has the potential to enhance the rocky bottom habitat for multiple species.

Staff has also conducted formal and informal tribal consultations regarding a complicated series of violations in Del Norte County at the mouth of the Smith River, the ancestral home of the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation. The final Consent Order, as modified by the Commission and approved in June, will restore vast swaths of salmon habitat; provide public access to the sloughs; provide for cultural resource surveys on Tillis Island, a deeply sacred site for the Tolowa; and transfer some very significant parcels of land to public or non-profit entities.

Commission staff also worked with the Tribal non-profit Kai Poma throughout the year on planned improvements to manage public access at Blues Beach in Mendocino County. The property is currently owned by Caltrans but will be transferred to Kai Poma pursuant to [SB 231](#) (McGuire, 2021). Eliminating the current unauthorized vehicle use while still allowing for managed pedestrian access on the beach and bluffs in a manner that protects cultural and biological resources requires creative planning and close collaboration.

After more than a year of remote meetings, staff from the Coastal Commission and Caltrans met with tribal leaders and local law enforcement in October to walk the land together in preparation for returning the land to tribal stewardship.



Blues Beach in Mendocino County. Photo by the Coastal Commission.

Public Access and Visitor-Serving Opportunities



Crystal Cove Cottage. Photo by J. Christopher Launi.

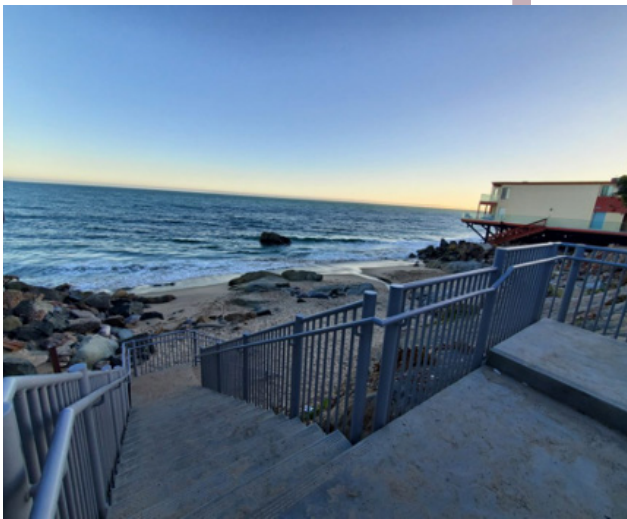
The Coastal Act calls for maximizing public access, and the Commission has many partners in fulfilling that mandate. One of the most successful champions for access is the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). During the August Commission meeting at the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's King Gillette Ranch, MRCA staff gave a presentation on two newly completed public access projects in Malibu that were made possible by funding from the Violation Remediation Account (VRA). The VRA is the account in which the administrative penalties from successful Coastal Act enforcement actions are deposited.

Using VRA funding, MRCA was able to design and construct two new stairways from the Malibu Lagoon State Beach parking lot on Pacific Coast Highway to Surfrider Beach at the foot of the Malibu Pier, complete with new trash bins and public access signs.

The two new stairways that will increase public access to Surfrider Beach from the Malibu Lagoon State Beach parking lot and the Malibu Pier. Photos courtesy of the MRCA.



Just downcoast at Big Rock Beach, MRCA replaced an informal bluff trail with a newly engineered stairway to a pocket beach called Maritime Rocks. A time-lock allows for daytime access year-round, and a bench and ADA-accessible platform provide scenic views of Santa Monica Bay. Signs with QR codes linked to local tide charts enable visitors to safely line up their visits with those times when the beach is at its widest. Finally, a new, visually permeable fence along the blufftop keeps pedestrians from accidentally getting too close to the bluff edge without compromising ocean views.



Left: Scenic overlook above Maritime Rocks beach. Right: New stairway providing access to Maritime Rocks beach. Photos courtesy of MRCA.

In February, the Commission approved a [permit amendment](#) for the City of Long Beach, allowing for the construction of a 100-foot-long, ADA-compliant, removable public access pathway on the sandy beach to extend an existing bike and pedestrian path at Granada Beach. The city is making additional improvements to the existing restrooms, shade structures, and concession area. The ADA path will improve accessibility to the entire area.

In March, the Commission approved a Caltrans proposal to build a 1.23-mile bike and pedestrian path underneath Highway 5 along Peñasquitos Lagoon in San Diego County. The trail will link three regional trail systems. This project was included as a “community enhancement” in the North Coast Corridor Public Works Plan (PWP), a comprehensive program of transportation, community, and resource enhancement projects along the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) rail line and Highway 5. The PWP was initially approved by the Commission in 2014 and includes numerous transportation and public access projects which the Commission was instrumental in securing. Caltrans and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) continue to make steady progress on the construction of projects within the plan, demonstrating the value and benefit of integrated long-term transportation planning for more than just cars and trains.

Also in March, the Commission considered two major remodels of older, beach-front hotels. The first was an appeal of a significant remodel of the Pacific Edge Hotel in the City of Laguna Beach. The original hotel was built in stages, between 1932-1967, at Sleepy Hollow

Beach. The newly re-named [Highgate Hotel](#) proposed adding 25 new rooms, a new café, conference space, pool and spa, and a lateral public access easement on the beach area fronting the hotel. Working with the applicant, the City, and Unite Here Local 11 (appellant), the Commission negotiated revisions to the project, which included six lower-cost rooms (\$130/night, inclusive of parking and resort fees), as well as payment of an in-lieu fee to fund additional access improvements at nearby Crystal Cove State Park. The applicant also agreed to dedicate a public access easement across the sandy beach fronting the hotel, provide free public transit passes for interested employees, and accommodate all guest, staff, and resort vehicles entirely on site to preserve existing parking spaces in the public right-of-way. The Commission's conditions of approval also required drainage and stormwater management plans to enhance water quality, landscape plans with entirely drought-tolerant native species, a marine debris and plastics reduction program, use of lighting and materials to avoid bird impacts, and waiver of rights to a future seawall.

The second was a permit application to [redevelop the Miramar Hotel](#) in Santa Monica, just inland from Santa Monica State Beach. The applicant’s proposal to expand the 301-room luxury hotel with its 103 parking spaces into a mixed-use development with four cafes, retail space, 312 hotel rooms, 60 condominium units, and 537 parking spaces on 4.5 acres included the conversion of an existing parking lot to support 42 affordable housing units. Although the Commission would generally have required the construction of 51 lower-cost overnight rooms, the cost of the affordable housing made this infeasible. Instead, the Commission required \$6.47 million in-lieu fees, which will be used to expand lower-cost opportunities nearby. The Commission also required a marine debris reduction plan to limit single-use plastics, Tribal monitors during construction, and a plan to incentivize non-vehicular access, including bike parking and a public transit reimbursement program.

In April, the Commission approved the construction of a new segment of the California Coastal Trail along the northeastern side of Humboldt Bay. This 4.25 miles of Class 1 multi-use trail will connect to an existing 6.3-mile-long CCT segment along the Arcata Bay Waterfront, creating a continuous 13-mile-long CCT trail route along Humboldt Bay and linking the region's two largest cities. (The Commission previously approved the two existing trail segments). The approval includes the construction of three bridges, two viewing platforms, interpretive signs, fencing, and the removal of approximately 200 non-native Eucalyptus trees.



Humboldt Bay Trail.
Photo by Hank Seeman.

On June 4, the Commission celebrated the opening of the new pedestrian and bike suspension bridge over San Elijo Lagoon. Suspended over the water and underneath the Highway, the bridge provides an innovative addition to the dedicated North Coast Bike Trail, a new 27-mile trail that complements the Coastal Rail Trail and links to other regional bike corridors. The lagoon itself is rebounding from years of degradation as restoration efforts approved by the Commission in 2017 continue to advance. New tidal channels have increased tidal circulation and water quality, supporting the return of wading birds and aquatic plants. [Monitoring reports](#) indicate that the efforts have been a huge success. The late Gabe Burr, a manager in the Coastal Commission’s San Diego office, was instrumental in the planning efforts for both public access and lagoon restoration at San Elijo and worked for many years to ensure that it would benefit future generations of many species.

San Elijo Suspension Bridge providing bike and pedestrian access over the San Elijo Lagoon. Photo courtesy of SANDAG.



Sea Level Rise: Raising Awareness & Raising the Bar



Crissy Field in San Francisco during high King Tides. Photo by King Tides Project.

The Commission awarded approximately \$8.3 million to local governments for sea level rise planning in 2022. These grants support LCP updates in 15 jurisdictions from Arcata to National City, bringing the Commission’s total statewide planning investment to more than \$16 million since the program began in 2014. Combined with approximately \$165 million in the 2022-23 State Budget for nature-based solutions and coastal resiliency projects to be administered by the Ocean Protection Council and the State Coastal Conservancy, California is continuing its commitment to advancing both sea level rise planning and project implementation.

The Commission approved the first of two competitive grant rounds in March. Round 7 awarded a total of [\\$3,405,600](#) to the Cities of Trinidad, Santa Cruz, Pismo Beach, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and San Clemente. Proposed work includes the finalization of two comprehensive LCP updates (Trinidad and Pismo Beach), the development of three coastal monitoring programs to support the implementation of SLR adaptation strategies (Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara), two site-specific adaptation plans (Santa Barbara), and a nature-based adaptation feasibility report (San Clemente), as well as five LCP amendments to incorporate the findings and recommendations from the various adaptation planning efforts.

Round 8 was approved in November, providing [\\$4,476,389](#) to Humboldt County, Mendocino County, and the City of Fort Bragg. Mendocino County will pursue a comprehensive LCP update. Humboldt County and Fort Bragg will each amend their LCPs to include the SLR policies identified by the Local Government SLR Working Group as a minimum baseline for planning, as well as a variety of technical studies that assess the impacts of sea level rise and climate change on coastal resources, regional coordination, and development of coordinated adaptation approaches.

The Commission’s non-competitive “rolling grant” program, created in 2021, allows cities and counties to receive up to \$100,000 with minimal effort and no application deadlines. Over the course of 2022, the Commission awarded five non-competitive grants to the Cities of Pacific Grove, Point Arena, Marina, Arcata, and National City for a total of \$500,000. The proposed work broadly includes efforts to fill data or information gaps, finalize previously started LCP update work, or initiate the first steps in adaptation planning.

Based on the success of this program, the Commission [approved an increase](#) in the cap for non-competitive grants from \$100,000 each to \$500,000 each at the November meeting.

This planning work is happening in the nick of time.

[NOAA’s 2022 Sea Level Rise Technical Report](#), developed with 23 co-authors from organizations including NASA, FEMA, and USGS, was released in June. It provides the most up-to-date projections for global and regional sea level rise scenarios for the U.S. through 2150. Sea levels are expected to rise an average of 10-12 inches by the year 2050 and as much as 7 feet by the end of the century.

Of course, there will be a lot of variability depending on location, landforms, seismic factors, and global conditions. To help local governments, state agencies, and the public navigate the complexities of sea level rise planning and translate them to the local level, the Commission has produced a series of statewide guidance documents and related information materials. In June 2022, Commission staff released a [Draft Public Trust Guiding Principles and Action Plan](#), describing how the public trust doctrine relates to the Commission’s work on sea level rise planning. The document presents a series of principles that guide the Commission’s work on this subject and sets forth next steps and research priorities for the Commission. Finalization of the Guiding Principles and Action Plan is anticipated in 2023.

