



September 14, 2021

Ms. Jennifer Norris
Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat
California Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Comments on Central Coast Region for California 30x30 Statewide Process

Dear Ms. Norris,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this crucial process for developing nature-based solutions to conserve 30 percent of California’s lands by 2030. The undersigned organizations seek a continuing partnership with you to develop this program and to implement sound, equitable, science-based conservation in future years.

In this set of comments, we highlight our values, the threats to the Central Coast Region and associated urgency of our needs, the solutions we propose for consideration and inclusion in your final plan, and the special landscapes we hope to protect within the California 30x30 Initiative.

Thank you for your time in this effort.

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The Central Coast Region

Our Central Coast Region is a valuable and critically important area of the State. As defined by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), the "Central Coast Region" consists of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, San Benito, Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. The region includes incredibly productive marine and coastal waters under state and federal jurisdiction. There are many well-known, iconic places in the Central Coast region and we identify them in **Appendix 1**.

These lands and waters make up the unceded Tribal lands and resources of the original stewards of the Central Coast which include the Chumash, Šmuwič (Barbareño), Obispeño territory in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, the Esselen, Salinan, Ohlone, and Rumsen Tribes of the Salinas Valley and northern Santa Lucia Range, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Awaswas, Muwekma, Tamien Nation and Chalon from Año Nuevo in the north, along the ridge-lines and west slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Pacific Ocean and Monterey Bay, south to the Salinas River, and inland to include the Pajaro and San Benito watersheds, Ohlone-Costanoan lands in the Carmel-Monterey Peninsula area, and Ohlone Costanoan Mutsun lands held by Ann Marie Sayers in San Benito County.

The Central Coast is under existential threat from climate change. The historically rural region is also threatened by development, water shortages, fire, and loss of wildlife habitat and connectivity due to land conversion. We offer a number of solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises in our region and respectfully insist that 30x30 efforts fully and authentically integrate equity and tribal consultation into the planning and decision-making process, as well as a historically rural region. The protection of lands, waters, and wildlife we have identified herein are crucial to achieving the State's 30x30 goals and we seek your partnership to plan and implement the solutions presented.

Threats to the Central Coast

We have included below some of the high-level issues in the Central Coast region which should be addressed in 30x30:

Climate change

Climate change is happening in our region at an unprecedented scale and timeframe. It is predicted that, “by mid-century (2040-2069), the change in the annual mean maximum temperatures is expected to rise between 4-5 degrees Fahrenheit across the five counties, with expected warming on an annual average basis generally consistent across the Central Coast region.”¹ This existential threat from climate change and associated sea level rise and ocean acidification places coastal habitats, such as beaches, tidepools, dunes, marshes and estuaries, at extreme risk and exacerbates saltwater intrusion. Deadly fires strike the region each year, damaging and destroying the homes of humans and animals. Climate change will cause the most harm to historically excluded communities in the Central Coast who already experience difficulties accessing housing, clean air and water, resources, and nature.

Loss of biodiversity

The Central Coast Region is notable for its extensive natural ecosystems. Chaparral, oak woodlands, and grasslands comprise more than 75 percent of the region's land cover. Coastal dunes and bluffs and inland sandhills host uniquely adapted plants found nowhere else. Closed-cone conifers such as Monterey pine and cypress are iconic rare vegetation types threatened by poor management and loss of habitat.

The Central Coast is part of California's Mediterranean biome, a biodiversity hotspot. The Central Coast Region provides habitat for a significant number of imperiled species, including at least 20 threatened or endangered species. Some of the endangered species include the California Condor, San Joaquin kit fox, Nelson's antelope squirrel, arroyo toad, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, southwestern pond turtle, central & south-central California coast steelhead, California red legged frog, Western Snowy Plover, California Least Tern, Smith's blue butterfly and Least Bell's Vireo. Overwintering monarch butterflies and other migratory species need coastal forests and habitats provided by undeveloped lands. These natural phenomena and access to and interpretation of nature provided by institutions such as monarch sanctuaries, state parks, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium bring billions of dollars to the region annually.

Additionally, the Central Coast region provides habitat for nearly 500 rare, threatened, and endemic plant species including: Santa Lucia fir, Gowen's cypress, Palmer's Mariposa lily, Santa Ynez false lupine, Ojai fritillary, pale-yellow layia, Yaden's rein-orchid, Monterey gilia, Blakley's spineflower, Nipomo lupine, La Graciosa thistle, and Pismo clarkia.

The greatest threats to biodiversity in the Central Coast region are habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation from increasing human land use and linear infrastructure, climate change, high demand for

¹ [Fourth Climate Change Assessment--Central Coast Region](#)

a limited and expensive supply of land, water scarcity and contamination, and established non-native, invasive species. Strong demand for housing, commercial development and linear infrastructure in rural areas and intensive agriculture have degraded native habitat and threaten intact lands that support wildlife, wildlife connectivity, sustainable grazing and natural vegetation. Here are the specific and highest priority threats to the exceptional biodiversity of the Central Coast Region that we have identified:

- Loss of habitat and habitat connectivity on land and in water due to climate change and associated drought;
- Land use change (conversion of grasslands and oak woodlands to houses and vineyards), development, linear infrastructure, sand mining, and habitat fragmentation;
- Unsustainable groundwater withdrawal and unsustainable water consumption;
- Fisheries depletion and unsustainable grazing practices;
- Under-funding for conservation: ranging from the need for funding for acquisition of lands to funding for species and conservation management on public lands;
- Logging practices that reduce fire-resilience and habitat quality, trespass cannabis cultivation, and disruption of natural fire patterns;
- Invasive plant and animal species degrading habitat;
- Onshore and offshore oil and gas development in Santa Barbara, San Benito and San Luis Obispo Counties; and
- Poorly-sited energy projects that harm wildlife and habitat connectivity.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's State Wildlife Action Plan includes further information regarding the threats and opportunities for biodiversity conservation within this region and should be incorporated.

Loss of working landscapes

Working landscapes are critical to maintaining local food supplies. Well managed farms and ranches can sequester carbon and, if co-managed for conservation, support biodiversity. Ranches in the region support some of the last remaining native grasslands and oak woodlands that used to characterize the region, providing habitat to endangered species. However, these lands are being developed at an alarming rate throughout California and the Central Coast.

Environmental justice issues

[Environmental justice](#) as defined by the State of California means the “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and

policies.”² The Central Coast continues to reflect an economic and social disconnect between prosperous coastal communities and inland, often agricultural areas with many low-income workers. Environmental justice communities³ face unique environmental and health threats from pesticides, proximity to oil development, poor air quality, and water contamination.

Inequities in access to nature

Opportunities to experience nature increase the health and wellbeing of our society, but these opportunities are not available equally for all communities in the Central Coast region, where redlining, other land use decisions and income inequality have kept access to key beaches in the hands of affluent, white communities. In many cases coastal access is not truly accessible as beach access points or viewsheds are hidden or invisible to the public and only known to wealthy homeowners, and in some cases restricted entirely. Meanwhile, historically and systemically excluded inland communities, such as Santa Maria and Orcutt, have limited access to open space. We also note that drought and dewatering of rivers such as the Santa Ynez, which tend to be more used by communities of color in the region, will harm these communities the most. Many of these same communities lack access to safe, affordable drinking water and deal with other forms of environmental pollution, as well as being the most susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

Lack of meaningful Tribal consultation and leadership

Tribes and Tribal bands, regardless of federal recognition status, in the Central Coast Region need to be engaged by the State of California in an authentic partnership to support their efforts around land return, co-management and stewardship and to begin to repair the deep trauma of colonization from when lands were taken from Native Peoples. One best, “early and often” engagement practice is to establish Tribal partnerships prior to developing proposals, planning and consultations. Building relationships with Tribal leaders, managers and community members is key to ensuring respectful

²Environmental Justice is further defined by the State of California in legislation supported by environmental justice leaders as follows: “*environmental justice*’ includes, but is not limited to, all of the following: (A) The availability of a healthy environment for all people, (B) The deterrence, reduction, and elimination of pollution burdens for populations and communities experiencing the adverse effects of that pollution, so that the effects of the pollution are not disproportionately borne by those populations and communities, (C) Governmental entities engaging and providing technical assistance to populations and communities most impacted by pollution to promote their meaningful participation in all phases of the environmental and land use decision making process, (D) At a minimum, the meaningful consideration of recommendations from populations and communities most impacted by pollution into environmental and land use decisions.”

