

**PATHWAYS TO  
30x30  
CALIFORNIA  
Annual Progress Report**

**MAY 18, 2023**



Sea Nettle, Monterey Harbor



# Administration of Governor Gavin Newsom

**May 18, 2023**

The creation of the Pathways to 30x30 strategy and the progress made to date would not have been possible without the many dedicated individuals and groups who make up the [30x30 Partnership](#). California's 30x30 initiative is "open-source" and designed to be inclusive and transparent. All who are committed to its principles and objectives are invited to work together to achieve its goals.

**Cover Photo:**

Wildflowers at Diamond Lake, Riverside County

# Executive Summary

Governor Newsom's October 2020 Nature-based Solutions Executive Order, [N-82-20](#), not only committed to the goal of conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 (30x30), it also jumpstarted a movement. This powerful target, built on conversations with legislators, leaders, and partners across our state, has launched a once-in-a-generation opportunity to lead the world in protecting and restoring nature.

Today, our collective progress across California is tangible, meaningful, and being recognized worldwide. This is thanks to the tremendous hard work of thousands from community groups, non-governmental organizations, California Native American tribes, private landowners, and programs from all levels of government who are driving progress to achieve 30x30 in California. Together, we can apply a science-based, equity-driven approach to protect biodiversity, increase access to nature, and combat and build resilience to climate change.

In April 2022, after 15 months of tribal consultations, public input, and collaboration with partners, we released a shared strategic vision called [Pathways to 30x30](#) that includes 10 concurrent and complementary strategies to reach our goal. At the same time, CA Nature was launched to provide a set of online mapping applications to identify conservation opportunities and track progress toward our goal by 2030.

In summer 2022, our Governor and legislature delivered unprecedented funding to implement 30x30. We also established the [30x30 Partnership](#), an alliance of groups and leaders advancing this initiative, kicked off at a standing-room-only event in Sacramento. The 30x30 Partnership Coordinating Committee is continuing this work by strengthening connections, sharing opportunities to collaborate, and helping grow the movement.

In December 2022, a delegation of leaders from California joined the United Nations Conference of Parties on Biodiversity in Montreal, advocating for and ultimately witnessing a compact among virtually all of the world's nations to achieve 30x30 in their own territories. This global agreement holds tremendous transformational promise. Because we are two years ahead, California can help show how 30x30 can be effectively and efficiently implemented for the shared benefit of both people and nature.

As of May 2023, we've conserved 24.4% of lands and 16.2% of coastal waters for 30x30, adding approximately 631,000 acres to lands conserved over the past year and identifying concrete strategies to strengthen conservation in coastal waters. We should be proud of our progress working together to expand the amount of durably protected areas across our state.

We have also made meaningful headway on 79 of the 112 actions identified in Pathways to 30x30,

in many cases establishing new programs and processes to accelerate progress toward 30x30 in the years to come.

Our commitment to ongoing learning, connection, adaptation, and collaboration is unwavering and will be critical to our success. Time and resources invested in partnership support the innovative, knowledge-based, action-oriented, and equity-driven progress we need.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) includes more than two dozen departments, conservancies, and commissions coordinating

California's 30x30 initiative. Through the 30x30 Partnership, this work focuses on supporting groups and leaders across the state, achieving 30x30 one project and action at a time. This requires the dedication of tribal governments and communities, local governments, federal agencies, non-governmental groups, academic researchers, private landowners, and caring community members. Our shared ambition can only be achieved together.

30x30 is a movement for us all. Let's work together and make it happen!



Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo County

# Key Objectives

The Pathways to 30x30 strategy aims to expand enduring conservation of California's lands and coastal waters to achieve three key objectives. This past year has brought new partnerships, increased funding, and an intensified focus on multibenefit conservation projects, all which have helped make major headway toward meeting these objectives.