And in August 2022, the Ocean Protection Council released the final [State Agency Sea-Level Rise Action Plan for California](#), which outlines a coastal resiliency roadmap and lays out adaptation planning and implementation actions for the next five years. The plan was developed, in partnership with 17 state agencies, including the Coastal Commission, to align the state’s strategic planning efforts across multiple sectors.

The Commission’s Transportation Program recently partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Caltrans to highlight the “intersection” of sea level rise and transportation infrastructure. The collaboration resulted in a spectacularly informative [Resilient Coastal Roads StoryMap](#) published in February. This web-based tool looks at transportation infrastructure and resource protection through the lens of climate change throughout California’s coastal zone. NOAA invited the Commission and Caltrans to help create the StoryMap to elevate California’s inter-

agency partnership and transportation resiliency solutions as a model for other coastal states. The StoryMap was shared through a [NOAA press release](#) and social media. The goal is to encourage longer-term approaches with more holistic and resilient corridor management strategies and projects that will ensure travelers reach their destinations throughout changing circumstances into the future.

The Commission continues to consider sea level rise when working with local governments, project applications, and other stakeholders. In addition to routinely evaluating sea level rise in hazards assessments and technical reports and incorporating sea level rise considerations into staff recommendations and Commission actions, the Commission approved several notable projects which implement cutting-edge implementation measures.

Sometimes interim measures are necessary to protect resources in the short term until longer-term solutions can be worked out, particularly for critical public infrastructure. That was the case in April, when the Commission approved the [repair and maintenance of an existing storm drain](#) and related infrastructure at Dockweiler Beach in Los Angeles to address damage and deterioration as well as protect against coastal hazards that are expected to be exacerbated by sea level rise. The storm drain prevents flooding for Playa del Rey, Loyola Village, Westchester Districts, and the north runways of LAX. The project includes installation of a tidal gate and wave protection barrier at the outlet. Authorization is limited to a ten-year term and requires the City to submit a sea level rise adaptation plan in 5 years that addresses longer-term hazards and impacts to public access resulting from the continuation of the development in a recreational beach area exposed to hazards.

In June, the Commission issued a waiver for State Parks’ [South Carlsbad State Beach Dune Habitat Project](#). This passive dune creation trial project will assess the most effective means for future habitat restoration and sea level rise adaptation strategies in line with the designated use of the beach area.



South
Carlsbad
State
Beach
Dunes.

Also in June, the Commission approved the [Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project](#), which includes elevating a portion of Highway 1 with a new bridge to restore historic Carmel River floodplain function and removing existing roadbed fill. In addition to restoring a significant acreage of floodplain, riparian, and scrub habitats; protecting agricultural operations; and providing new public recreation areas and connectivity, the project helps address historic flood problems and increases coastal resiliency as sea levels rise.

Del Mar Bluffs. Photo by Wesley M. Farmer.



At the same meeting, the Commission gave the go-ahead for the construction of a multi-benefit [bluff stabilization project](#) in the city of Del Mar. The nation's second-busiest rail corridor runs along the Del Mar Bluffs, supporting both freight and passenger service between Los Angeles and San Diego. The bluffs are also a popular recreation spot and part of the region's iconic scenic landscape, towering 50-70 feet above the beach. With a history of landslides and slope failures exacerbated by sea level rise, the 1.6-mile stretch of rail corridor is increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic erosion events. Over the long term, the entire stretch of rail will need to be relocated landward, as no amount of armoring will ultimately protect this critical infrastructure. At that time, all existing hardscape will be removed. The Commission's consistency certification will ensure that this critical stretch of rail will not be impacted over the next 30 years while SANDAG and other stakeholders pursue permanent relocation options.

In November, the Commission approved a [nature-based adaptation pilot project](#) involving construction of a temporarily buried cobble berm with vegetated sand dunes seaward of the coastal trail at the southeast end of Doheny Beach in Dana Point. The pilot project will include site monitoring for five years following construction to inform the region's longer-term sea level rise adaptation plans. Orange County Parks teamed up with the California Department of Parks and Recreation on this innovative approach.

Raising public awareness of the threats and opportunities associated with sea level rise is a continual requirement of successful SLR planning and adaptation. Without public understanding and support for sustainable solutions, problems become much more challenging to solve.

The most visible of these efforts is the Commission's annual [California King Tides Project](#), the largest crowd-sourced science project of its kind. King Tides are the highest high tides of the year, about a foot or two higher than average. The King Tides Project invites people to document and share local conditions by uploading photographs of the highest high tides in their local coastal area to a dedicated web page.

Collectively, this creates a statewide visualization of what a normal high tide would look like on a daily basis with one or two feet of sea level rise.

The flooded roads and trails, submerged beaches and parks, and inundated infrastructure provide snapshots of our future. They serve as graphic illustrations of the urgent need for meaningful adaptation planning and implementation. This year’s King Tides events also included an educational webinar co-hosted with the San Francisco Estuarine Institute and several tidepool, slough, and estuary explorations led by partner organizations. At least 35 local community events were organized around the King Tides.

The Winter 2022/23 King Tides occurred on December 23-24, 2022, and January 21-22, 2023. Working with partner organizations, the Coastal Commission’s Public Education unit posted more than 1,100 photos taken in December and January. For ease of access for planners, scientists, media, and other members of the public, the photos are [mapped](#) and archived all the way back to 2018.

The Commission tracked at least 44 unique articles, television and radio segments about the King Tides Project published throughout the 2022-23 winter season, along with numerous social media posts. Growing participation in the event demonstrates that the public is becoming increasingly aware of this natural phenomenon and the future it reveals.



Big waves at a high King Tide in Pacifica, San Mateo County. Photo by the King Tides Project.

Healthy Habitats for Coastal Species



Camouflage off of Laguna Beach coast. Photo by Jill Matyuch.

Environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA) are protected by some of the strongest policies in the Coastal Act. Conserving, restoring, and protecting these habitats from the pressures of population growth and climate change is some of the Commission's most important and technically challenging work.

One of the most notable conservation successes in 2022 was the acquisition of Newport Banning Ranch in Orange County. The Commission set the stage for preservation six years earlier, when it [denied a proposal](#) to build 895 houses and 45,000 square feet of retail space on rare and sensitive habitat that supports several listed species, including endangered burrowing owls. On December 16, 2022, a long, convoluted odyssey in coastal protection came to a successful close, as the [Trust for Public Lands](#) and the [Banning Ranch Conservancy](#) closed escrow on the 387-acre property. Made possible by a combination of [public and private funding sources](#), the property will be known from now on as the Randall Preserve, in honor of Frank and Joannn

Randall who donated \$50 million toward the purchase. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) will hold title to the property and manage it for public access. This acquisition brings closure to a controversial development plan for the largest remaining coastal wetland property in Orange County at the mouth of the Santa Ana River. Formerly used for oil extraction, the property will be fully restored in the coming years and protected in perpetuity.



Sea lions. Photo by Stacy Boorn.



In April, the Commission approved the City of San Diego's ordinance for the [seasonal closure of the sea lion rookery](#) in La Jolla. The ordinance is intended to reduce the incidents of sea lion harassment and other human/wildlife conflicts. Last year, the Commission approved an emergency permit allowing the closure of Point La Jolla for August and September, the height of the pupping season, while the City worked on a permanent solution. The new ordinance covers the entire pupping season from May 1 to October 31, while still allowing access to the water for fishing.

The city will also add a stairway, hire seasonal rangers to patrol, and deputize them to be able address federal marine mammal harassment laws. During the hearing, Commissioners expanded the closure area, and required the City to submit annual reports. While the City is still working on implementation details, the framework for better management is in place.

As California intentionally transitions toward a carbon-free future, the question of how to remediate aging oil and gas infrastructure is moving to the forefront. In July, the Commission approved the State Lands Commission's application to [remove two of the remaining oil piers](#) at the Ellwood Onshore Facility near Haskell's Beach in Goleta. These unsightly structures located on State Tidelands are remnants of the oil production that occurred along the Northern Santa Barbara Channel Coast from the late 1920s to 1990s. The project also involved decommissioning the remaining portions of the oil wells housed in the piers, and site restoration after project completion. Minor improvements to the existing beach access road and right-of-way will facilitate project activities, as well as provide longer-term benefits for public access after the project is complete. The first caissons were removed in December and work started immediately on the second pier with an expected completion date of February 2023. Removing these obsolete structures is a visual reminder of the steady progress being made to shift away from the carbon economy of the last century.

Ellwood facility near Haskell's Beach in Goleta, before removal (left) and after partial removal (right). Photo courtesy of the State Lands Commission.





Aerial image of Smith River Estuary. Photo courtesy of CDFW.

The Smith River estuary in Del Norte County will soon undergo one of the largest estuarine [restoration initiatives](#) on the west coast, as part of an extremely complex Consent Restoration Order approved by the Commission in June. The Smith River is the last completely undammed river system in California and is a salmon stronghold. In the heart of the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation’s ancestral homeland, it runs through the old-growth redwoods of Jedidiah Smith State Park and Redwood National Parks. Restoration requirements include removal of levees, roads, tide gates, and illegally filled areas of the estuary, as well as the permanent protection of 31 acres of riparian forest. (More details on pg. 40)

In November, three California agencies signed off on a Pesticide Use Overview and Job Aid to assist CCC staff in making regulatory determinations related to pesticide use and integrated pest management. The approval comes after two years of collaboration between the California Coastal Commission, the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on intersecting roles and responsibilities regarding human health and the environment related to the use of pesticides. The information includes resources, definitions, and decision-making prompts to consider when evaluating coastal development permit applications. These resources will ensure the use of safer, more sustainable pest management practices in California’s coastal regions to the benefit of people, pollinators, and wildlife.



Wind and Water



Egg yolk jelly at sunset, Monastery Beach, Carmel. Photo by Bruce Sudweeks.

California is committed to building a clean, renewable energy economy, with a goal of achieving 90% clean energy generation by 2035 and 100% by 2045. Offshore wind (OSW) will be a critical component of reaching that goal. The California Energy Commission set a goal for the development of up to 25 Gigawatts of power generated by offshore wind, and the Coastal Commission is a vital partner in that effort. In 2021, after a multi-year investigative process, the Federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) designated approximately 580 acres of federal waters off the coast of Humboldt and San Luis Obispo Counties as Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) potentially available for leasing. That began an intensive and unprecedented planning effort led by the Coastal Commission in coordination with BOEM, the Energy Commission, Ocean Protection Council, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Lands Commission, local governments, tribes, industry, labor, environmental NGOs and commercial fishing groups. The Commission worked in collaboration with these entities to conduct a siting level analysis of potential coastal impacts related to offshore wind in the designated WEAs. This analysis addressed potential impacts to marine resources, such as marine mammals, fisheries, pelagic birds, and benthic habitats; water quality; commercial and recreational fishing; tribal and cultural resources; scenic and visual resources; public access; environmental justice, and coastal hazards.