³**(1)** Santa Barbara: Eastside Santa Barbara, Santa Maria. **(2)** San Benito: Greenfield, Arroyo Seco, King City, San Lucas. **(3)** Monterey: Seaside. **(4)** Southern Salinas Valley: Spreckels Junction, Alisal, Boronda. **(5)** Monterey Bay: Watsonville, Watsonville Junction, Pajaro Valley, Pajaro, Freedom, Colache Town. **(6)** South to the Salinas River: Neponset **(7)** Benito Watershed Area: Gilroy, San Juan Bautista, Morse, San Juan Valley

dialogue and that intentions are trustworthy. This assures that programs which are developed are accessible to Tribal communities and that Tribal concerns, values and principles are included in decisions about land and waters.

Drought and water shortages

As noted, climate change has and will continue to lead to drought, affecting access to safe, affordable water to low-income communities and harming wildlife. There are multiple critically overdrafted basins in the region, including Santa Cruz Mid-County, Pajaro Valley, 180/400 foot, Paso Robles, Los Osos and Cuyama Valley, and others are rapidly declining. This confluence of drought and groundwater overdraft will continue to grow. We encourage CNRA to work with local partners and consider strategic land retirements that could be utilized for habitat and productive open spaces for community members. The dewatering of South Central Coast streams and rivers is also the number one threat to critical habitat for endangered species such as the Southern California steelhead trout and other wildlife.

Solutions

CNRA must establish a clear definition of “conserved” under 30x30

Conserved areas must be established with enduring (lasting) measures, support connected and intact habitats and thriving biodiversity, protect endangered and threatened species and species of special concern, contribute to climate resilience, provide ecosystem services, and be managed so that their natural character, resources, and functions exist for current and future generations, provide clean water, clean air, and places for communities, particularly communities of color, who have traditionally been excluded to experience nature, respect Tribal sovereignty and the right to Tribal self-determination so that Tribal communities can fulfill their priorities for the stewardship of their natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Examples of areas considered conserved under 30x30 include but are not limited to: areas acquired and placed under permanent protection for conservation through permanent conservation easement or in fee with deed restriction, National Parks, National Monuments, designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, lands within the Bureau of Land Management’s National Conservation Lands System, National Wildlife Refuges and State ecological reserves.

Build climate resilience

We note that the state has recently completed its [Fourth Climate Change Assessment for the Central Coast](#) and recommend CNRA review and build off this study when developing recommendations for the region. We suggest restoring wetlands, dunes, and reefs to reduce threats of catastrophic flooding and coastal erosion, while also revitalizing the land, and note that because the Central Coast is relatively undeveloped, land conservation efforts are impactful. We support investments in projects that promote climate resilience as well as sustaining biodiversity, supporting wildlife linkages, reducing fragmentation of habitat, and benefiting historically and systematically excluded communities who will be most impacted by climate change.

Preserve biodiversity

We support a number of solutions for protecting the Central Coast’s unique biodiversity. We suggest the state invest significantly in existing programs and leverage existing partnerships throughout the region to achieve these goals. These solutions include:

- Investing in strategic and significant land acquisitions with willing sellers through fee title or permanent conservation easements, each with limitations on development and endowments for conservation management in perpetuity.
- Working with local land trusts and willing landowners to permanently protect biodiversity on private and/or working lands which can be managed for conservation (including through practices such as science-based managed grazing to maintain grasslands for species such as burrowing owls, tiger salamanders, badgers, and grassland birds).
- Supporting efforts of Native American land trusts, Tribes and Tribal Bands to implement efforts around management, co-management and land return.

- Supporting and advocating for new protective designations for federally-managed lands and waters with high conservation value such as the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, the PUBLIC Lands Act and BLM-managed lands.
- Acquiring strategic inholdings or mineral rights in already protected lands such as the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument to promote improved intactness and reduce fragmentation.
- Facilitating efforts to reclaim lands used for oil and gas development or retired under SGMA.
- Providing increased, sustained and reliable funding for land management agencies and land trusts to manage and monitor land for biodiversity.
- Conserving or restoring eelgrass meadows and kelp forests as essential for biodiversity and climate resilience, including as a source of blue carbon.
- Protecting and monitoring upwelling zones.
- Efforts to limit and manage uses and practices which harm biodiversity.

Support and implement existing efforts to preserve wildlife and plant habitat

We note there are many existing and historical partnership efforts underway to identify habitat and actions necessary to preserve the remaining species in the region. As noted above, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's State Wildlife Action Plan includes a chapter specific to the Central Coast. We encourage CNRA to incorporate these efforts into their work, and highlight below specific actions surfaced by our group. These include:

- *Actions identified in the [Recovery Plan for the Upland Species of the San Joaquin Valley](#) (Recovery Plan).* The kit fox (an umbrella species) recovery depends on the enhanced protection and management of three geographically-distinct core populations: Carrizo Plain Natural Area, natural lands of Western Kern County and the Ciervo-Panoche Natural Area of Western Fresno and Eastern San Benito Counties. Unfortunately, since the time of the Recovery Plan much of the core recovery areas have been lost to development. We encourage CNRA to look at the actions identified in the Recovery Plan, including what lands in San Luis Obispo and San Benito Counties can still be acquired for permanent protection, as well as other recommended actions or lands that might be suitable for habitat.⁴We encourage CNRA to work with US Fish and Wildlife Service and BLM staff working on recovery of upland species to identify high-value lands for acquisition, future designation and opportunities for enhanced management.
- *Plants:* CNPS and several partners are working to map the Santa Clara River Watershed, identifying natural and culturally important sites; a preliminary report is expected next year along with a map of Important Plant Areas in the Central Coast Region. We recommend CNRA incorporate the findings of this effort, and include below other partnerships and local efforts to build off of:
 - *Carrizo Plain:* CNPS has monitored plots in the Carrizo Plains for several years, showing the interannual variability of herbaceous-dominated systems that cannot be seen via remote sensing. Most public lands in the area have one or more plant lists showing the

⁴ We note that Little Panoche Valley is currently for sale

high diversity of systems, and local floras identify regionally rare or important species or habitats.