1

**Protect and Restore  
Biodiversity**

2

**Expand Access  
to Nature**

3

**Mitigate and  
Build Resilience  
to Climate Change**



Mecca Hills, Riverside County



Yreka Phlox, Siskiyou County

## Protect and Restore Biodiversity

California's 30x30 initiative is committed to protecting the state's thousands of plant and animal species, many of which are endemic (found nowhere else on Earth). Our biodiversity supports healthy human communities and helps buffer and build resilience to climate change impacts, as different organisms interact with each other and the environment in ways that are essential to maintain its balance and function.

In this past year, we have strategically targeted areas adjacent and connected to existing conserved lands and prioritized vulnerable places that hold biological and cultural significance. Focusing on connectivity

### Protecting One of California's Endemic Plants

CDFW, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funded two Siskiyou Land Trust projects that conserve a total of 665 acres to protect the state and federally endangered Yreka Phlox (pictured). This California endemic is currently only found on about 47 acres across the state. The Yreka Phlox Recovery Plan identifies both properties as essential to saving this species, and these projects will protect more than 40 percent of its largest population.

and uniquely important resources helps us identify, restore, and protect the full diversity of California's ecosystems and increase their resiliency now and into the future. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has also started to update the [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) for 2025, which will align with the 30x30 initiative to guide future biodiversity conservation.

## Expand Access to Nature

Being outdoors is critical to our health and wellness. It also strengthens our connection with and appreciation for our natural world and each other. Unfortunately, for too many, nature is simply not accessible, be it from a lack of transportation to a park, living in an area without green spaces, or being systematically excluded and made to feel unwelcome. Expanding access to nature through 30x30 is a crucial step toward righting historical wrongs.

By increasing both the variety and accessibility of outdoor recreation, California's 30x30 initiative is working to enable everyone in California to enjoy and connect with nature. Seizing opportunities to expand conservation that also increase access has been a priority over the past year and will remain so going forward. CNRA's [Outdoors for All](#) strategy will guide this facet of its 30x30 work.

### Dos Rios Ranch to Become California's Newest State Park

Dos Rios Ranch in the San Joaquin Valley will become California's newest State Park, providing access to nature for an area that has the fewest parks of any region in California. The 2,100-acre property will provide hiking trails; fishing; river paddling; and, eventually, camping under a canopy of oaks and cottonwoods. It also provides important habitat for sensitive species, and seasonal floodplains to reduce downriver flooding threats to Stockton and surrounding communities. This project took a village. Spearheaded by the non-profit River Partners, more than \$45 million in combined acquisition and restoration funding was secured from the CDFW, California Department of Water Resources, CNRA, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Belgium Brewing, Pacific Gas & Electric Co., San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Sierra Nevada Brewing, Stanislaus County Public Works Dept., Tuolumne River Trust, WCB, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and USFWS.



Dos Rios Ranch, Stanislaus County

## Mitigate and Build Resilience to Climate Change

Robust, thriving ecosystems remove and store carbon; maintain clean water, air, and healthy soils; and buffer people from climate threats such as floods and extreme heat. California's 30x30 initiative is designed to collaboratively conserve, steward, and restore ecological and cultural systems in the face of the added challenges of climate change.

Science-driven, nature-based approaches, both traditional and western, must continue to be expanded across the state to protect California from the effects of climate change. The 30x30 initiative continues to advance the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#) which identifies priority nature-based solutions that support carbon neutrality and build California's resilience to climate risks such as wildfire and drought.

### Restoring Dunes at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Meeting California's 30x30 goal and its three key objectives will not only mean conserving new lands, but also restoring those currently protected. The California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), in partnership with the USFWS, funded a project to restore 80 acres of dune habitat to increase sea level rise resiliency at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This dune system separates the bay and the estuaries of the Mad, Little, and Eel Rivers from the Pacific Ocean and buffers these waterways, surrounding communities, and critical infrastructure from the impacts of sea level rise and storm surges. Restoring native dune species and ecosystem function allows the dunes to recover faster from storms and to migrate inland more gradually with sea level rise.



Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Humboldt County

# Core Commitments

The Pathways to 30x30 strategy advances broader state commitments to equity, tribal partnerships, and economic prosperity. Our shared progress over the past year sets us on a path to expand conservation in a manner that institutionalizes these core values.