As the only California state agency with the authority to review and authorize activities in federal waters under the [Coastal Zone Management Act](#), the Commission's prior-to-leasing review was a critical opportunity for the state and the public to weigh in on offshore wind siting in California. The Commission was able to ensure that all stakeholders had a meaningful voice in the process, as well as identify concerns, information needs and expectations for engagement and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation approaches. Based on this robust analysis and process, and with overwhelming public support, the Commission concurred in

both federal consistency determinations for OSW leases off the coast of [Humboldt](#) and [San Luis Obispo](#) Counties in April and May respectively. Future development in these lease areas is likely to be one of the first, if not the very first industrial-scale floating OSW facilities in the world, and California has set a high standard for others to follow in terms of environmental analysis and protection and community inclusivity.

The Commission's action cleared the path for lease sales which were held in December. The auctions from California's two lease areas generated over \$757 million dollars from the winning bidders. While these funds will be held by the federal government, there are opportunities to apply some to developing community and ocean user benefit agreements and supply chain and workforce development. It will also be critical to identify funding to support the state's substantial regulatory workload that lease development will require in the years to come.

There's nothing like a site visit to better understand the details of a complex project. To prepare for the extended OSW conversation, Senior Deputy Director Kate Huckelbridge joined California state, tribal, environmental justice, and NGO leaders on an offshore wind energy study tour of Scotland, Denmark, and Germany in September. The group toured existing facilities and manufacturing plants and met with government officials and industry representatives to learn about how offshore wind has evolved in Europe and what lessons California can learn as it seeks to develop a floating offshore industry. Highlights included boat and helicopter tours of OSW installations in Scotland and Denmark; a tour of OSW port facilities in Esbjerg, Denmark; exchange sessions with Danish and German regulators; and spirited policy discussions throughout.

Climate change is driving conversations about water as well as wind. The Commission considered three very different ocean desalination projects in 2022, with different designs and outcomes. The first was a 50 million gallon per day (mgd) plant proposed by [Poseidon Water](#), a private company. The plant would have utilized the 54-acre site of a former Huntington Beach power plant, including the existing open-ocean intake that would draw in 106.7 million gallons of sea water daily. Approximately 57 mgd of highly saline wastewater would be discharged into the ocean about 1,500 feet offshore. This project has been the subject of previous Commission hearings over several years, and although the final project incorporated some design changes, the Commission ultimately voted unanimously to deny the project due to its vulnerability to sea level rise, marine impacts, and environmental justice concerns.

In October, the Commission unanimously approved a much smaller [desalination facility](#) proposed by the South Coast Water District, a public agency, at Doheny State Beach in Dana Point. The 5 million gallons produced daily by the plant will reduce Dana Point's reliance on imported water, which currently provides 90% of the city's water supply. In contrast to the Poseidon project, the Doheny plant will use slant wells under the sea floor as its water source, which reduces impacts to marine life. Brine will be co-mingled with existing wastewater discharge which will reduce the overall effects of both discharges. The California Ocean Plan identifies these methods as optimal for the design and operation of desalination facilities, and the Doheny desalination project will be the first in the state to incorporate both of these Ocean Plan preferences into its design.

The following month, in November, the Commission spent an entire day and much of the evening deciding the fate of the controversial [California American Water \(CalAm\) desalination facility](#) on the Monterey Peninsula. Although CalAm is also utilizing slant wells, the City of Marina opposed the project, which was proposed within city limits at the former CEMEX sand mine. The City produced studies that raised the possibility of CalAm's wells drawing water from the City's aquifer. Residents raised issues of environmental justice, citing the disproportionate number of industrial facilities already located in and around the City of Marina. Ratepayers concerned about the increased cost of water also pointed to the pending expansion of the publicly owned water purveyor, Pure Water One, as a superior and more affordable alternative. Persuaded by the need for a dependable new supply of water for the drought-stressed Monterey Peninsula, the Commission approved the project on a 10:2 vote with 20 stringent conditions. Commissioners also increased proposed monitoring and mitigation measures, required a \$3 million dollar payment to Marina, expand the eligibility criteria for low-income rate assistance, and capped the maximum rate increase for low-income customers to no more than an additional \$10 per month for the life of the project.



Artist rendering
of CalAm
Desalination
plant.

In September, the National Park Service (NPS) submitted a Service to develop the water quality plan as part of its 2021 federal consistency concurrence with of the National Park Service's comprehensive update to the [Point Reyes National Seashore General Management Plan](#). Ongoing cattle and dairy ranching operations within the National Seashore have focused public scrutiny on the water quality impacts to riparian and marine habitats and recreational areas. Despite reports of sewage spills, inadequate management of cattle waste, runoff, and erosion, the Commission approved the controversial water quality plan, but added in new requirements for an annual progress report to the Commission at a public meeting, including an update on the NPS climate plan, a multi-agency enforcement update, a report on best management practices implemented over the prior year and a report on the status of leases to cattle ranchers and dairies.

Point Reyes Tule elk.
Photo by Tim Bernot,
National Park Service.



As a result of citizen complaints of untreated sewage disposal on two ranches within the park, the Commission also opened an enforcement case and is coordinating with NPS and Marin County Public Health on resolution. The prevailing view expressed by commissioners was that without adequate management and significantly increased oversight, continued cattle and dairy operations in the Seashore may be incompatible with the resource protection goals of the Coastal Act. The information provided by the additional reporting requirements is intended to inform how best to accomplish that increased management and oversight and to allow for adverse impacts to water quality and coastal resources to be identified and addressed.

Also in September, the Commission approved Phase 1 of the [Arcata Wastewater Treatment Plant improvement plan](#). Located on former tidelands at the edge of Arcata Bay, the aging facility is in need of upgrades, including a new outfall, a new disinfection system, new pumps and wastewater piping, and electrical infrastructure. Concerned about the facility's vulnerability to sea level rise, the Commission approved the project on an interim basis of 30 years. As a condition of the permit, the City will need to complete a Coastal Hazard Adaptation plan within 5 years, ensuring that Arcata immediately begins to consider alternative long-term adaptation approaches, including relocation. The City of Arcata would have preferred to implement adaptation measures on its own timeframe, but the Commission is pushing jurisdictions to make more proactive planning and implementation commitments to resiliency.

Advances in Local Coastal Planning



Garage conversion. Photo by Shin Shin; courtesy of HCD.

Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) are the local blueprints for Coastal Act policies, implementing statewide resource protection mandates in a locally specific context. As such, they are living documents that provide direct land use policy links between the state and local governments. In addition to sea level rise, the Commission has been working with local partners to address numerous emerging issues through programmatic guidance and/or training materials. In addition to sea level rise, coastal jurisdictions are taking long-range actions related to wildfire risk management, housing, short term rentals.

Wildfire Resilience Planning

Protecting and restoring sensitive habitats and the species that depend on them is one of the central tenets of the Coastal Act. With the convergence of population growth and climate change, natural landscapes in the coastal zone are facing unprecedented challenges. In coastal forests, decades of aggressive fire suppression have resulted in unnaturally dense undergrowth and crowded trees that are more susceptible to disease and parasites. Combined with a prolonged, historic drought across the Western U.S., these ecosystems are increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic wildfires.

Restoring balance to forest health in a manner that supports the resiliency of natural landscapes requires advance planning and a holistic approach. To facilitate efficient permitting, CalFire and the Board of Forestry collaborated on the creation of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP). Fuel reduction projects that are carried out consistent with CalVTP standards are presumed to meet the requirements of CEQA, which saves applicants significant time and money.

To complement CalVTP in the coastal zone, the Commission has pioneered the use of Public Works Plans (PWP) to streamline fuel reduction projects consistent with the Coastal Act. The PWP functions like an overlay to CalVTP, so that following the PWP guarantees both CEQA and Coastal Act compliance. This approach allows applicants to safeguard sensitive biological resources without having to apply for individual coastal development permits. This new programmatic approach was debuted in 2021, when the Commission certified PWPs for [San Mateo](#), [Santa Cruz](#) and [Upper Salinas Las Tablas](#) Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs). The plans are already proving their effectiveness.

In March, 2022, the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) became the first entity in the State to complete a forest resilience project using CalVTP. Notably, the project combined the CalVTP with a companion PWP. The [Camp Butano project](#) thinned and treated 44 acres of mixed redwood and tan oak forest, removed invasive non-native species such as Scotch Broom, and promoted the health of native shrubs through pruning and selective thinning. The resulting shaded fuel break retained approximately 80% of the native vegetation, while creating conditions whereby the remaining trees can better withstand fire while simultaneously slowing its spread.

It's noteworthy that the first successful CalVTP project in the state was completed in the coastal zone pursuant to a PWP certified by the Commission. Skeptics had theorized that this would add “another layer of bureaucracy” to CalVTP causing confusion and delay. In practice, local practitioners have found the PWPs to be helpful and easy to interpret and implement. Perhaps this is because they were involved directly in the drafting, and the plans are specific to local habitat types, and thus directly relevant to the actual projects.

Camp Butano before (left) and after (right) the CalVTP project. Photo courtesy of the San Mateo RCD.



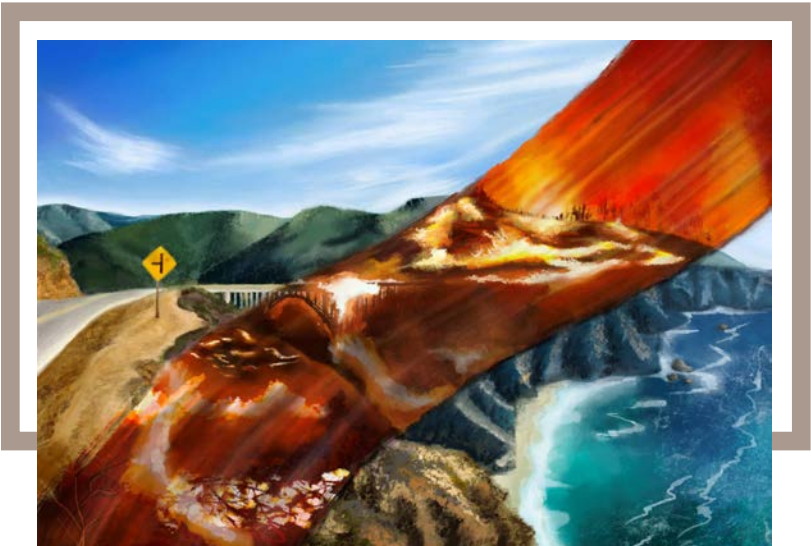
In April, the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District undertook two separate projects under the Santa Cruz County Forest Health and Fire Prevention Public Works Plan. The first included 40 acres of ecological forest restoration treatments and created 20 acres of shaded fuel within the [Skylark Ranch Girl Scout Camp](#) in northern Santa Cruz County. Before the catastrophic 2020 CZU fire, this project area had been identified as a high fire-risk area due to a buildup of dead and dying vegetation. After the CZU fire burned through, it left behind significant amounts of unconsumed fuel and compromised vegetation that was hampering the natural recovery processes and leaving the area vulnerable to subsequent catastrophe.