- *Cultural Burning*: The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band is working with the Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association and other agencies and partners to reintroduce cultural burning in several habitats.
- *National Parks*: Pinnacles National Park has restored several bottomland areas from yellow starthistle-dominated systems to native wildflower fields, and the Santa Lucia Conservancy and UC Santa Cruz have worked to restore and understand coastal grasslands, one of the most densely biodiverse systems with less than 10% of its original extent remaining.
- *Academia*: UC Santa Cruz and several natural history museums work to conserve and interpret native plants to the public, and provide native plant demonstration gardens as corridors and connectors of biodiversity, and particularly as reservoirs of pollinators in agricultural areas.
- [Fire Followers](#) project empowers local communities to observe natural recovery after fire, and improve fire literacy to reestablish our relationship with fire. This ongoing study provides documentation of plants and animals found before and after fires and has already documented several new populations of rare or ephemeral species.
- *Birds*: National Audubon Society has designated hundreds of thousands of acres of lands in this region as [Important Bird Areas](#), including some of the places mentioned in this letter, such as Carrizo Plain, Panoche Valley, Big Sur, Santa Maria River Mouth, and Morro Bay. IBAs contain a mixture of private and public maps but identify the places most important in the region to wintering, migratory or breeding birds as well special status species. The state should look at the IBA map as a way to identify lands and/or connectivity to protect bird and other wildlife populations.
- *Protect Wildlife Connectivity*: Marine and terrestrial movement is common along the Central Coast. Conservation efforts should strategize establishing a connected network of protected areas by protecting core habitats and linkages between them to allow wildlife to disperse throughout their natural range and facilitate climate change adaptation. Pathways to a preferred climate are necessary for species protection because it provides options when current habitats are no longer viable. Terrestrial plants and wildlife may move northward, toward the coast, or to higher elevations to achieve more suitable conditions. The State should utilize existing efforts to identify important wildlife connectivity areas, including, [CDFW Priority Barriers to Wildlife Movement](#), [Wildlife Permeability and Hazards Across Highway 152 Pacheco Pass](#), and the [California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project](#), to guide and prioritize conservation investments that enhance connectivity throughout the Central Coast Region, as well as incorporating wildlife movement considerations into design of highways, High Speed Rail and other infrastructure.
- *Protecting Watershed Ecosystems from Impacts of Drought and Climate Change* The Central Coast Region serves as the source of a number of important streams, including the Pajaro, San Lorenzo, Santa Ynez, Salinas, Carmel and Santa Maria Rivers, tributaries and countless creeks. Protection of the upper watersheds and coastal creeks of California's Central Coast Region is

essential for the maintenance of aquatic habitat resources and the health of the state's coastline and offshore marine areas. We encourage CNRA to think about opportunities to invest in dam removal and stream restoration to benefit biodiversity and wildlife. We support investments in programs to enhance instream flow in depleted groundwater basins such as those that exist in the Ventura River watershed. Executable, integrated water strategies such as: rainwater capture and reuse, groundwater infiltration, wastewater reuse, water conservation, and ocean friendly gardens should be implemented on both regional and parcel-level scales for the purpose of augmenting shallow groundwater supplies necessary for maintaining groundwater dependent ecosystems.

Address invasive species

We support efforts that protect native plants and wildlife and restrict the spread of invasive species. We offer the following specific recommendations:

- Implement planning policies that address invasive plant and wildlife species, e.g. regional landscape plans.
- Fund prevention, early detection, and rapid response to eradicate new invasive species before they are fully established.
- Lands considered conserved under 30x30 should, where applicable, have active and funded conservation plans that manage habitat against the spread of invasive species and support restoration work to remove invasive species and reestablish native vegetation.
- Implement funding to support education and outreach to public and local agencies to emphasize the value of native species and habitats and the importance of preventing development of or encroachment into intact habitat that make them more vulnerable to invasion.

Work with Federal Agencies for better protection of federal lands and waters

Although federal lands are not within the jurisdiction of CNRA, there is a key role for the state to play in coordination, and advocacy with Congress, as well as opportunities to assist federal land managers by helping agencies identify areas that are important for conservation or access.

We thank CNRA for their efforts to date in publicly supporting the PUBLIC Lands Act, which would add new wilderness and other protections to the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument, as well as protecting key watersheds.

We also support and want to highlight the long-standing efforts led by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council to designate waters off the Central Coast as the Chumash National Heritage Marine Sanctuary, supported by all of our federal representatives, and urge CNRA to advocate for this proposal with the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

We also note that many federal lands in the region, including Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument have active development threats from logging or mineral extraction and urge CNRA to consider actions which can create greater biological integrity for this region. Other

opportunities for greater land protections for federal lands that would meet 30x30 goals include new wilderness designations on the Channel Islands and greater protection for Bureau of Land Management-managed areas in Eastern San Benito and Western Kern Counties which are a [biodiversity hotspot](#). (This area along the inner Coast Range is severely [under-protected but holds significant landscape-scale intactness](#).)

Pesticides

Agricultural and residential pesticides can cause harm to humans, wildlife and water. The region has pesticide usage ranging from 47 - 100% higher than other areas in California. This equates to approximately 2.652 pounds to as high as 52,641.128 pounds of active ingredients used per square mile. Communities such as Watsonville Junction and Pajaro Valley in Monterey Bay are experiencing disproportionate levels of pesticide use, and related harms from air and water contamination. Synthetic pesticides can also be a primary driver of biodiversity loss, and reducing synthetic pesticide use is a critical mechanism for protecting endangered species and critical habitat. We urge CNRA to incentivize the development of alternatives to synthetic pesticides and support efforts to incentivize farmers' conversion to ecological pest management, including biological and organic systems. We recognize that pesticides can be an important tool in managing lands, either for agriculture or habitat restoration, however additional resources and education should be provided to land managers to reduce pesticide use.

Center environmental justice

Because of their historic under-representation in decisions, it is important to make additional efforts to inform Tribal and environmental justice communities about the 30x30 process. CNRA should work with farmworker rights groups and other community-based organizations to obtain and dedicate meaningful resources to reach out early and often to these communities, in language that is understandable and accessible to everyone in a community. Terms such as "conservation", "equity" and "access" should be clearly defined. Outreach should be augmented with non-traditional communication methods, for example, the use of social media, flyers, community meetings, surveys, language translation and interpretation services targeted at populations who face barriers to participation. Additionally, CNRA and sister agencies should consider environmental justice, as well as the values in the 30x30 process, holistically when drafting regulations or providing approvals for projects that have particular impacts on environmental justice communities, including location of oil and gas and other industrial facilities, regulations of water, oil and gas and pesticides. We believe that clearly-established and openly-communicated metrics for success, in regards to equity and transparency, must be communicated at every stage of the process.

Equitable distribution of conservation benefits

Access to clean and safe drinking water, clean air and nature are not shared equally in the Central Coast as communities, particularly less-affluent inland communities of color, disproportionately bear the impacts of poverty and environmental contamination. This disparity is shown in the unequal access to parks and open space throughout the Central Coast. The 30x30 process in the Central Coast must include

new and expanded parks and open spaces for communities who have been historically and systemically excluded from accessing the benefits of nature. Issues of transportation equity must also be addressed. Specifically, we advocate for partnering with CBOs and community members in these communities to create a community needs assessments or otherwise develop community-based recommendations to identify what communities need in terms of open space, transit, and recreational facilities. Based on the community needs assessment we advocate for:

- Funding new parks and open spaces in the Central Coastal Region to provide high-quality open space opportunities for historically excluded communities
- Funding transportation from underrepresented communities to existing open spaces to address transportation equity
- Creating new landmarks and cultural monuments important to Tribes, immigrant communities and communities of color and actively engaging in renaming efforts.
- Using the 30x30 process holistically and considering incorporating within the process state decisions that could impact public health in under-served communities including air pollution, chemical runoff and pollution, asthma, extreme heat, wildfires, and lack of access to safe and affordable drinking water.
- Addressing cost barriers by eliminating or reducing park fees at state parks for underrepresented communities

Equitable and sustainable recreation

While outdoor recreation promotes the innate connection between people and nature, and increases health and wellbeing, these recreational opportunities should also exist in harmony with our biodiverse and delicate natural ecosystem. A proliferation of active recreation has harmed habitat in protected areas in the Central Coast. We urge CNRA to work with recreation ecologists and biologists to identify lands best-suited to active recreation and those where active recreation or human visitation may need to be restricted or limited. Investments should be made to promote nature-based education that encourages visitors, and especially youth, to learn about and steward our public lands. We recommend CNRA to partner with local CBO's working to engage their communities in responsible outdoor recreation.