1

**Advance Justice,  
Equity, Diversity,  
and Inclusion**

2

**Strengthen Tribal  
Partnerships**

3

**Sustain Our Economic  
Prosperity, Clean Energy  
Resources, and Food Supply**



Debs Park, Los Angeles County



Sproul Creek, Humboldt County

## Advance Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Historically, many communities have lacked access to nature; been made to feel unwelcome in open spaces; and/or been excluded from land stewardship, decision-making, and conservation jobs. Including and amplifying diverse voices is essential to ensure our conservation efforts represent all of California.

Prioritizing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion enables all communities to benefit from California's natural resources. Ensuring access for all means not only broadening opportunities to enjoy beauty and recreation, but also increasing the number of people who are connected to and invested in these places. This is why California's

### Advancing Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Practice

The California Conservation Corps partnered with the Eel River Watershed Improvement Group to complete the Sproul Creek Instream Restoration Project in the summer of 2022. This project provided paid natural resources job experience to young adults, many from underserved communities. More than 100 Corps members played an essential role in designing and developing this successful project, adding 72 large wood structures to more than 2.9 miles of stream. Their work improved habitat for all life stages of coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and steelhead trout.

30x30 initiative prioritizes efforts that are proactive, community-based, and localized. The [30x30 Partnership](#) engages communities statewide to increase access to natural spaces, advance conservation, and provide resource management employment opportunities.

## Strengthen Tribal Partnerships

California Native American tribes have safeguarded California's natural resources since time immemorial. However, for many, this relationship was severed through a history of genocide, forced relocation, and cultural erasure. Governor Newsom's formal apology to California Native American tribes ([N-15-19](#)) acknowledges this history and sets California on the path to healing. Our 30x30 Initiative follows this lead and recognizes that tribal connection to and ownership, stewardship, and use of ancestral and traditional areas are central to identity and sovereignty. They are also essential to healthy biodiversity and ecosystem function and will strengthen our ongoing conservation efforts.

California's 30x30 initiative continues to proactively work towards stronger tribal partnerships. Over the past year, opportunities have been prioritized for co-management

with state land managing agencies and to return ownership of lands and coastal waters through conservation funding programs. Consulting early, often, and meaningfully with California Native American tribes with the goal of collaborative problem-solving is essential to equitable inclusion and shared planning and decision-making. Honoring tribal expertise, traditions, knowledges, and intellectual property is imperative, and our collective conservation work is made richer through the diversity of expertise and perspectives they bring.

### Wiyot Tribe Land Return

The Wiyot Tribe, in partnership with academic and community organizations, led the effort to purchase and return 46 acres of ancestral lands with the support of a \$1.2 million Prop 1 Coastal Environmental Justice grant from the Ocean Protection Council (OPC). These lands have been returned to the Wiyot Tribe's stewardship and will be restored and conserved to protect the property's important cultural, ceremonial, and environmental resources. This land return is an early example of how the 30x30 initiative's commitments to environmental justice, righting past wrongs, and tribal sovereignty can be realized, while also helping achieve 30x30 and climate resiliency goals.