The second project applied similar [forest restoration treatments](#) to 33 acres along Last Chance Road at Waddell Creek in northern Santa Cruz County, and created 27 acres of shaded fuel breaks by manual and mechanical means, including strategic use of pesticides for invasive species control. The shaded fuel break will provide critical emergency ingress/egress for residents in the area as well as first responders, with support areas to stage equipment when fighting wildfires. The break will also support residual and recovering forest stands through the retention of live overstory canopy. This will also suppress understory re-growth while helping to maintain continuity of the forested landscape. The Santa Cruz RCD will oversee periodic maintenance of the area, consistent with the certified PWP.

Demand for the program increased in 2022, and Commission staff are now working with the Monterey County RCD, the Coastal San Luis RCD and the Marin County Wildfire Prevention Authority to develop Public Works Plans for large-scale vegetation treatment projects within their coastal zone jurisdictions. The program could scale up faster with dedicated funding, but at the moment the rate of implementation is constrained by the Commission’s existing budget and staffing levels.

Commission staff also continued to work with local governments to address wildfire hazards through permits and LCP updates. In March, the Commission issued a permit to the City of Laguna Beach for a [fuel modification project](#) on approximately 11.5 acres in Hobo Aliso Canyon adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods. The area contains high-value endangered species habitat including coastal sage scrub and southern maritime chaparral. Because this ecosystem is sensitive to disruption, it will be managed through a combination of hand thinning and grazing by goats to reduce plant density by half. By prioritizing removal of unhealthy plants and invasive species, and thinning rather than removing the native, more fire resilient species whenever possible, the project has the potential to improve the overall health of the habitat as well providing a defensible buffer for the adjacent residences.

Finally, to implement the State’s Roadside Fire Fuels Reduction program, the Commission’s Transportation Unit and Statewide Planning team worked with Caltrans throughout the year to streamline their efforts to reduce fuels for fire prevention and improve forest health along state highways.



Big Sur Wildfire Disaster.
By Katie Dung, Grade 11.

Short Term Rentals

Short-term rentals (STRs) in the coastal zone can provide important public access in the form of lower-cost overnight accommodations. Families have been making memories at “summer beach house” rentals since long before there was a Coastal Act. But the proliferation of internet-based marketing platforms has fueled rapid growth in the market, to the point where some desirable coastal neighborhoods can have more overnight guests than residents. If unregulated, STRs can contribute to housing unaffordability, cut into rental housing stock, and destabilize formerly cohesive neighborhoods. But STR bans eliminate critical coastal accessibility. This issue has been the subject of numerous Commission briefings, workshops and round-table discussions over the decades, with passionate and compelling arguments on both sides. Resolving the controversy requires close attention to local context, and respect for all points of view.

In 2022, the Commission continued working with local governments to find the right balance between STRs and livable communities, and approved five jurisdictions’ modifications to their LCPs adjust local regulation of vacation rentals. Most featured some combination of caps, hosted “home stays” v. non-hosted rentals, limiting new STRs to commercial or visitor-serving areas, and/or the number of nights a unit can be rented per year. By working together to craft policy solutions that reflect the unique community character and needs of each jurisdiction, the Commission was approved targets vacation rental policies for the following jurisdictions:

<u>City of San Diego</u>	<u>City of Long Beach</u>	<u>Los Osos</u>
<u>City of Newport Beach</u>	<u>County of San Luis Obispo</u>	

Early, upfront coordination with local government allowed the Commission to approve all of these amendments on the Consent Calendar or by E.D. checkoff, as all of the controversial issues had been resolved ahead of time.

But we can’t always get to yes. In August, the Commission denied Malibu’s approach to regulate STRs through a [proposed LCP amendment](#) which would have completely banned non-hosted vacation rentals in the city. Malibu currently has few overnight accommodations for coastal visitors and STRs are an essential part of the City’s supply of overnight accommodations. The Commission found that banning all non-hosted stays would unduly restrict the rental of residential units to visitors and diminish their ability to access and recreate on the coast.



Malibu coast, Los Angeles County. Photo by Carlos Bastias.

Housing and ADUs

The Legislature has enacted multiple laws over the last several years aimed at speeding up the approval process and easing site requirements for Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Junior Accessory Units (JADUS) in order to encourage more density in residential areas. Although these streamlining provisions do not supersede the Coastal Act, local governments must revise their planning documents to specify how they will meet new state requirements while still protecting coastal resources. This has been a consistent priority for the Commission, which has been working with the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and local governments to harmonize state housing and coastal management laws. In 2022, another ten jurisdictions brought their LCPs up to date with evolving state laws involving ADUs and JADUs. Throughout the course of the year, the Commission approved conforming LCP amendments for the following jurisdictions:

<u>City of Carlsbad</u>	<u>Long Beach</u>
<u>City of Carpenteria</u>	<u>Newport Beach</u>
<u>City of Half Moon Bay</u>	<u>Redondo Beach</u>
<u>City of Santa Barbara</u>	<u>San Luis Obispo County</u>
<u>Encinitas</u>	<u>Santa Cruz County</u>

The City of Carlsbad also updated its [density bonus](#) provisions, which the Commission approved on the consent calendar, and increased its density cap to [20 units per acre](#) in specified areas of the city.

The Commission also issued 41 waivers for construction of new ADUs in uncertified areas. These projects ranged from newly constructed, stand-alone ADUs, and converted garages, patios, storage units, and interior spaces within existing homes.



Attached ADU. Photo by Murray Lampert; courtesy of HCD.

Meanwhile, the Commission continues to analyze housing proposals under the Coastal Act in a manner that also preserves existing density levels and encourages affordable housing whenever possible. While ADUs don't always provide the same level of housing opportunity as a residential apartment, they do at least maintain the potential to provide lower-cost housing options. Although the Coastal Act no longer contains policies that directly protect and provide for affordable housing, the Commission has been able to take actions on a case-by-case basis to preserve housing stock through permit conditions, project design, and denials based on Chapter 3 policies.

For instance, in April the Commission denied the [demolition of a duplex](#) in Hermosa Beach to make way for a 3-story residence with an ADU. Over the last decade, there have been 40 projects that converted multi-family units into single family homes in Hermosa Beach. Instead, the Commission required a redesign of the project allowed the demolition and replacement of the duplex within the same footprint, with neither unit being smaller than 850 square feet.

In May, the Commission denied a [proposal to demolish four small cottages](#) on a single lot in Venice, subdivide the parcel, and build two 3-story homes with ADUs. The Commission found that the loss of 4 affordable units in the Oakwood area of Venice would be incompatible with the architectural and social diversity of the community, and inconsistent with the Venice certified Land Use Plan and the Coastal Commission's Environmental Justice policy.

In June, staff presented the findings of an internal research project on the [history of exclusionary housing practices](#) in coastal California. The report looked at how modern demographic patterns in and near the coastal zone have been shaped by decades of overtly racist laws and government policies, institutional bias, and disinvestment. The report was an important reminder that while many of the more obviously racist legal and social frameworks have been dismantled, their deplorable legacy remains. This underscores the need for government at every level to be vigilant in reversing these harms wherever, and whenever possible.

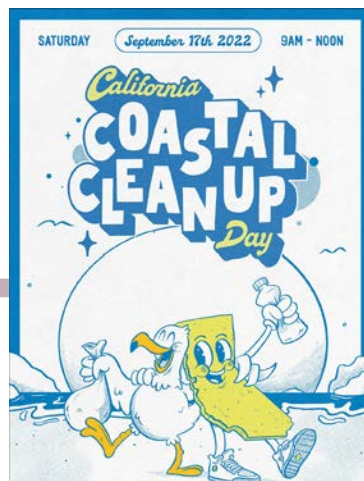
As Commissioner Escalante observed in the hearing, “These are not relics of the past, but burdens of the past that we carry with us into the future.”

Public Education: Inspiring Stewardship Through Learning



The Oceans of Today. By Kate Jang, Grade 11.

With public health restrictions lifted throughout the state, local organizers resumed in-person cleanups in most locations for the 38th annual California Coastal Cleanup Day took place on September 17th. While not quite back to pre-pandemic numbers in terms of cleanup sites and volunteer participation, coordinators around the state organized 619 cleanup sites and hosted 35,530 volunteers that day. In addition, the Commission encouraged neighborhood cleanups of streets, local parks, and other natural areas throughout September, and recorded an additional 3,237 volunteers for a grand total of 38,767 cleanup volunteers. Once again California led the world in cleanup activity over the month of September with a total of 2,083 cleanup events. Public Education staff partnered with California State Parks to host a Coastal Cleanup Day Facebook Live event on September 9th to promote participation and provide an opportunity for real-time public engagement at a statewide level.



2022 California Coastal Clean Up Day posters in Spanish (left) and English (right).



Whale Tail Grant recipient
Save California Salmon's
Indigenous Science Camp.
Photo courtesy of Save
California Salmon.

The 2021/22 competitive WHALE TAIL® Grants cycle was by far the largest in the program's history, with six and a half times as much funding and three times as many grants. This was the first grant cycle augmented by the \$10 million budget allocation in FY 2021. Approximately 106,000 direct participants are anticipated to benefit from the 90 programs funded in this cycle.

Since its beginning, the WHALE TAIL® Grants program has focused on engaging communities that have historically had few such opportunities due to systemic and geographic barriers. Over the past two years, staff carried out an intensive review to improve how this focus is implemented throughout the grant program. An equity analysis report on the FY 2021/2022 grants cycle was presented to the Commission in October. It describes revisions and improvements made to the grant application and administrative processes, and an analysis of the 2021/2022 grant recipients. The 90 projects funded in 2021/2022 are taking place in 26 counties and Yurok Tribal Land. Seventy-seven projects focus on the inclusion of BIPOC communities, 42 offer translation services or bilingual resources, 27 support dual language learners, 13 engage people who identify as having a disability, 12 engage Designated Rural Regions, 11 engage inland communities, 5 engage unhoused communities, 4 engage carceral system impacted people, 4 engage LGBTQ+ youth, 4 primarily engage female and/or gender expansive individuals, and 4 engage youth in the foster system.

Nearly 1,600 k-12 students from across California submitted inspiring and original masterpieces to the 2022 California Coastal Art & Poetry Contest. Ten winners and 43 honorable mentions representing all age groups were selected in April. The Commission maintains a perpetual online gallery of winners at: www.coastal.ca.gov/art-poetry. The images are available for purchase as prints, pillows, mugs, beach towels and more through the Commission's on line store.



Under the Pier. By Eden
Yuen, Grade 7.

Thanks to a NOAA Federal Coastal Zone Management Grant three new educational slide shows debuted on the Commission's website in June, to help inform the public on key elements of the Coastal Act. "[Coastal Act Overview](#)" describes the coastal protection goals and core regulatory functions of the Coastal Act; "[Coastal Zone Overview](#)" explains the legislatively-defined geographical area of the coast where the Coastal Act applies, and "[Coastal Act Chapter 3](#)" details the coastal resource protection and management policies contained in Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. They are part of a larger "LCP Training" grant, but the Statewide Planning Unit designed them to provide useful information for a wide variety of audiences.



Enforcement Highlights



Plans to fence the train tracks along the Del Mar Bluffs were halted by the Commission's Cease and Desist Order. Photo by c.2021 G.Wade.