Invest in community resilience

We support economic development and equitable distribution of conservation funding for land acquisition and management to create and maintain open space in under-resourced communities. This work should be done in partnership with communities and community-based organizations. We also seek to create opportunities to empower youth leaders and workers on the Central Coast. We believe that through the 30x30 process California can support many new jobs in the environmental field including education, stewardship, recreation, and tourism while also protecting farmworkers and securing sustainable agriculture for the future of our region. Towards this end, we support the goals identified in the "Using Nature-Based Solutions to Advance Equity Advisory Panel Summary Document" including to: 1) Establish long-term stable and dedicated funding sources for natural climate solutions and 2) Invest in organizational diversity and capacity as well as a commitment to building pathways to

wealth for under-resourced communities. As noted in the Advisory Panel Summary Document, economic or career driven incentives should be planned for and implemented as part of the 30x30 process. That is to say, incentivizing restoration and conservation management actions, green economy jobs, and job training for environmentally focused positions should be included in the planning process of meeting the 30x30 goal.

Meaningful Tribal consultation

Actions taken without sufficient tribal consultation lead to further destruction of tribal communities and culture. We encourage the State to consult with each Tribe and Band in the region in authentic partnership and support Indigenous-led efforts on the following topics:

- Provide financial and technical assistance to increase tribal capacity, when needed, to participate in meaningful and appropriate consultation as well as to support outreach.
- Develop climate resilience plans and projects.
- Develop and support the continuity of cultural practices with a focus on preserving the ecosystems and species that are integral to Tribal communities.
- Develop plans, opportunities, and funding for Land Return.
- Create capacity and opportunity for management and co-management of conserved lands.
- Build momentum and encourage planning for renaming of Native ancestral lands.
- Protect landmarks and cultural designations important to tribal groups such as the Chumash Marine Sanctuary.

Expanding and protecting cultural heritage sites

30x30 should include specific strategies for expanding cultural heritage sites which preserve the history of those excluded from recognition starting with Indigenous tribes and people of color in California. The definition of “cultural resource” should be defined with the input of Tribes and other communities of color and should encompass community-identified cultural heritage sites and efforts to rename places to reflect the values of the surrounding communities. People of color must see themselves represented in conservation efforts and cultural heritage sites. The preservation of their cultural history will serve to engage and inspire a new generation in heritage conservation, both natural and cultural.

Increase state funding for public and private land conservation, restoration and management.

While organizations work to identify new sources of funding through private donation and federal funds, state funding remains a critical part of the funding mix for land conservation, restoration and management. Past bonds have provided important funding for land conservation. **We urge you to combine the 30x30 Pathways Report with new and substantial state investments in conservation.** This is particularly critical for the Central Coast region. Funding support for land conservation acquisition that meet distinct 30x30 goals and regional priorities will ensure high-quality conservation projects. We also urge funding for improvements of wildlife movement along wildlife linkages in the central coast and adjacent areas, including improvement of culverts, and dedicated wildlife bridges. Finally, State Parks

should coordinate with state and local agencies to support conservation projects in underrepresented communities and provide technical assistance and advanced payment (instead of reimbursements).

With the current budget surplus, California could significantly jump start its efforts to achieve the 30x30 goal with increased and/or new state funding for conservation. We were pleased to see significant funding in the final budget agreements. However, the need for support for acquisitions, restoration and capacity remains significant and will be necessary beyond the three-year budget agreement. It is our understanding that there will be an additional budget surplus for the next fiscal year. **We urge the state to allocate additional new funding in future state budgets to meet the 30x30 goals.**

In particular, **the 30x30 Pathways Report should include recommendations for new funding programs to support capacity building for organizations working to promote conservation and access in this region.** The state must invest more in building up its partners' technical expertise, capacity (e.g., job training and development), and funding to help achieve its goals.

Funding for restoration is also an important part of the 30x30 effort. Many areas in the Central Coast Region have been seriously degraded and in critical need of restoration. For example, multiple organizations are working with local, state and federal agencies to remove the Matilija dam and restore the Matilija Creek and Ventura River. In addition, in urban areas, there are lands seriously degraded by industrial pollution, channelization of rivers and streams, and failure to prioritize open space and parks. **There needs to be a significant emphasis placed on restoring degraded landscapes in addition to protecting intact landscapes.** Many organizations are already working on restoring and managing important lands that provide benefits for biodiversity, climate resilience and access to the outdoors. **The state needs to invest more into accelerating restoration on public and private lands through increased funding.**

Further, an important component of "conservation" is to ensure that those areas counted towards the 30x30 goal are managed in the long-term to ensure that they continue to provide conservation value. This means that there needs to be increased funding and emphasis on long-term management and monitoring of these "conserved areas." **The state should also increase funding for land management and scientific monitoring to ensure that land management is achieving its intended goals over the long-term.**

In particular, we urge the state to provide for adequate and sustainable funding for conservation management, restoration, science and staffing on California state parks and reserves and CA Department of Fish and Wildlife properties, which provide habitat for endangered and threatened species and support biodiversity and climate values, as well as public access. Many state properties suffer from deferred maintenance and degraded habitats as well as lack of adequate staffing to fully manage their properties for public access and biodiversity. Land restoration will create jobs and support land management, trail building, land restoration, restore wildlife connectivity, and develop skills within the community. State parks in the region often rely on volunteers for stewardship work, and need stable funding for ongoing maintenance and restoration needs.

Management of state parks

The Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, part of California's State Parks system, contains many rare habitats that support diverse threatened or endangered plants and animals, but has allowed for harmful recreational driving. CNRA should use the 30x30 process to rehabilitate the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, provide opportunities for passive and non-vehicular recreation, and restore the dunes. In addition, state managed lands should be made more welcoming and safe for underrepresented communities, including having interpretive signage and trails in multiple languages, as well as signage that educates and informs on Tribal history in the region.

Improve wildfire management and response

The Central Coast includes unique habitats in many different ecoregions. A one-size-fits-all wildfire management approach is inappropriate for this landscape, and the preservation of native species and ecosystems is critically important. Improper vegetation removal can increase wildfire risk and reduce biodiversity. For example, the "emergency" 2019 fuel reduction in Cambria cleared rare native Monterey pine forest against recommendations of vegetation ecologists and in defiance of an established forest management plan.

While we understand fire poses risks to human communities, fire has been a natural part of California's systems for several million years, and both traditional ecological knowledge and the basic ecology of vegetation needs to be at the forefront of any fuel reduction work. Furthermore, recent wildfires, including the Dixie Fire and Caldor Fire have demonstrated that thinning and other types of vegetation removal activities do not stop or slow wildfire, especially under increasingly common extreme weather conditions. Mechanical removal of vegetation at a landscape scale can reduce ecosystem carbon sequestration, emit more CO₂ than is saved in a future wildfire, deplete ecosystem services, cause tremendous damage to soils and water, spread non-native invasive plants, and degrade ecosystem integrity.

Many plant species native to the Central Coast are adapted to a particular fire regime, especially in chaparral ecosystems which dominate the landscape. These plants are resilient to fire at the right time of year, under the right conditions, and at the right interval—otherwise they cannot regenerate. These circumstances are difficult to artificially replicate. Pile burning and burning during damp conditions outside of the dry season can kill seeds, cause soil sterilization, and harm nesting birds and other animals evolved to breed when fires don't naturally occur. Plants need time to mature and develop a seedbed between fires. When fires are too frequent, certain plants cannot regenerate.

To better prepare for wildfire, we should:

- limit development in residential fringe areas that are highly prone to fire,
- limit linear infrastructure (transmission lines, roads, rail) in areas that are prone to fire, particularly extreme wind (e.g. Santa Ana winds) corridors.
- develop programs that provide equitable access to home and infrastructure hardening thereby reducing the impacts of wildfire on communities and human health. These improvements can

include air filtration systems, fire resistant building materials, home hardening, escape plans and at least two escape routes for communities, wildfire shelters, and the maintenance of defensible space around homes and businesses located within the wildland urban interface.

- Avoid vegetation management activities in chaparral and sage scrub habitat that cause type conversion of vegetation that only increases fire risk in the long-term.