Mouralherwaqh, Humboldt County

## Sustain Our Economic Prosperity, Clean Energy Resources, and Food Supply

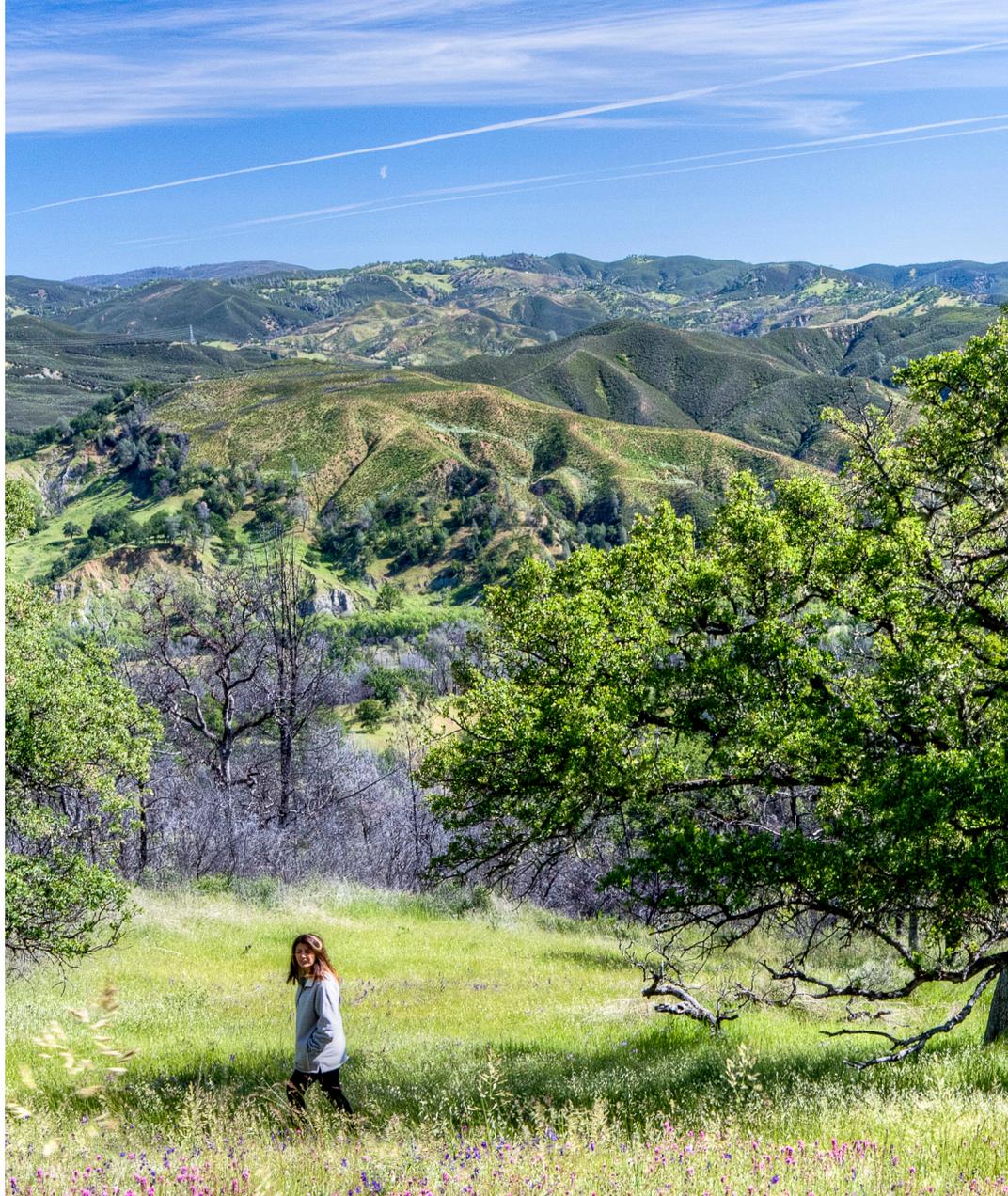
California's future depends on our commitment to protect the health of the lands and waters that sustain us in ways that meet the needs of all communities. Over the past year, strategic planning has focused on ways to achieve 30x30 that also meet the state's goals for climate resilience, clean energy, food security, housing, and transportation. Thoughtful, locally driven planning will ensure we can meet 30x30 and these other key priorities together.

California's 30x30 initiative is identifying and promoting sustainable practices. Programs such as CDFA's Healthy Soils Program and the federal-state Multi-Agency Monarch and Pollinator Collaborative support our farm economy while ensuring that vulnerable communities, habitats, and native species are protected, restored, and maintained. Many of these actions are encompassed in the 30x30 Pathway to advance and promote complementary conservation measures.

### Onyx Conservation Project

In a first-of-its-kind state and federal public-private partnership, CDFW, Bureau of Land Management, and USFWS partnered to enhance biodiversity protections for existing public lands on more than 215,000 acres in the Mojave Desert. As part of mitigation for five solar projects, the Onyx Conservation Project offers a roadmap for how to support renewable energy to combat climate change while also providing landscape-level ecosystem benefits to native plants and wildlife.