The Coastal Act, like any law, is only as effective as it is enforceable. Gaining the authority to impose [administrative penalties](#) for Coastal Act violations in 2021 provided a strong deterrent to property owners who may be considering unpermitted development, as well as a financial incentive for violators to resolve violations quickly and amicably.

Unfortunately, the Enforcement Unit lost 60% of its staff in 2022. Because state salaries have not kept up with the cost of living, particularly in coastal areas, the Commission has had challenges filling these and other vacancies. As a result of chronic staffing shortages exacerbated by the post-pandemic job market, the Commission's backlog of open, unresolved cases grew from 2,846* at the beginning of 2022, to an all-time high of 2,967** at the end of the year.

* 2,734 District cases, 112 Elevated HQ cases

** 2,853 District cases, 114 Elevated HQ cases

Despite the growing caseload, the Commission took several significant actions in 2022 that will have long-term benefits to coastal resources and public access.

Headquarters Enforcement Work

The Commission’s enforcement unit is comprised of District staff who investigate, verify, and work to resolve reported violations of the Coastal Act voluntarily, and Headquarters staff and attorneys who work on cases that require formal administrative action by the Commission through cease and desist and restoration orders and administrative penalty actions. In March, the Executive Director issued a Cease and Desist Order (EDCDO) to the North County Transportation District (NCTD) to halt the imminent construction of a mile-long six-foot-high chain link fence on the sensitive and scenic Del Mar bluffs adjacent to the railroad tracks, raising both access visual issues. The Commission had been negotiating with NCTD since shortly after they filed a petition with the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) in 2020, asserting that all their activities were exempt from both the Coastal Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act. The Commission stepped in to suggest alternative approaches that would improve public safety without eliminating public access. But at the end of 2021, NCTD broke off negotiations and began construction on their original design. Because the project would significantly diminish public access and degrade public views, and because the work was imminent, the Executive Director took the unusual step of issuing an EDCDO. The Commission then followed up in court to ensure Coastal Act issues would be enforced over the long run, and to prevent unpermitted development from damaging coastal resources. That litigation is ongoing.



Vandalized public restroom will be repaired and maintained. Photo by the Coastal Commission.

In May, the Commission issued a [Cease and Desist Order](#) and [Administrative Penalty](#) to Headlands Property Associates to reverse a long-standing public access violation in Pacific Palisades related to a 1980’s-era housing development. When the Commission approved the original subdivision, it required the developer to dedicate a parcel of land for a public parking lot, trailhead and restroom that would improve and expand historic public access to the extensive system of trails in the area, including the Temescal Ridge Trail, which leads to the iconic Backbone Trail traversing the length of the Santa Monica Mountain range. Once the improvements were constructed, the parcel was to be conveyed to the City of Los Angeles.

While the parking lot and restroom were completed as required, the deed transferring the property was never recorded. Over the years, the facilities fell into disrepair, and in 2016, the developer sold the property to a private party who sought to develop the site as a private residence. The new owner consequently closed the ½ acre parcel, eliminating the public access.

Commission staff spent years attempting to work with all parties to find an amicable resolution that would return this important trailhead to public ownership but was ultimately unable to reach an administrative settlement. The Commission’s orders required that Headlands Company cease and desist from taking any action in violation of the previously issued permit, take all steps within its power to ensure the transfer of the property to a public entity, and pay \$6,000,000 to the Commission’s Violation Remediation Account. Staff continues to work with the purchaser on what will hopefully be a full, consensual resolution of this issue.

Another significant case was heard in July, when the Commission resolved a long-standing, complicated, and emotionally fraught Coastal Act violation by approving [Consent Orders](#) for a local dairy operator to [restore](#) and [convey](#) portions of land within the Smith River Estuary in Del Norte County. The Smith River is the only undammed river system in California, a salmon stronghold that nourishes some of the largest stands of old growth redwood forest, and is critical habitat for migrating waterfowl. The property is near the mouth of the Smith, in the heart of the ancestral homelands of the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation. Known as Reservation Ranch, it was the site of many reprehensible genocidal acts of violence against the Tribe in the late 1800s that resonate deeply with Tribal members to this day. Operated as a dairy farm for generations, the land has been cleared, diked, filled and farmed in a variety of ways for decades. Some activities predate the Coastal Act, and other clearly unpermitted activities have been ongoing.

The Coastal Act violations included in the Consent orders addressed unpermitted filling of wetlands and tidal sloughs, diverting water from the Smith River, and constructing levees, tide gates and dikes. These activities damaged environmentally sensitive habitat areas in some cases for decades. Portions of the slough had been used to dump cow carcasses and manure. Tide gates and other levee crossings greatly diminished the estuary’s habitat potential, harmed water quality, and blocked all public access to the 3-mile-long tidal slough network. The largest levee crossing at the mouth of Tillas Slough was a structure built out of train cars covered in soil and concrete.

Smith River in
Del Norte County.
Photo by Kirt
Edblom.



Reservation Ranch Conservation
Easement/Restoration areas.
Photo courtesy of the Coastal
Commission.



After learning of the violations, Commission enforcement staff worked closely with the landowners and the Tribe to craft a resolution. The Commission's action requires the removal of unpermitted levee crossings, material and fill and restoration of those areas; reforestation of the banks of three miles of tidal slough; installation of fish passages; and tribal monitoring of all ground disturbance activities. In lieu of a monetary administrative penalty, the landowner agreed to record public access easements over more than ten acres of riverbank. A conservation easement will also be recorded over 17 acres of forest. Fourteen acres of riverfront forest will be conserved and conveyed to a public entity, and to mitigate for lost public access, two acres of oceanfront blufftop property adjacent to a lower-cost public campground will also be conveyed to a public entity. In addition, the owners of Reservation Ranch will perform cultural resource surveys over the dedicated lands, and allow for surveys of a 75-acre area known as Tillas Island which has profound spiritual significance to the Tribe. While there is still much to be done to restore the Smith River Estuary and account for the historic injustices perpetrated by previous generations, the Commission's action represents a significant step forward.

A previous enforcement case from 2016 that did not enjoy the cooperation and consent of the violator was finally put to rest in 2022 when the US Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of lower court rulings upholding the Commission's Cease and Desist Order and Administrative Penalty. In *Lent v. California Coastal Commission* ((2021) 62 Cal.Ap.5th 812), property owners in Malibu challenged the Commission's order requiring them to remove unpermitted stairs and gates obstructing a public access easement along-side their beachfront home and to pay an administrative fine of \$4,185,000. The legally required access had been blocked for many years despite Commission efforts to persuade them to comply with their permit. The Lents alleged that the Commission abused its discretion and that the Commission's findings were not supported by substantial evidence. The trial court upheld the cease and desist order, the validity of the penalty statute, and the assessment of a penalty, but due to one procedural issue ruled that the Commission had to hold a new hearing on the amount of the penalty.

The Lents appealed this ruling, and the Commission cross-appealed. The Court of Appeal reversed the trial court's ruling that the Commission must hold a new hearing to address procedural errors, and issued a published decision upholding the Commission's actions. The Lents filed a petition for review with the California Supreme Court, which rejected it, and then a petition with the U.S. Supreme Court. On February 22, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court denied the petition, bringing 6 years of litigation to a close.

District Enforcement Work

Commission staff make every effort to reach amicable resolutions with alleged violators at both the District and Headquarters level. Working directly with alleged violators, local governments, and other public agencies, the Enforcement Unit resolves over 95% of its cases with the agreement and cooperation of the landowner. Despite staff shortages, the districts were able to resolve a total of 12 violations voluntarily without the need for penalties, Commission action or litigation. Cases ranged from removing fake “No Parking” signs to removing unpermitted seawalls to reining in rogue security guards.

An unfortunately typical example with a good outcome was a public access violation in Mission Bay, one of the most popular destinations on the San Diego coastline. Two private RV resorts, the Mission Bay RV Resort and Campland, had installed “Guest Parking Only” signs in front of several spaces in a nearby public parking lot, as well as in front of 31 spaces that were required to be available to the public at no charge, per a previous Commission action. After contact from Commission staff, both companies removed the misleading signs and replaced them with affirmative signs notifying the spaces were reserved for public parking, and resort-related parking is not allowed.



Public access signs at Mission Bay RV Resort before (left) and after (right).

Some of these cases were worked out in coordination with district planning staff to resolve existing violations in the context of pending permit applications. Others involve monitoring prior permits to ensure conditions are fully implemented. “Condition compliance” is an essential element of the Commission’s regulatory actions, because the special conditions are



The construction of a new stairway and debris removal at Latigo Beach in Malibu resolved a long-standing violation with a Homeowner’s Association.

essential to achieving consistency with the Coastal Act. Some of the Commission’s permit compliance work in 2022 involved the replacement of missing “Public Access” signs in the city of Carlsbad, where a Homeowners Association (HOA) had removed required signage from a beach trail, and placed picnic tables in what then appeared to be private property. Commission staff worked with the HOA to replace the signs as well as indicate that the picnic tables were available for public use. They also worked with the city to ensure the trail will be included in the City-wide Public Trail Master Plan.

Another case of condition compliance involved an HOA in Santa Cruz County whose original permit required native plants included in an approved landscaping plan. Instead, much of the area was discovered to be cultivated with non-natives, including invasive ice plant. After notifying the HOA, the non-native plants were removed and replaced with appropriate species, improving public views and enhancing native habitat.

Non-native plants aren’t always unwelcome. Coral Trees, while non-native to Southern California, are an iconic urban tree in the city of Long Beach. Due to the increasing scarcity of suitable habitat for vulnerable populations of animals in this area, these trees remain an important coastal resource that require protection. Their unpermitted removal to discourage “messy” nesting birds has been an ongoing issue for several years. In 2020, the Commission required the protection of these trees through a permit issued for the Belmont Pier Plaza. When residents informed the Commission that the city had removed another coral tree contrary to the terms of its permit, the Commission staff formalized a plan requiring the city to plant and maintain three new trees to replace the one that was removed.



Long Beach Coral Tree. Photo by the Coastal Commission.

Budget & Legislation



Turkish towel blade with red seaweed epiphyte, Crescent Bay. Photo by Rosa Laucci.

The Commission's budget saw some modest growth in 2022. The Legislature and the Governor signed off on additional funding for another attorney position and a new information specialist, as well as one-time funding for digital security system upgrades and new legal software. The 2022-23 State Budget also restored \$750,00 for sea level rise work that was swept from the Commission's baseline allocation during the Pandemic-era cuts of 2019. And the Legislature added a one-time augmentation of \$5 million to support the Commission's enforcement work in Southern California, and \$1.2 million to digitize the Commission's old paper records over the next five years.

CalHR and SEIU agreed on long-awaited request for salary increases for the Coastal Program Analyst I and II classifications. Effective July 1, staff in those positions received a well-deserved and much-needed pay bump of approximately 10 percent.

In furtherance of the Governor's "Cutting the Green Tape" initiative, the Coastal Act was amended to make it easier and more affordable for non-profit groups and public agencies to obtain coastal development permits for public access or habitat restoration projects, thanks to [AB 2160 \(Bennett\)](#).

Consistent with the Commission's equity and inclusion goals, the Commission supported [SB 1497](#), a bill that removed all gendered pronouns from the Coastal Act.