In addition, we can increase equity in our response to wildfires by supporting outdoor workers and farmworkers by implementing:

- educational efforts on the harmful effects of smoke from wildfires,
- distribution of personal protective equipment for extreme heat and smoke exposure,
- building community smoke shelters,
- educating employers and workers on appropriate public health responses to wildfire,
- creating new channels to pass along emergency information, including multilingual alert systems, e.g., text alert system, radio outreach, and empowering community and local faith leaders to share important information with their constituents.

Fossil fuels

Fossil fuel extraction, including oil and gas leasing is counterproductive to the stated climate goals of California's 30x30 process. The Biden Administration is actively working to decommission oil and gas drilling platforms, pipelines, and wells off of the Southern California coast, and the State Land Commission has a meaningful role in executing this. We also note there are several active proposals in Cat Canyon to drill 760+ new oil wells that will all penetrate the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin, which provides drinking water for 200,000 people and irrigation water for the Santa Maria Valley. We encourage CNRA to use the 30x30 process to reclaim and restore lands harmed by oil and gas development and help protect these lands in perpetuity for conservation purposes. Plugging wells to prevent leaks of methane and other pollutants and restoring this land for conservation purposes provides multiple benefits for the climate and potentially for habitat and local communities. These land restoration efforts would also help provide jobs and encourage a just transition for the region's oil and gas workers.

Sustainably sited renewable energy

We maintain that it is important that renewable energy is sustainably sited to avoid harms to plants and wildlife species. The last remaining San Joaquin Valley native grasslands have been particularly impacted by large solar projects in this region. Where possible renewable energy should be targeted for rooftops and other developed areas, not open space with high biodiversity value. We also note the active process led by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management around offshore wind, in partnership with the California Energy Commission (CEC) and we encourage CNRA and CEC to consider 30x30 biodiversity values and impact to the migratory birds using the pacific flyway and marine mammals when engaging in that process.

Special Places to Conserve, Protect and Restore

We hope that the following descriptions of special places and projects, divided by County, will help to identify strategically important lands to protect in the Central Coast region through the 30x30 process.

Monterey County Special Places and Projects

Special Places and Projects

Project name: *Monterey Bay State Seashore*

Description: Acquisition of coastal dune habitat would conserve threatened coastal dune ecosystems and numerous rare plants and animals, provide protection of viewsheds, increase public access and recreation opportunities, and support habitat restoration.

Project name: *Conservation Connectivity – Santa Lucia Range to Fort Ord National Monument, 250-acres*

Description: Acquisition of fee land and conservation easements would connect conserved park lands and open space, protect rare habitats and species (Monterey Pine Forest, Vernal Pools, Coastal Grassland, Maritime Chaparral), create wildlife corridors and recreational trail connections, and maintain scenic viewsheds.

Project name: *Southern Monterey County Working Lands, 9,200-acre conservation easement*

Description: Acquisition of a conservation easement over a large working ranch would promote climate resilience by conserving a landscape-scale mosaic of diverse vegetation and wildlife habitat, as well as Native American cultural features. The property includes opportunities for restoration of riparian and wetland habitat.

Project name: *Sierra de Salinas Watershed and Biodiversity Conservation*

Description: Fee and conservation easement acquisition of working ranches would protect biodiversity, watershed health, climate resilience and inter-connected wildlife corridors with landscape-scale mosaic of diverse habitat types. Acquisitions offer opportunities for wetland and riparian enhancement, as well as potential recreational trail connections.

Project name: *Repatriation of Tribal Lands*

Description: Identify and acquire lands suitable for conveyance to Native American tribes for ceremony, return of remains, and traditional plant collection activities.

Project name: *City of Monterey Campground*

Description: Acquire fee land for conservation of Monterey Pine Forest and habitat for federally endangered plants, and provide opportunity for development of small camping areas within the Monterey City Limits.

Santa Barbara County Special Places and Projects

Background

Natural and working lands cover over 85% of Santa Barbara County and play a key role in the region's economy and culture⁵. Similar to other Central Coast counties, Santa Barbara County's natural and working lands are increasingly threatened by conversion to urban land, with approximately 21,000 acres of farmland and rangeland converted to urban and built-up land uses each year⁶. In the Central Coast Region, it is especially important that the state actively support the passage of Representative Salud Carbajal's Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, which is part of the Protecting America's Wilderness Act in the House and the Protecting Unique and Beautiful Lands by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act in the Senate.

Many of Santa Barbara County's special places to conserve are located along the Gaviota Coast. The Gaviota Coast in Santa Barbara County lies at the end of Southern California. It remains undeveloped because of this fact and the 100-acre agricultural zoning instituted in 1981. The Santa Ynez Mountains form the backbone of the Coast. Its beaches stretch for 73 miles, equally spanning the "elbow" of Point Conception to both the north and east. Remember, the coastline of southern Santa Barbara County, the "Southcoast", runs east- west, not north-south – a fact that confuses most, locals included.

The Chumash, the first people on this coast, have been here for 13,000 years and have left their legacy across the entire area, as reflected in many of the projects we will describe. Europeans are recent arrivals but have left heavy footprints that makes the relatively unspoiled rural character of the Gaviota Coast an emblem of what once was and a jewel to conserve for future generations of people, plants and animals. Appendix 2 provides more in-depth descriptions of the special places and projects along the Gaviota Coast, courtesy of the Gaviota Coast Conservancy.

Four of the Channel Islands fall within the boundaries of Santa Barbara County. Channel Islands National Park (CINP) enabling legislation, the Wilderness Act, and National Park Service Management Policies require that lands within the park be studied for wilderness designation. The General Management Plan (GMP) analyzed lands within the park boundary and identified the lands eligible for wilderness designation, which have been included in this section. The park wilderness is now "proposed wilderness" and "proposed potential wilderness" by virtue of the GMP. The next step in the process is for the Director of the NPS to submit the wilderness proposal to the Secretary of the Interior, who then recommends wilderness designation to the President. The four proposed wilderness areas are described below:

⁵ 2040 Fast Forward Regional Transportation and Sustainable Communities Strategy. Santa Barbara County Association of Governments; 2017
http://www.sbcag.org/uploads/2/4/5/4/24540302/ff2040_final.pdf

⁶ California Department of Conservation. Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program. 1996. Available from: <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/Index.aspx>

Special Places and Projects

Project name: *Channel Islands National Park Wilderness (CINP), Santa Cruz Island - 14,476 acres*

Description: Most of Santa Cruz Island is undeveloped and generally appears to be affected primarily by the forces of nature. There are many opportunities for outstanding solitude and primitive recreation. The island is very scenic, with mountain ranges, deep canyons, craggy coastline cliffs, one of the largest and deepest sea caves in the world, pristine tidepools, and expansive beaches. The island supports a very diverse biotic community, including nine federally listed plant species, large colonies of nesting seabirds, and breeding harbor seals and California sea lions. In addition, the island has a rich cultural history, with many archeological resources.

Project name: *Channel Islands National Park Wilderness (CINP), Santa Rosa Island - 50,802 acres*

Description: Much of Santa Rosa is undeveloped. Although heavily grazed by livestock beginning in the 1850s, and later browsed by introduced deer and elk, the island is primarily affected by natural forces. Few signs of people are evident on most of the island. There are many opportunities for outstanding solitude and primitive recreation. The island supports several rare plants, some of which are found nowhere else in the world. It also is home to the endangered and endemic island fox. The sandy beaches and cliffs are breeding and resting areas for seabirds, seals, and sea lions. Archeological and paleontological sites are abundant on the island, including the site of the world's most complete pygmy mammoth skeleton, which was excavated in 1994.

Project name: *Channel Islands National Park Wilderness (CINP), Santa Barbara Island - 639 acres*

Description: Most of Santa Barbara Island is undeveloped, with few signs of people. It generally appears affected primarily by natural forces. There are outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. The island has a diversity of habitats, including steep cliffs, canyons, and badlands, and is a haven for seabirds, including one of the world's largest colonies of Scripp's murrelets. The rocky shores also provide resting and breeding areas for California sea lions, and elephant and harbor seals.