Mojave Desert, Kern County



## Progress to Date

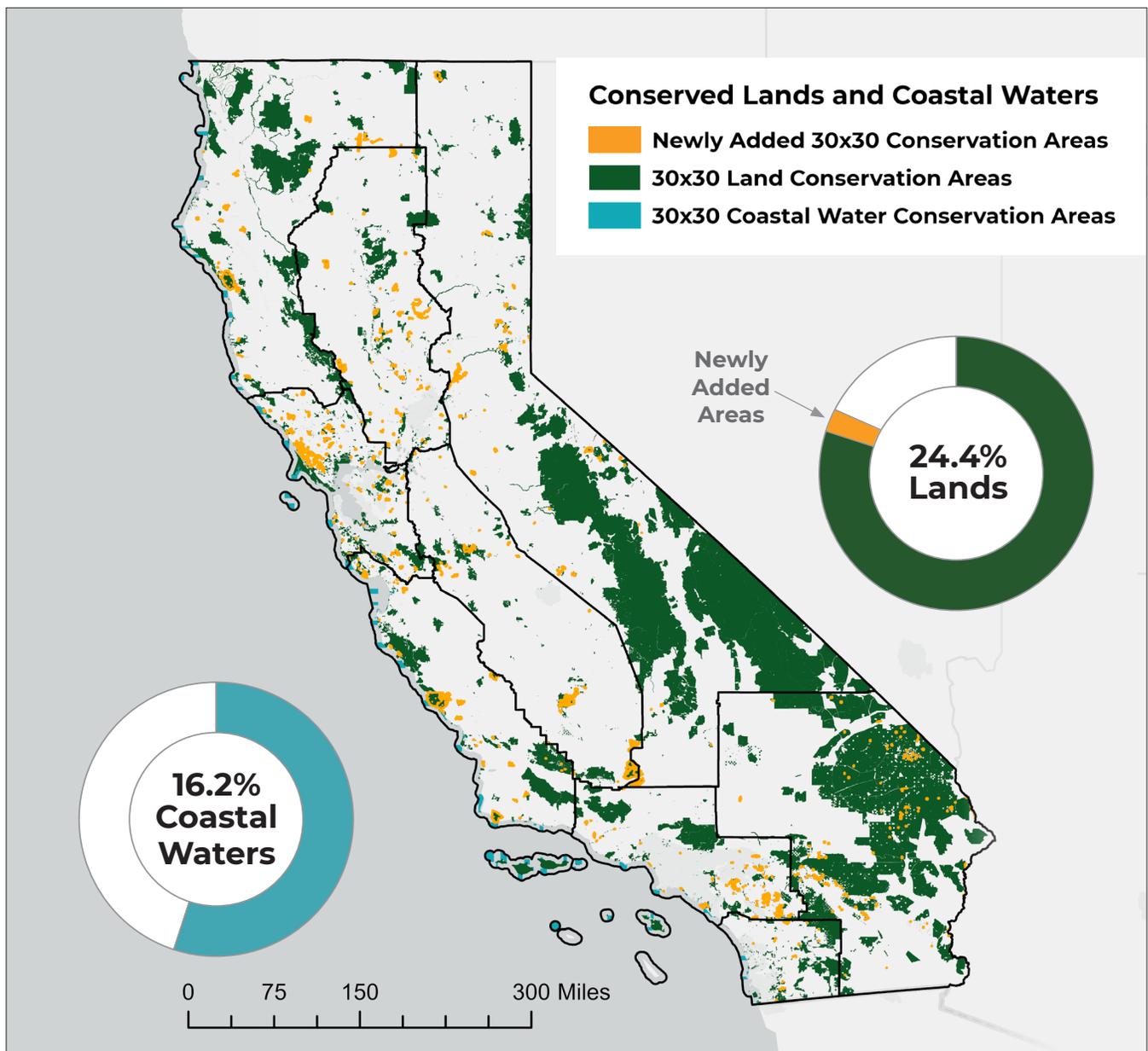
Since April 2022, California has added approximately 631,000 acres of conserved land, bringing our statewide total to 24.4% of lands and 16.2% of coastal waters. Our progress included large area projects, such as the Onyx Conservation Project example (page 12), to small projects like the Wiyot Tribe Land Return (page 11). Each project brings its own unique benefits, and all these actions together achieve, as a portfolio, our key objectives for 30x30.