The Hollister Ranch public access got an unexpected boost from a provision in [AB 211](#), declaring that the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the Hollister Ranch Public Access Program will satisfy the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for all projects needed to implement the program. This forecloses the possibility of future opponents of the plan filing time-consuming CEQA suits for individual amenities such as bathrooms or bike lanes, which would further delay the long-overdue public access at Hollister Ranch.



Diablo Canyon
Nuclear Power
Plant.

In the last days of the 2022 legislative session, at the Governor’s request, the Legislature approved an unprecedented 5-year extension for the operation of PG&E’s Diablo Canyon Nuclear Generating Facility in San Luis Obispo, and provided \$1.4 billion for the investor-owned utility to pursue relicensing. Currently set to decommission in 2024-25, the aging nuclear power facility’s closure date had been memorialized through a settlement agreement forged by PG&E, labor unions and multiple environmental groups and signed off on by the California Public Utilities Commission. Yet 72 hours before the end of session a bill previously dealing with [the sale of alcoholic beverages](#) was stripped down and re-written to extend the life of California’s last nuclear power plant. Early drafts of the language would have exempted the process from the Coastal Act, and given the CPUC exclusive authority to determine all future land uses on the 12,000 acres surrounding the plant over 14 miles of undeveloped coastline. But key coastal legislators balked at that approach, and ultimately, the Commission retained its authority over permitting and relicensing, but will have to act in an expedited timeframe.

Under [SB 846 \(Dodd\)](#), the Resources agency will develop a Land Conservation and Economic Development Plan, and the CPUC will have authority over who will hold the 4 parcels that make up the 12,000 acres of Diablo Canyon lands, but not future land uses.

Several Budget Trailer bills, [AB 205](#), [AB 178](#) and [AB 180](#) revamped the way California reviews, approves and funds clean energy projects of all kinds. AB 205 expanded the Department of Water Resources’ (DWR) authority to procure energy for the State to maintain grid reliability during peak summer use periods. The Department can now construct, own, operate, or fund the construction and/or operation of new or existing power plants and battery storage facilities notwithstanding “any local, regional, or other permit, regulation or law restricting or prohibiting the construction, or operation of generation.” This means DWR-associated energy project will not be subject to the traditional regulatory review that would normally apply to siting, construction or operation of energy projects. AB 205 was in print for just 72 hours before the Legislature passed it on June 29. In August, in response to continued objections from tribes and environmental NGOs, the Legislature [reinstated](#) the Commission’s jurisdiction over energy storage facilities and energy generation projects using zero-emission fuel technologies in the coastal zone. But for the next 4 years, most DWR-funded energy projects will not be subject to local or state permits, including CDPs. Instead, DWR will submit an application to the CEC for certification for any project it finds necessary to achieve and retain grid reliability.

Mapping and GIS



Aerial image of Hollister Ranch in Santa Barbara County. Photo courtesy of the State Lands Commission.

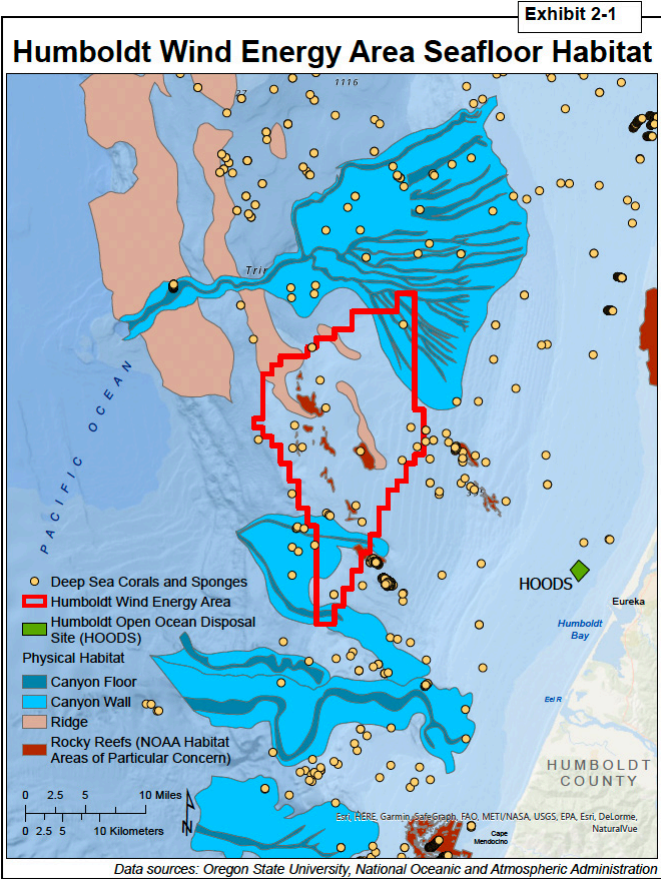
The Mapping Unit is responsible for graphic and cartographic production of all kinds, from LCP post-certification maps to story maps, data analysis and follow up research. It works with sister agencies including the State Lands Commission, BCDC, Caltrans, State Parks and the State Coastal Conservancy to provide necessary mapping services for areas of joint responsibility and shared authority. Their role is constantly evolving as advancing technology provides new opportunities for digital communication. Still, the most common question is where the coastal zone boundary lies in a given area. To better answer questions of coastal jurisdiction, the mapping unit unveiled a new parcel-scale geodatabase of the statewide coastal zone boundary.

This will allow the Mapping Unit to provide information more quickly and clearly to the public.

In addition to providing annual interactive public mapping service for the [California King Tides Project](#), the Commission completed the [Who Owns the Beach Public Trust Story Map](#), an illustrated overview of the importance of state tidelands and how public beach space is identified and how it can change over time. A companion to both products is the California Coastal Armoring Database (CCAD) map viewer, a comprehensive inventory of structures with links to their location and permit history. Nearly complete, it currently includes approximately 4,200 armoring structures, and has already proved to be a useful tool in myriad applications related to sea level rise, coastal erosion, and the migrating mean high tideline boundary.

The Mapping Unit also developed maps identifying the newly elected state legislators in their current [Senate and Assembly coastal district boundaries](#) which were redrawn after the 2020 U.S. Census; a [Senate Bill 9 Geographic Eligibility in the Coastal Zone Map Viewer](#) to help Commission staff, local governments and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) determine whether proposed developments qualify for [SB 9](#) (Atkins, 2021) housing incentives; offshore wind maps for the [Humboldt](#) and [San Luis Obispo](#) federal consistency determinations; a mapping service for 900 miles of the Caltrans Broadband Middle Mile Network project in the coastal zone, and a Vegetation Management Planning application for cooperative wildfire resilience related work in Northern California.

Humboldt Wind Energy Area
Seafloor Habitat Map.



Transportation Program



Bixby Creek Bridge. Photo by Fabio Piacenza.

For two decades, the Commission has formally partnered with Caltrans through a series of inter-agency funding agreements to advance the missions of both agencies. In May of 2022, both agencies reentered into a new and continuing [Partnership Agreement](#) that not only reaffirms this partnership, it expands the two agencies abilities to align priorities with both of their Strategic Plans – including early coordination, sea level rise, programmatic permitting efforts, coastal trails, and other mutual goals.

2022 saw the Commission’s Transportation Program at the forefront of the agency’s efforts to advance critical infrastructure resiliency and broaden multi-modal transportation to include public access opportunities. Throughout the year, the Transportation Program helped realize these goals through the review and permitting of Caltrans projects, participating in regional planning and mitigation efforts, and supporting Local Coastal Program transportation policies and projects.

Throughout the year, the Commission approved a wide variety of Caltrans projects that will also provide significant public access benefits, such as a new public access pathway at [Mussel Shoals](#) in Ventura County, new beach access stairs at [Las Tunas Beach](#) in Malibu, and a new public access easements in [Marshall](#).

Caltrans will be replacing a [bridge over San Jose Creek](#) in Santa Barbara County that provides access to Goleta State Beach, pursuant to a permit approved by the Commission in February. The new, wider, four-lane bridge includes innovative features that allow Caltrans to potentially raise the bridge deck in the future to adapt to coastal hazards. In the meantime, the bridge will also improve existing bike lanes and provide a new section of Coastal.

In August, the Commission approved demolition and replacement of the [Elk Creek Bridge](#) on Highway 1, approximately 2.5 miles south of the community of Elk in Mendocino County. The new two-lane bridge will have wider shoulders, a new separated bicycle and pedestrian path and updated railings. The project will also widen roadway approaches for enhanced safety, and replace an existing rock slope protection with more environmentally appropriate root wad revetment.

In November, the Commission approved similar bike and pedestrian improvements to the existing Highway 1 bridge over [Jack Peters Creek](#), as well as strengthened bridge abutments, piers and foundations. The improvements to both bridges will improve the safety of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike.



Jack Peters Bridge and California Coastal Trail rendering. Courtesy of Caltrans.

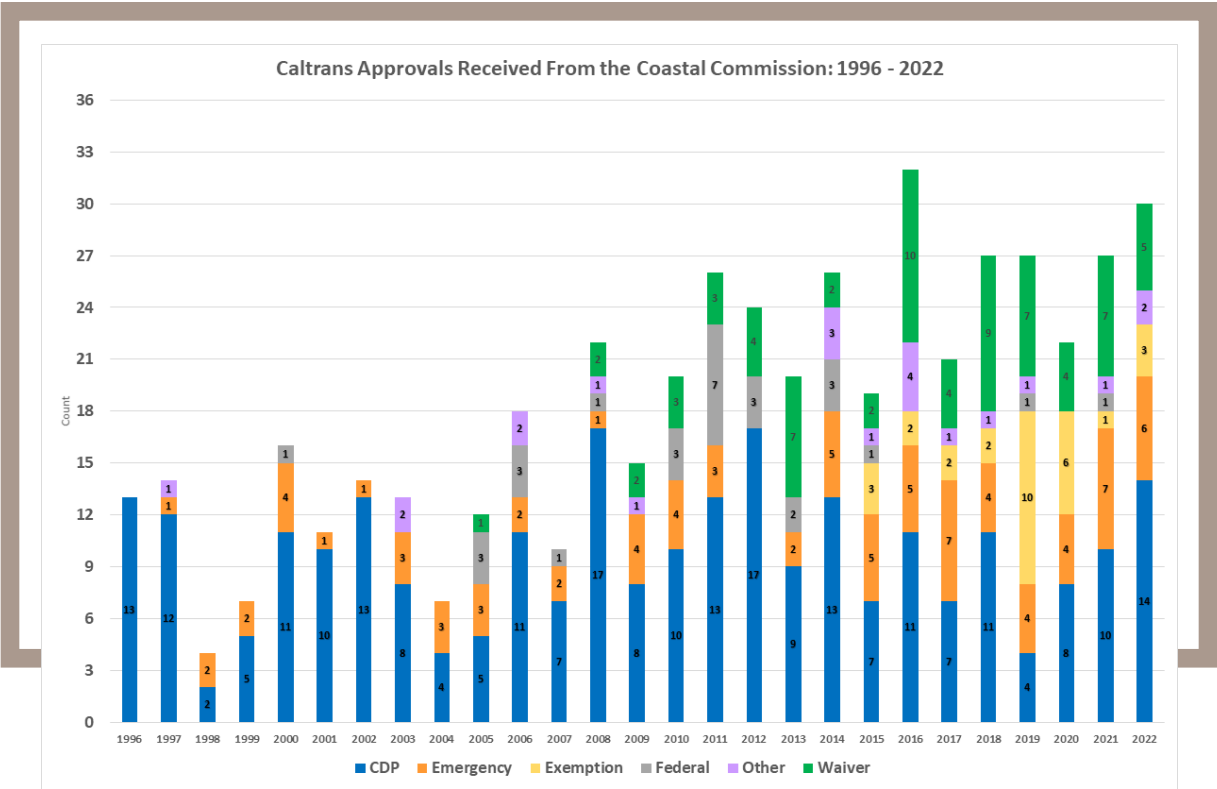
Several permits authorized significant coastal habitat improvements, such as the [Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Enhancement](#) and Highway 1 reconfigurations. Numerous CDP project-related habitat mitigation efforts came forward in 2022, including the acquisition of 12-acres of undeveloped ocean bluffs blufftop along Highway 1 in Mendocino County known as Saunders Landing that will be dedicated to habitat preservation and public access.