Project name: *Channel Islands National Park Wilderness (CINP), Islets and Rocks - 39 acres*

Description: Many of the small rocks and islets are offshore of the main islands, within the park boundary. They are all undeveloped and are affected primarily by the forces of nature. All of these areas are closed to public access to protect wildlife. They are important breeding and resting areas for seabirds and sea mammals.

Project name: *Channel Islands National Park Wilderness (CINP), Anacapa Island - 620 acres*

Description: The West Anacapa Islet (460 acres) and the Middle Anacapa Islet (160 acres) are undeveloped and appear to be affected primarily by the forces of nature. West Anacapa supports the largest breeding colony of western gulls in the world. The islet also provides resting and breeding areas for California sea lions and harbor seals. Sea bird roosting and nesting sites and pinniped haul-out and rookery sites are present. Few people use the Middle Anacapa islet, which is mostly closed to public

access to protect sensitive resources. The Middle Anacapa islet supports the largest breeding colony of the endangered California brown pelican in the U.S.

*Note that Anacapa Island is under the jurisdiction of Ventura County.

Project name: *Los Padres National Forest Watersheds*

Description: Protect forest ecosystems by passing Representative Salud Carbajal's Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, which is part of the Protecting America's Wilderness Act in the House and the Protecting Unique and Beautiful Lands by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act in the Senate.

Project name: *Santa Ynez Valley Oak Woodlands*

Description: Work with local officials to develop protection plans for this fast disappearing oak woodland ecosystem.

Project name: *Gaviota Coast - A Coastal Park Without Precedent in Southern California - 1500 acres*

Description: Acquire four contiguous, privately held coastal parcels immediately to the west of the City of Goleta. Properties are undeveloped ocean-front properties with critical endangered species habitat and marine wildlife haul out beaches. The four contiguous properties form the eastern coastal gateway to the Gaviota Coast and comprise about 4 miles of coastline and over 1,500 undeveloped acres. Properties include: 8501 Hollister Avenue, Paradiso del Mare, Santa Barbara Ranch (aka "Naples"), Dos Pueblos Ranch

Project name: *Gaviota Coast - Baron Ranch*

Description: The 1,000-acre Baron Ranch encompasses the majority of the Arroyo Quemado watershed, providing important wildlife connectivity. It is owned by the Public Works Department of the County of Santa Barbara, and was purchased by the County as mitigation for a neighboring landfill. The Public Works Department has been a poor steward of its natural environment. The acquisition of this property by a conservation entity would provide for the proper restoration of the lower portion of the canyon.

Project name: *Gaviota Coast - University of California Santa Barbara North Campus Open Space*

Description: The removal of the abandoned oil storage facilities and the remediation and restoration of the 17-acre site will complete nearly 30 years of community effort to conserve 600 acres of protected coastal open space. Remediation and restoration are essential to restore ecosystem values, wildlife corridors, equitable access, and the integrity of the landscape.

Project name: *Gaviota Coast - Mariposa Reina*

Description: Acquire and repurpose the Gaviota Terminal property at Mariposa Reina interchange on Highway 101 to a visitor serving center and a Chumash interpretive center. Repurpose the Freeport

McMoRan (FMR) oil and gas consolidation site to the north of the interchange after remediation. This large industrial site is a remnant of the off-shore oil industry in Santa Barbara County. The Gaviota Terminal in the foreground has been removed and remediation has been completed. The larger facility in the background (FRM) is awaiting decommissioning and remediation.

Project name: *Gaviota Coast - Gaviota Creek Watershed*

Description: This project aims to restore Gaviota Creek Estuary to its historical footprint and restore the creek to reestablish endangered southern steelhead salmon. This project also consists of the construction of a new access road to Gaviota State Park to alleviate the annual flooding of the poorly located present road. The Gaviota Creek Watershed is a large watershed that was once a quality stream for the endangered steelhead salmon. However, the estuary has been filled with sediment so that it is now less than 20% of its original size while the creek has numerous migration barriers. Restoring the estuary taking into account projected sea level rise requires rerouting the park entrance road from the causeway through the middle of the estuary to a bridge at its upland terminus.

Project name: *Gaviota Coast - State Parks on the Gaviota Coast*

Description: This project aims to improve equity in access, remove invasive vegetation, reestablish native plant communities, and restore endangered Gaviota tarplant. The three State Parks on the Gaviota Coast – Gaviota, Refugio and El Capitan – are very popular destinations for locals and travelers, but have been financially starved for decades, creating significant areas of deferred maintenance. These projects deserve the attention of the 30x30 initiative. Many of them are low cost, but have large benefits. It is time for us to prioritize the care and maintenance of our shared parks.

Project name: *Foothills Forever*

Description: The Foothills Forever campaign is working to purchase the San Marcos Foothills West Mesa which is a privately-owned 101-acre property next to the County-owned San Marcos Foothills Preserve., is a 200-acre nature preserve managed by the County Parks Department. The vision is to purchase the property (much of the funds secured), place a permanent restriction limiting development and endowment for habitat protection, transfer fee title. Management would be contiguous with the existing Preserve creating 300 acres of open space, with opportunities for outdoor education.

San Luis Obispo County Special Places and Projects

Background

San Luis Obispo County is well known for its beautiful and rugged coastline, volcanic peaks, productive farms and ranches, Morro Bay National Estuary, and wonderful outdoor recreation opportunities. The County is extremely diverse in its habitats, ranging from coastal dunes in the south, to expansive oak woodlands in the north, with oak savannah, riparian corridors, and grasslands throughout. These special places are under constant threat from climate change, development, land use conversion and invasive species. Places in need of protection and restoration include its relatively undisturbed coastal waters; the significant wildlife corridors between Big Sur in the north and the Los Padres National Forest in the South that remain largely unprotected; the Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes; numerous coastal streams such as Santa Rosa Creek and San Luis Obispo Creek that support steelhead trout and other riparian species; the upper Salinas River watershed which is critical for maintaining water supply and reducing salt water intrusion in the Salinas Valley; and the Carrizo Plain. There are ample opportunities to work with willing landowners and government partners to protect and restore vast tracts of land in San Luis Obispo County. There is a compelling need to connect more people to nature in the County— especially those that have not had an equal chance to experience these special places in the past. Finally, there are real opportunities to reconnect local tribes to their ancestral homelands.

Special Places and Projects

Project name: *Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary*

Description: In 2015, the northern Chumash Tribal Council submitted a proposal to NOAA for a [Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary](#), to be located off 140 miles of coastline between Monterey and the Channel Islands, an area that contains diverse ecosystems including large concentrations of kelp forest, wetlands, and estuaries, as well as extensive cultural Chumash sites – an ideal location for the ecosystem based management regime of the National Marine Sanctuary System. At the southern edge of the proposed site is an area known as Point Conception, which has been recognized internationally as a historically significant site of archaeological evidence of pre-history. The Chumash know it as Humqaq, the “Western Gate,” one of the most sacred Native American sites on Chumash lands and in all of North America. Reps. Salud Carbajal, Barbara Lee, Alan Lowenthal, Julia Brownley, and Jimmy Panetta, along with Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, have urged the Dept. of Commerce and NOAA to begin the designation process for the sanctuary, pointing out that the proposal supports a suite of the Biden administration’s priorities, especially America the Beautiful (30x30).