**Photo:** Berryessa Snow National Monument, Lake County

Our 30x30 target counts land and coastal water areas that are durably protected and managed to sustain functional ecosystems, both intact and restored, and the diversity of life that they support. This definition of 30x30 Conservation Areas is important, but only a first step. Identifying and quantifying these areas well requires accurate data and mapping.

California state agencies worked with ESRI and GreenInfo Network to ensure that California's

30x30 initiative is built upon a foundation of solid data, creating a suite of interactive GIS mapping and visualization applications called [CA Nature](#). CNRA has also continued to partner with GreenInfo Network to identify and refine the 30x30 Conservation Areas database. A new toolkit is under development to improve how users can report and update information on conserved lands so that they are counted toward our 30x30 goal.

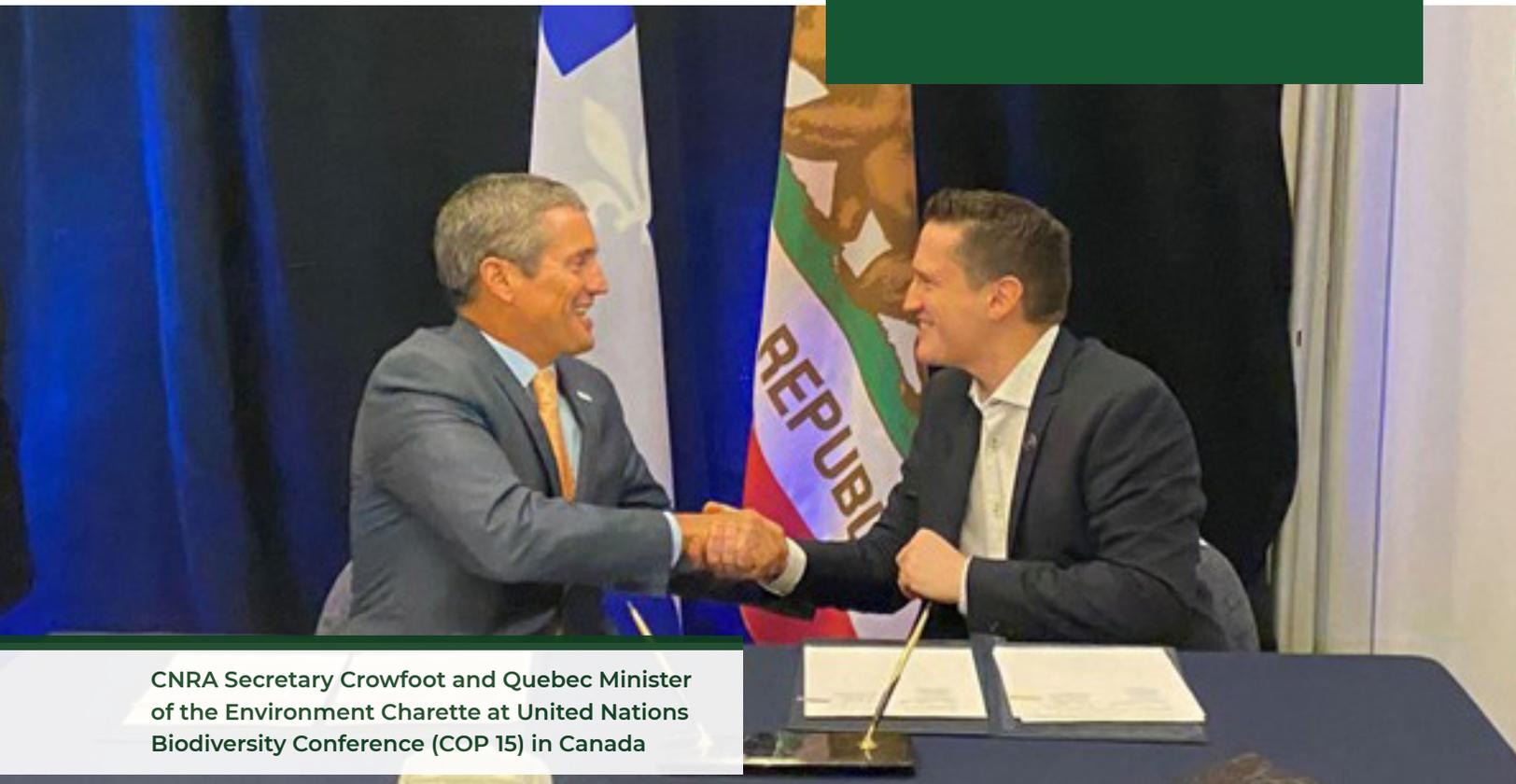


The current estimate of 24.4% of California's land durably conserved represents an increase of approximately 631,000 acres in the last year. While there has not been a percentage increase in coastal waters during the past year, public workshops and information gathering have identified concrete strategies to strengthen conservation in coastal waters. Each percentage conserved is a significant accomplishment and includes thousands of acres of the unique habitats that make California one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. With almost seven years until 2030, we are on track to reach our goal.