[Transportation Team staff worked with Caltrans staff to develop a project, to be undertaken by Point Blue](#) Conservation Science, to identify specific coastal habitat areas along the coast where Caltrans assets are impinging natural retreat, are vulnerable to SLR, and will need to be upgraded to protect coastal resources and to preserve coastal transportation.



Saunders Landing in Mendocino County. Photo Copyright (C) 2002-2023, Kenneth & Gabrielle Adelman, California Coastal Records Project, www.Californiacoastline.org.

Throughout the year, the Commission processed 29 regulatory approvals for Caltrans' transportation-related projects.



Early Coordination

Long before permits come before the Commission, the Transportation Program staff coordinates with Caltrans staff, local government planning staff, resource conservation districts, and other state agencies on a wide number of transportation projects that are in the early development phase. Particularly notable in 2022 was the team’s work with Caltrans to promote SLR planning efforts at several critical coastal corridor stretches of Highway 1 from Marin to Los Angeles County. These projects take time to develop, but also offer significant opportunities for adaptation, public access and habitat restoration. 2022 saw the Commission’s Transportation Program at the forefront of the agency’s efforts to advance critical infrastructure resiliency and broaden multi-modal transportation to include public access opportunities. For example, staff participated in the development of numerous Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plans (CMCP), such as the CMCP between the cities of Oxnard and Santa Monica, enabling Caltrans to implement more holistic adaptation and multimodal improvements, as well as SANDAG’s Coastal Connections Study, which seeks to improve access at Del Mar Bluffs.

Jackson Ranch Road in Arcata during King Tides. Photo by Aldaron Laird.



Middle Mile Broadband Network

A major new workload item for Transportation Program staff emerged in 2022 - the State’s [Middle Mile Broadband Network](#) (MMBN) project. This effort involves installation of 5,000 miles of broadband infrastructure along state highways throughout the state to make high-speed internet service broadly available throughout California, particularly in unserved and underserved rural areas. Approximately 450 miles of the network will occur within the Coastal Zone, mostly on Highway 1. Funding parameters require the issuance of permits by the end of 2024. These compressed timelines require extensive advanced planning with the California Department of Technology and Caltrans. Staff from all three agencies have regular coordination meetings to develop guidelines for work in the Coastal Zone, including how to strategically locate broadband “hub” buildings. The team also formulated a plan for CDP consolidation across Caltrans’ districts. And with funding support from Caltrans, the Commission hired several new staff in 2022 that will focus on the broadband effort in both the Transportation and Mapping units.

Federal Program: Building a Deeper Bench



Sunset at Crescent City Lighthouse. Photo by Paul Priebe.

The continual work of building and maintaining a talented, committed workforce from diverse backgrounds and experiences is critical to keeping the Coastal Commission vibrant, dynamic and relevant. One of the most important pathways to coastal careers is through fellowships and internships.

Throughout 2022 the Commission continued its long-standing commitment to serving as a host agency for California's Sea Grant Fellowship and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Management Fellowship Programs. These fellowship programs attract the best of the best, and serve as an invaluable recruitment tool for the agency. The Commission's overarching goal in hosting fellows is to provide emerging environmental leaders with a positive, supported, influential, and fulfilling post-graduate learning year. The Commission aims to expose their fellows to a range of coastal management issue areas and topics as well as provide each of them with a variety of opportunities to learn new skills and apply new thinking to challenging coastal problems. The Commission strives for each fellow to come away from their time with our agency with significant new professional development opportunities under their belt and feeling prepared and ready for their next step, whether it be with the Commission, a sister agency, or a position outside of state government. As a result, the Commission has a proud history of welcoming former fellows onto our full-time professional staff.

Today, the Commission employs more
than 15 former fellows.

California Sea Grant Fellowship Program

The Commission welcomed its 2022 California Sea Grant Fellow Korrin Davis to the team in February. Korrin came to the Commission with a Masters in Regenerative Studies from Cal Poly Pomona. During her tenure Korrin supported multiple units, including the Environmental Justice, Tribal Coordination, Energy, Ocean Resources, and Federal Consistency, and Public Education units. She worked on offshore wind, took part in tribal consultations, and conducted research on the impacts sea level rise has on environmental justice communities. She also created internal guidance for staff on tribal consultation and youth education programs, as well as a variety of 1-pagers and FAQs for the public, covering topics such as offshore wind, nuclear waste storage along the coast, and port master plans. In October, Korrin presented an [equity analysis of the Commission’s Whale Tail Grants Program](#). The report, which she prepared while working with the PE and EJ Units, provided an overview of recent efforts to advance equity, accessibility, and inclusivity for the Whale Tail Grants Program.

In June 2022 the Commission bid a fond farewell to its 2021 California Sea Grant Fellow, Hanna Payne. Hanna joined the Commission as a fellow in March of 2020 after completing her Masters in Environmental Communication, Earth Systems from Stanford University. Hanna worked across the agency on a variety of issue areas, from applying her design expertise to the Commission’s Coastal Adaptation Planning Guidance for Critical Infrastructure and 2021 Year in Review to developing an outreach and communications plan for the agency’s coordination with the State Lands Commission on managing public trust lands in the face of sea level rise. One of Hanna’s primary accomplishments as a fellow was working with staff from the Environmental Justice and Legislative Units on a report on the [history of exclusionary housing practices](#) and their impacts on modern demographic patterns in coastal California, which she presented to the Commission at the June 2022 hearing.

Hanna’s fellowship ended in June 2022 and Korrin’s came to a close in January 2023. While saying goodbye to departing Fellows is always bittersweet, Commission staff are always happy to welcome the new Fellows to the fold. The Commission looks forward to welcoming Camila Pauda, a recent Masters in Climate Change Policy from UC San Diego’s Scripps Institute of Oceanography, its 2023 California Sea Grant Fellow, to the team in January!



Korrin Davis, 2022 Sea Grant Fellow (left) and Hanna Payne, 2021 Sea Grant Fellow (right).

NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship Program

The Commission’s newest 2022-2024 NOAA Coastal Management fellow, Liz Plascencia, joined the Commission in August. Liz is a native Californian hailing from Los Angeles and came to the Commission with a Master of Environmental Management from Yale University's School of the Environment. Liz's two-year fellowship project will create resources, training materials, and policy guidance critical for the agency’s long-term implementation of its Environmental Justice and Tribal Consultation Policies. Liz will also add capacity to the Commission’s ability to carry forward key projects within its climate change and sea level rise planning and regulatory work focusing on the intersection between environmental justice, climate change, sea level rise planning, and resilience.



Liz Plascencia, 2022-2024
NOAA Coastal Management
Fellow.

Partnerships: Stronger Together



Caspian Terns on Redondo Beach. Photo by Ellen Eifert.

Public agency partnerships are critical to effective coastal management. The coastal program does not stand alone in the role of protecting and restoring habitat and expanding public access throughout coastal watersheds. We couldn't carry out our work without consistent collaboration with our local, state and federal agency partners. Through formal working groups and informal mutual support, the work is ongoing, but a few new initiatives and accomplishments in 2022 stand out.

In early March, Commission staff joined colleagues from Caltrans, CDFW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in forming a Wildlife Connectivity Advisory Team (WildCAT) to develop strategies to advance wildlife connectivity in state transportation plans and projects. Terrestrial and aquatic connectivity is an emerging priority for the State and the public, and there is a growing body of science demonstrating transportation systems can be made safer both for travelers and wildlife. The Commission's collaboration with our agency partners to identify the data and design approaches to best advance wildlife connectivity through careful planning and execution of future transportation projects. Ensuring that connectivity is considered and built into designs from the beginning will allow the Commission to permit those projects more efficiently. This team is part of staff's broader coordination effort with Caltrans and our sister resource agencies as participants in the State Transportation and Environmental Partnership for Permitting Efficiency (STEPPE). We look forward to making wildlife connectivity advancements through our ongoing collaboration in this important work.

On November 8, 2022, senior management from State Parks and the Coastal Commission gathered at Orange County State Parks Headquarters for the inaugural gathering in a series of facilitated partnership meetings between the two agencies that will continue throughout 2023. The purpose of this planning effort is to strengthen the relationship between California State Parks staff and Coastal Commission staff at all levels, from Executive Director down the

district planners. Strengthening collaboration and cooperation will help both agencies better achieve their missions and benefit the State of California. Ultimately both departments intend to develop a detailed Partnering Agreement similar to the successful agreement between Caltrans and the Commission.

Local governments are the Commission’s front-line partners for Coastal Act implementation, and communication is the key for advancing our shared responsibility for coastal protection. In August the Commission hosted a facilitated workshop on sea level rise with the [Local Government Sea Level Rise Working Group](#). The focus of the workshop was to discuss key takeaways from the Commission’s sea level rise grant program that provides local assistance to jurisdictions seeking to address SLR resiliency through amendments to their LCPs.