Project name: *Rehabilitate the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, 4,750 acres*

Description: Intact coastal dune ecosystems are extremely rare. The Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, part of California’s State Parks system is a dynamic natural sand dune system that is a component of one of the largest such ecosystems in the world, containing many rare habitats that support diverse threatened or endangered plants and animals, including USFWS-designated critical habitat for the western snowy plover, fronting the under-served community of Oceano in San Luis Obispo County. It is also the only State Park in California that allows recreational driving on the beach

and coastal dunes. Hence, it is hard to overstate the magnitude of the March 18, 2021, decision of the California Coastal Commission to [order the removal of off-highway vehicles from the Park](#), giving the California Dept. of Parks and Recreation a deadline of Jan 1, 2024, to do so. The Commission noted that the Latino majority residents of Oceano “have no options for beach recreation free of cars fronting their community, and these residents bear the significant burden of air quality and public health problems, with little benefit from Park operations. In addition, the Northern Chumash do not support continued OHV use, and they consider the Park to include areas that are sacred ancestral lands that should not, in any circumstance, be used in these ways.... They have asked that the vehicles and OHVs that degrade this area be removed so that this sacred natural space can be honored and cherished.” Multiple lawsuits have been filed by the off-road lobby in an effort to turn back the Coastal Commission’s decision, but most local residents are clear that it is time to look to the future, begin to restore the dunes, and turn the region into a prosperous, environmentally conscious California coastal community.

Project name: *Preserve Diablo Canyon Lands, 12,000 acres*

Description: 12,000 acres of pristine, undeveloped California coastal land owned by the Pacific Gas & Electric Company will be up for grabs upon the shut-down and decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, scheduled for 2025. To that end, over a dozen local groups and NGOs formed the coalition that drafted a [Framework for Conservation of the Diablo Canyon Lands](#) and submitted it to the CPUC in May. We recommend state funding for this project.

Project name: *Warren Ranch, Conservation Easement, 712 acres*

Description: Significant water resources above Cambria on a long-standing family ranch. This project is very time sensitive - the opportunity will be gone without funding by late 2022.

Project name: *Adelaida Springs Ranch, Conservation Easement, 1,500 acres*

Description: Sustainable livestock ranch and vineyard, intact wildlife habitat near protected lands. Important project to add to the Adelaida CAPP.

Project name: *Camatta Ranch, Conservation Easement, 30,000 acres*

Description: One of the last landscape-level conservation opportunities in our County. This easement would protect a major wildlife corridor between the Carrizo Plain and inland mountains. Will likely pair significant private donations with a large state grant through CNRA or WCB. This remarkable opportunity is time-sensitive - there is a limited window to protect the entire 30,000-acre ranch.

Project name: *McMillan Ranch, Conservation Easement, 2,700 acres*

Description: Working ranch carefully managed to restore native grassland habitat.

Project name: *Bitterwater Ranch, Conservation Easement, 8,500 acres*

Description: Long-time working cattle ranch, important habitat for San Joaquin kit fox and Tule elk.

Project name: *Diablo Canyon, Fee Acquisition, 12,000 acres*

Description: Once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the intact lands surrounding the Diablo Canyon Power Plant and provide sustainable managed public access. LCSLO is working with yak tit^yu tit^yu yak tilhini Northern Chumash Tribe of San Luis Obispo County and Region to reconnect them to their homeland.

Project name: *Toro Coast Preserve, 1,500 acres*

Description: Incredible opportunity to protect 1,500 acres of coastal land between Cayucos and Morro Bay and create a new premier open space preserve accessible to residents and visitors for hiking and other passive recreation.

Project name: *Mioosi Trust Ranch, Conservation Easement, 130 acres*

Description: The gateway to San Luis Obispo along Highway 101 and an important piece of a major wildlife corridor that crosses the highway.

Project name: *Goodrich Ranch, Conservation Easement, 644 acres*

Description: High-quality farmland, orchards, and serpentine outcrops adjacent to protected lands.

Project name: *Cuesta Grade Ranch, Conservation Easement, 576 acres*

Description: This project would protect a critical wildlife corridor and wildlife undercrossing on both sides of Highway 101 in San Luis Obispo.

Project name: *Black Lake Canyon, Wetland Restoration Project*

Description: Restoration of the southernmost peat bog in California and native dune scrub, home to federal and state listed amphibian and plant species. Ready to implement in 2021 or 2022 with adequate funding.

Project name: *Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes Dune Protected Area Network, Habitat Restoration, 18,000 acres*

Description: Extensive and sustainable habitat restoration in critical areas of the 18,000-acre dunes complex – one of the largest coastal dune landscapes along the west coast of North America and an incredibly diverse ecosystem supporting special status species of plants and animals.

Project name: *Dune Lakes, Wetland Restoration Project, 600 acres*

Description: Restoration of 600 acres of uplands, freshwater ponds, and other wetlands in the Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes to improve habitat for birds and special status plants.

Project name: *Learning Among the Oaks*

Description: Support the operation and expansion of the Learning Among the Oaks Program, an innovative nature education program “embedded” in our public schools. Beloved by kids, their families and their teachers. Seeking support for the full established program in three public elementary schools with specialized programming throughout each district.

Project name: *Santa Rita Ranch Rangeland and Riparian Improvement Project, 1,715-acres*

Description: The installation of wildlife friendly riparian fencing, rotational grazing infrastructure, and native grassland restoration on the newly acquired 1,715-acre Santa Rita Ranch to improve carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and water quality.

Project name: *Pismo Preserve Habitat and Rangeland Improvement Project*

Description: A highly popular open space preserve, opened in 2020. Extensive opportunities to perform habitat restoration and for use as a demonstration site for fire management in the urban/wildland interface, including managed grazing and grassland improvement.

San Benito County Special Places and Projects

Background

San Benito County is a mosaic of rural landscape, rangelands and natural open spaces of high-value for conservation. It is uniquely situated on the confluence of the Bay Area, the Central Valley and the California Coastal range. With a population of only 62,000 in 900K acres of land San Benito County retains some of the last remaining Central Valley wildlands and grasslands, some of which are managed by BLM. The County also contains privately-owned ranching and agricultural lands that provide valuable wildlife habitat. Cultural resources important to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band are located in multiple areas of the County. There are opportunities here to increase the conservation value of this landscape by increasing protections of BLM lands, providing incentives for permanent voluntary private land conservation on working lands and purchasing land (especially on areas containing last remaining San Joaquin Valley upland habitat), and enhancing wildlife movement connectivity across major obstacles (such as segmented landscapes and roads such as SR 152).

The State of California must coordinate with and firmly urge federal agencies to protect lands such as the Bureau of Land Management areas in Eastern San Benito and Western Kern Counties which are a [biodiversity hotspot](#). This area along the inner Coast Range is severely [under-protected but holds significant landscape-scale intactness](#). We list below local organizations working in this region:

Local resources

[San Benito Agricultural Land Trust](#)

The Mission of the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust is to conserve regionally significant lands that sustain productive agriculture, preserve open space and maintain the rural character of the county.

[The San Benito Working Landscapes Group \(SBWLG\)](#)

The San Benito Working Landscapes Group (SBWLG), a project of the Pinnacles National Park Foundation, is a voluntary partnership among agencies, ranchers, and non-governmental organizations that work with the ranching community and other landowners to identify conservation opportunities that help ranches stay viable to preserve the open landscapes of San Benito County.

[Pajaro Compass](#)

The Pajaro Compass Network is a group of landowners and managers, public agencies, conservation organizations, funders, and elected officials who collaborate to learn, connect, and engage in efforts to maintain a healthy and productive Pajaro River watershed.

Special Places and Projects

Project name: *The Panoche Valley*

Description: The Panoche Valley is one of the last remaining valley grasslands in the Central Coast area. It is home to a large number of federally and state listed species, including: Blunt-nosed leopard lizard, Giant kangaroo rat, San Joaquin Antelope Squirrel, Tiger salamander, San Joaquin kit fox, and many avian species including Golden Eagle, Tri-colored blackbird, Burrowing owl. The valley is designated an

Important Bird Area (IBA) of global significance by BirdLife International and the Audubon Society. The IBA program identifies and aims to conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. Panoche Valley and some of the hills that surround it are partially protected by mitigation and conservation easements. Conservation in the Panoche Valley can contribute to the implementation of the [Recovery Plan for the Upland Species of the San Joaquin Valley](#). Of note, the adjacent Little Panoche Valley in Fresno County contains similar species composition and offers opportunities for conservation, and is not currently protected.