In the three years since this initiative launched, new partnerships have been forged that have improved information-sharing, aligned investments, and elevated the importance of nature for human health and well-being. California's 30x30 efforts have even been recognized on the world stage and showcased at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP 15).

### California on the World Stage

In December 2022, a delegation of more than 50 California leaders including state elected officials, tribal leaders, scientists, non-governmental organizations, and philanthropic groups attended the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Montreal to support the signing of the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This new agreement signed on by over 190 countries calls for conservation action at an unprecedented scale and includes a commitment to conserve 30% of the planet's land and oceans by 2030. While showcasing California's 30x30 initiative, the delegation established international partnerships and forged new global alliances. California is now part of High Ambition Coalition Subnational Task Force, which will support 30x30 across the world, and RegionsWithNature, the new U.N. platform for subnational collaboration on issues such as protected-area stewardship, pollution, ecosystem restoration, and the climate-biodiversity nexus.



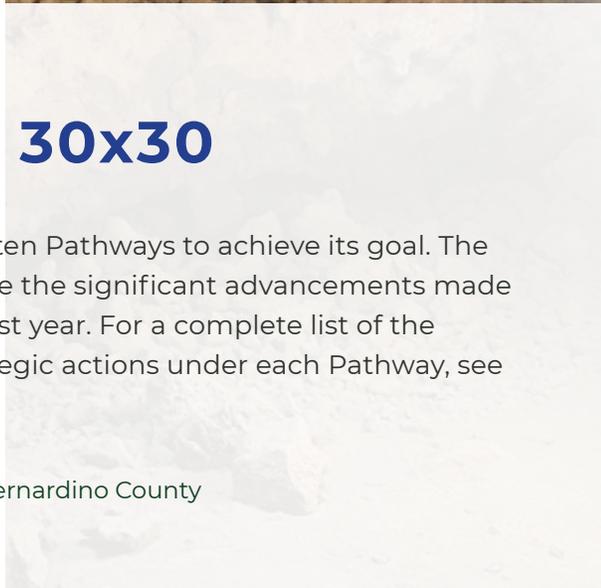
CNRA Secretary Crowfoot and Quebec Minister of the Environment Charette at United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in Canada



## Pathways to 30x30

The 30x30 strategy identified ten Pathways to achieve its goal. The sections that follow summarize the significant advancements made toward each goal in just the last year. For a complete list of the progress made on all the strategic actions under each Pathway, see Appendix A to this report.