Despite chronic staffing shortages, the Commission continued to participate in the following multi-agency committees, task forces, panels and working groups statewide, including:

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

BEACON Managers and Scientists Workgroup

Caltrans Integrated Planning Team (IPT) Sea Level Rise
Working Group

Climate Change Action Coordination Team

Coastal and Ocean Working Group of the Climate Action Team
(CO-CAT)

Humboldt Bay Natural Shoreline Infrastructure TAG

Public Trust Coordination Group

Safeguarding California Climate Action Team (SafeCAT)

SANDAG Shoreline Preservation Working Group

State Agency Sea Level Rise Leadership Team

West Coast Governors Alliance Action Coordination Team





COASTAL HAZARDS AND SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT

California Coastal Sediment Management Working (CSMW) Group

California Geological Survey Tsunami Policy Working Group

California Geological Survey Tsunami Technical Advisory Panel

North-Central California Coastal Sediment Coordination Committee

Sand TAC for San Francisco BCDC

Southern California Dredged Material Management Team

Southern Monterey Bay Opportunistic Beach Nourishment Program TAC

COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT, STATE AND FEDERAL

Coastal States Organization Ex-Officio Representatives and Executive Committee
Member

Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Advisory Committee

USC Sea Grant Advisory Board

West Coast Regional Coastal Zone Programs and National Estuarine Research Reserve
Managers Work Group

Federal-State GIS Informational Meetings

SF Estuary Geospatial Working GroupSouthern Monterey Bay

ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Beach Ecology Coalition

Board of Forestry Cal VTP Implementation Working Group

California Natural Resources Agency Sea Grant Advisory Panel

California Natural Resources Agency Statewide Monitoring Coordination Group

California Wetlands Monitoring Group

Caltrans Advanced Mitigation Program Inter-agency Team

Contaminated Sediments Task Force

Fish Passage Advisory Councils (FishPACs) for Northern California, Bay Area, Central Coast, and Southern Steelhead

Gaviota Coast Wildlife Connectivity Study Stakeholder Advisory Group

Goleta Slough Management Committee

Integrated Watershed Restoration Program TAC for San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties

Inter-agency Review Teams for wetland mitigation banking

Loma Alta Slough Wetlands Enhancement TAC

Los Cerritos Wetlands TAC

NOAA Ocean Acidification Resilience Project Advisory Board

Ocean Protection Council Estuary Marine Protected Area Mgmt Advisory Council

North Coast Corridor PWP Resource Enhancement & Mitigation Advisory Group

Ormond Beach Restoration Committee

Inter-agency Pesticide Working Group

Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy TAC

Seabird Protection Network

Southern California Wetlands Recovery Group

Topanga Lagoon TAC

U.S.F.W.S. Oregon Silverspot Butterfly Working Group

Wetlands Recovery Project Wetlands Managers Group

JOINT ENFORCEMENT

Santa Monica Mountains Enforcement Task Force
Mendocino County Environmental Crimes Task Force
Del Norte Environmental Crimes Task Force
Humboldt County Environmental Crimes Task Force
Humboldt County Code Compliance Working Group



ENERGY AND OCEAN RESOURCES

California's Critical Coastal Areas Program (Joint Lead Agency)
CDFW Aquaculture Development Committee
California Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Group
Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Regional Working Group
Diablo Canyon Independent Peer Review Panel
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
Inter-agency Oil & Gas Platform Decommissioning Working Group
Joint Strategic Advisory Committee for Ca Coastal Ocean Observing System
Monterey Bay NMS Advisory Council
OSPR Technical Advisory Committee
Ports of San Diego, Long Beach, LA, Hueneme, SF and Humboldt Harbor Safety Committees
Southern California Coastal Ocean Observing System
Statewide Advisory Committee on Cooling Water Intake Structures
Statewide Marine Protected Area Leadership Team

PROJECT-SPECIFIC WORKING GROUPS

Arana Gulch Adaptive Management Working Group TAC
Broad Beach Restoration Project TAC
CNRA Inter-agency EJ Roundtable
Elk River Regulatory Integration Team
LOSSAN San Diego Regional Rail Corridor Working Group
ODSVRA Technical Review Team
ODSVRA TRT Scientific Subcommittee
Pescadero TAC/IWRP
Russian River Estuary Management Advisory Management Panel
Scott Creek Lagoon Restoration TAC
Senior Technical Advisory Committee for BCDC
Surfers Beach TAC

PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

Coastal Connections Study Project Development Team
Hollister Ranch Public Access Inter-agency Working Group
Gleason Beach Coastal Access Task Force
STEPPE (AB 1282) Transportation Permitting Taskforce
Barriers to Coastal Access Working Group
Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council
California Coastal Trail Working Group
Caltrans IPT Public Access Working Group
Lower-Cost Visitor-Serving Working Group



PUBLIC EDUCATION

California Environmental Education Inter-agency Network
Pacific Oil Spill Prevention Education Team

WATER QUALITY

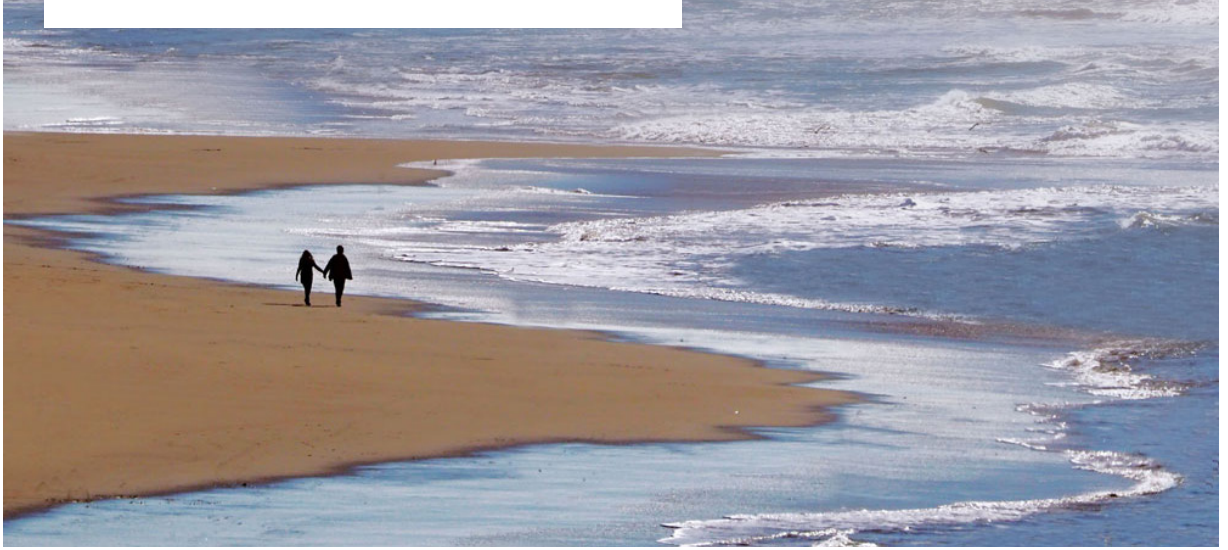
- California Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (Joint Lead Agency)
- California’s Critical Coastal Areas Program Inter-agency Working Group
- Marinas and Recreational Boating Inter-agency Coordination Committee
- Ocean Protection Council Plastic Pollution Steering Committee
- West Coast Marine Debris Alliance
- US EPA’s Regional Response Team Region 9 Applied Response Technology Workgroup



Photo Captions and Credits

- Page 56: Photo by King Tides Project.
- Page 57: Sunrise at China Beach in a natural frame. Photo by Jay Huang.
- Page 59: Spanish Shawl nudibranch at Deer Creek Kelp Beds. Photo by Nicholas Horniblow.
- Page 60: Hollister Ranch. Photo by Caroline Zimmermann.
- Page 61: No Blue, No Green. By Johnny Tang, Grade 6.

Happy Trails, and Auld Lang Syne



Ocean Beach in San Francisco. Photo by Ricky Pan.

There's the family your born with, the family you chose, and the family you forge with fellow travelers in service to coastal protection. In 2022 the Commission bid a bittersweet farewell to nine more long-time staff colleagues and close friends. While we celebrate their well-deserved retirement, they will be deeply missed, both personally and professionally. Their institutional knowledge and experience has contributed mightily to California's coastal protection legacy. As the CCC Staff Alumni roster grows, we can only hope that our former colleagues will plan to enjoy some of that fabled coastline they have worked so hard to save in so many ways. The inevitable result of having so many dedicated public servants who have committed their entire professional careers to coastal protection is that they leave a big hole when they go. Their contributions will be forever appreciated by all who visit California's magical, magnificent 1,200-mile shoreline.

Jack Ainsworth | Executive Director | 34 years

Tami Grove | Transportation Unit Manager | 34 years

Lesley Ewing | Coastal Engineer | 33 years

Maria Elena Marquez | Management Services Technician | 25 years

Jim McCunn | Human Resource Specialist | 22 years

Pat Sexton | Senior Legal Analyst | 21 years

Peggy Change | Information Technology Specialist | 20 years

Al Wanger | Coastal Program Manager, Central Coast | 21 years

Patrick Veasart | Northern California Enforcement Supervisor | 17 years

Where We Go From Here



Kelp woman. Photo by Judith Barat.

The Commission begins a new chapter in 2023, under the leadership of a new generation of dynamic women in the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, Executive Director and Chief Deputy. Four out of the five coastal agencies are now led by women directors: the Coastal Commission, Coastal Conservancy, State Lands Commission and the Ocean Protection Council, a true sea change in coastal management.

The exciting influx of talented new staff has highlighted the need to update and develop internal training resources. The Statewide Planning Unit will complete work on several internal training modules by the end of June, 2023.

Permitting review and continued planning for Offshore wind will continue to be a major priority in the coming year. With two federal offshore wind energy lease areas approved, developing the leased tracts offshore Humboldt and Morro Bay will occupy a significant amount of the Ocean and Energy Resources Unit's attention.

The EJ Team will be launching a SLR and EJ advisory group which will provide guidance and input on developing new training and outreach materials for SLR guidance and engagement strategies in EJ Communities. The EJ Unit will also be developing additional training materials on integrating EJ into LCPs, thanks to funding from a federal grant.

The Transportation Unit is engaged in several major upcoming projects including Limekiln Creek Bridge replacement in Big Sur, Last Chance Grade project in Del Norte County, and the Highway 156-Castroville Interchange in northern Monterey County. Each of these projects represent major infrastructure projects, with significant implications for transportation and coastal resources, which require careful planning and extensive collaboration in order to meet multiple objectives.

The Coastal Commission will be working with the Ocean Protection Council and the Ocean Science Team, in coordination with other state agencies, to update the State Sea-Level Rise Guidance for California. The updated guidance, which will be released in 2023, will incorporate the latest projections as developed in [NOAA's 2022 Technical Report](#).

In Memoria



A Memory Shell. By Katy Wang, Grade 2.

In September, the coast lost a tireless warrior with the passing of the indomitable Sara Wan, the longest-serving Commissioner in the agency's history, and former Chair of the Commission. An unflinching defender of the environment, Sara was a force of nature who combined her scientific training with strategic activism and political acumen to fight for the benefit of all species great and small. After leaving the Commission she and her husband Larry formed the Western Alliance for Nature, a land trust focused on preserving imperiled habitat. In the last year of her life, her final contribution was raising funds to purchase land in Marin County where proposed development was threatening a pair of nesting Northern Spotted Owls.

In a somber end to the year, the Santa Monica Mountains lost its unintentional champion for urban wildlife; the iconic, elusive mountain lion known as P-22. The celebrity cat whose image graced the pages of international publications from National Geographic to Vanity Fair was euthanized by state wildlife officials in December, due to injuries from a car collision as well as underlying illness. Nobody on two legs or four did more to focus the state's attention on the underappreciated importance of habitat connectivity than the big male puma who crossed two freeways to live as a life-long bachelor in Griffith Park. The state's inter-agency WildCAT team, of which the Commission is a member, will redouble its efforts to design a state multi-modal transportation system that does a better job of honoring the needs of those who rely on paws, hooves, fins and scales.

Sara Wan, the longest-serving Commissioner in the agency's history, passed away in September.



The mountain lion known as P-22 was euthanized in December following a car collision. Photo by Crystal (Flickr).





Photo by Hayleigh Smith.



California Coastal Commission

2022 Year in Review