Project name: *Panoche Hills, Tumey Hills and Griswold Hills*

Description: The rugged and remote [Panoche Hills, Tumey Hills and Griswold Hills](#) surround Panoche Valley to the north, east, and south. Tens of thousands of acres are under BLM management or under conservation easements. Private rangelands make up the remainder of the ridges around the Valley. BLM lands offer recreational activities. The hills offer opportunities for purchase, conservation easements, and work with the BLM to manage the lands for the endangered species of the area.

Project name: *Serpentine Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA), 75,000 acres*

Description: The Serpentine Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) encompasses approximately 75,000 acres, of which 63,000 acres are public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management Central Coast Field Office. The BLM permits a range of activity at the CCMA, including hunting, camping, hobby gem/mineral collecting, mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking/backpacking, and sightseeing.

Project name: *Ranches around Pinnacles National Park*

Description: Pinnacles National Park, the most spectacular public land area in the county, is surrounded by privately owned cattle ranches. These large, contiguous rangelands, and grazing activity on these lands, are critical to the survival of a myriad of endangered and threatened wildlife species. Ranchers have strong ties to the land, but at this time, many are struggling and must maintain off-ranch jobs in order to make ends meet. Ensuring that ranchers can remain stewards of this land through funding sources such as conservation easements and mitigation from solar projects is crucial for protecting these species.

Project name: *Beaver Dams*

Description: Local ranchers are interested in reintroducing beavers or creating beaver dams analogues to improve rivers and creek hydrological function, create wetlands, and allow wildlife to thrive. The state can help by creating specific programs to help interested ranchers reintroduce beavers and/or install these structures.

Project name: *SR-152 Wildlife Connectivity Improvements and Wildlife Overpass.*

Description: Pacheco pass, located in south Santa Clara County, provides critically important wildlife connectivity between the one of the largest remaining tracts of undeveloped and pristine habitat in

Santa Clara County and the rural and natural landscapes of San Benito County. This year, Pathways for Wildlife, the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, CDFW and Caltrans are monitoring the entire stretch of SR 152. This study is expected to identify the best location for a wildlife overpass (land bridge) along with developing further wildlife connectivity enhancement recommendations. The project will improve existing wildlife crossings (bridges and culverts) to allow wildlife to cross safely year-round. In addition, the project will build a wildlife overpass over SR 152 to serve some of the species that are reluctant to use under crossings.

Santa Cruz County Special Places and Projects

Background

Santa Cruz County encompasses a rich assemblage of natural landscapes and waterways, including coastal prairie grasslands, maritime chaparral, redwood forest, sandhills and coastal dunes, riparian woodlands, and both freshwater and coastal wetlands. Several of these landscape types are rare globally and many host high levels of native biodiversity. The County also features diverse and productive working lands including the fertile agricultural zones of the North Coast and the Pajaro River Valley and the region's iconic working forests. Santa Cruz is also home to the first "World Surfing Reserve." World Surfing Reserves serve as a model standard for preserving wave breaks and their surrounding areas by recognizing and protecting key environmental, cultural and economic attributes in coastal communities. The Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve is located on the northern side of Monterey Bay along California's Central Coast within the protected coastal waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The Reserve stretches approximately 7 miles from Natural Bridges State Park on the west end of the City of Santa Cruz eastward along the city and county coast to the Opal Cliffs, just east of Pleasure Point. At least 23 consistent surf breaks are sited along this coast, and are used by surfers throughout the year. An array of State Parks and State Beaches, including Wilder Ranch and Nisene Marks, as well as other public and private landholdings, provide a wide range of recreational opportunities enjoyed by large numbers of locals and visitors year round.

Special Places and Projects

Project name: *West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan*

Description: The City of Santa Cruz is currently developing their "[West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan](#)" which will guide access, parking, recreation, cliff protection and other public works projects along West Cliff Drive for the next 15 years. It is imperative that in the alternatives and proposals identified in the plan appropriate sea-level-rise and managed retreat adaptation methods be considered. West Cliff Drive spans 2.5 miles of ocean views, cliffs and beaches. [Managed retreat](#) is an adaptation measure that realigns or moves at-risk infrastructure to allow for natural cliff erosion to maintain coastal infrastructure to allow for natural cliff erosion to maintain coastal resources. There are many ways to implement managed retreat which are typically phased over time.

Project name: *College lake management*

Description: College Lake is one of the most important wintering and migratory stopover habitats for waterfowl on the Central California Coast, historically supporting high numbers and high diversity of waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds, and raptors. The emergent marshland and adjacent upland habitat and wetland ecotone support a broad array of additional species, including nesting raptors, warblers, finches and sparrows. According to ebird, the most trusted database in the ornithological community, 232 species of migratory and local birds have been observed here. There is a need to work with land managers with jurisdiction over wetland habitats to manage with the ecological needs of the bird species in mind. Additionally, College Lake and its vicinity feature a number of cultural resources

important to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band that warrant preservation.

Project name: *Protect Juristac*

Description: To conserve the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band's sacred site of Juristac, which extends across the boundaries of Santa Cruz and southern Santa Clara Counties north of the confluence of the San Benito and Pajaro Rivers. In addition to the site's immeasurable cultural significance, this site contains upland and riparian ecosystems that provide important hydrologic functions, wildlife and fish habitat, and landscape connectivity to the broader region. A portion of Juristac is located on the Sargent Ranch property, where a sand and gravel quarry development has been proposed and is being opposed by the Amah Mutsun and a large group of allied organizations, citizens, and area governments.

Appendix 1

Iconic Lands in the Central Coast

The Central Coast Region includes a number of iconic places:

- Pinnacles National Park
- Big Basin Redwoods State Park
- Big Sur
- Morro Bay
- Gaviota Coast
- Paso Robles wine country
- Los Padres National Forest and Wilderness Areas
- Fremont Peak
- Point Lobos State Nature Preserve
- Carrizo Plain National Monument
- Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (NOAA/CDFW)

The Central Coast Region includes more than 1.8 million acres of some of California's most spectacular public lands and waters. These public lands and waters are of incalculable value to plants, wildlife, and people and they include:

National Park Service (NPS) Units: Approximately 86,400 acres

- Pinnacles National Park
- Channel Islands National Park (a portion)

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Approximately 375,000 acres

- Bakersfield Field Office - Carrizo Plain National Monument (the majority)
- Central Coast Office - Cotoni-Coast Dairies and Fort Ord National Monuments

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Refuges: Approximately 2,900 acres

- Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge
- Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) National Forests: Approximately 1,132,000 acres

- Los Padres National Forest

California Department of Parks and Recreation: Approximately 84,000 acres

- El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park
- Gaviota State Park
- Refugio State Beach
- El Capitan State Beach
- La Purisima Mission State Historic Park
- Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area
- Pismo State Beach

- Montaña De Oro State Park
- Morro Bay State Park
- Estero Bluffs State Park
- Harmony Headlands State Park
- Hearst San Simeon State Park
- Limekiln State Park
- John Little State Natural Reserve
- Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park
- Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park
- Andrew Molera State Park
- Point Sur State Historic Park
- Garrapata State Park
- Point Lobos State Natural Reserve
- Carmel River State Beach
- Monterey State Historic Park
- Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area
- Fremont Peak State Park
- The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park
- Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park
- Big Basin Redwoods State Park
- Wilder Ranch State Park
- Castle Rock State Park

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Approximately 171,000 acres

- Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (NOAA/CDFW)
- Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network
- Carrizo Plains Ecological Reserve
- Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve
- Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve
- Joshua Creek Ecological Reserve

Regional and County Parks

- Garland Ranch Regional Park
- Palo Corona Regional Park
- San Antonio Lake County Park
- Jacks Peak County Park
- Toro Park