**Photo:** Mohave Lava Tubes, San Bernardino County



## Pathway 1: Accelerate Regionally Led Conservation

Regionally led conservation is a powerful tool to ensure that local priorities and needs are addressed and to engage those leaders best positioned to identify relevant opportunities. California has a proud history of effective, regionally led conservation planning. More than 160 existing conservation strategies across the state ([Pathways to 30x30 Appendix F](#)) represent the hard work of diverse stakeholders to identify conservation priorities that meet local goals. However, these efforts must be more inclusive moving forward. Purposeful, meaningful inclusion of underrepresented communities and California Native American tribes in each region remains a priority, especially where their interests and knowledge have been excluded.

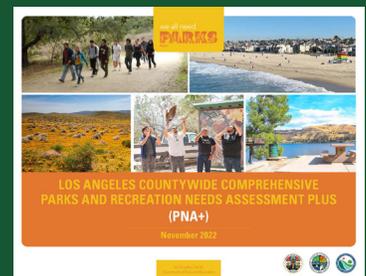
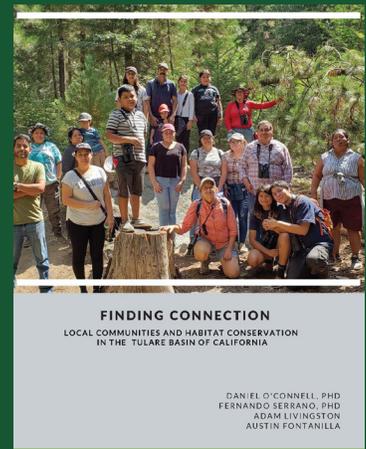
Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- \$36 million in new, dedicated funding for regional planning and implementation through [Natural Community Conservation Plans](#) will soon be available through a CDFW grant program.
- \$70 million in new, dedicated funding for California Native American tribes that includes conservation planning as a priority will soon be available through the [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program](#). (Draft grant guidelines were released by CNRA in February of 2023).
- Many local and regional partners set their own 30x30 goals and updated or completed local conservation plans to advance the statewide Pathways to 30x30 strategy.

### Pathway 1 in Action: Regional 30x30 Plans

The creation of the statewide Pathways to 30x30 strategy inspired local and regional partners to prepare their own plans that contribute to this effort.

- In the Central Valley, the report [Finding Connection: Local Communities and Habitat Conservation in the Tulare Basin of California](#) focuses on conservation priorities of farmworker and climate-vulnerable communities in the southern San Joaquin Valley and compiles existing conservation plans from the Tulare Basin. The report seeks to bring these two historically divergent interests into conversation, and in doing so, open a dialogue about how equity and racial justice may be integrated into future regional conservation efforts.
- In southern California, the [LA County 2022 Parks Needs Assessment Plus](#) identifies priority areas for environmental conservation and restoration to form the basis of a local 30x30 strategy. This assessment reimagines conservation to include both traditional efforts to acquire and protect natural lands as well as the restoration of degraded areas, such as brownfields, landfills, and oil fields. There is a special focus on lower-income communities of color, in which vulnerable populations and environmental burdens are concentrated.



## Pathway 2: Execute Strategic Land Acquisitions

Coordinating with regional and local partners to identify areas that protect biodiversity, advance climate action, and expand equitable access maximizes the benefits of new lands protected under 30x30. Because not all areas meet these three criteria, acquisition decisions need to strategically balance data about conservation values with community and economic needs. Combined, the full portfolio of acquisitions under 30x30 will meet the initiative's objectives.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- Approximately 101,500 acres of lands owned in fee and protected for open space purposes were added to [CA Nature](#) as 30x30 Conserved Areas over the past year.
- Acquisition planning and prioritization are being supported by updated statewide protected-areas databases thanks to a new project with GreenInfo Network.
- New land-acquisition partnerships have been forged between state agencies, regional entities, and a range of non-governmental groups including land trusts and environmental conservation organizations.

### Pathway 2 in Action: Deer Creek Beach

Purchased by the Trust for Public Land, this 1,250-acre area in Ventura County will become part of the adjacent Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The 2.1-mile coastal property forms a critical corridor between the Santa Monica Mountains and the 14,000-acre Point Mugu State Park. Protecting Deer Creek Beach and increasing habitat connectivity will benefit key species like mountain lions, support overall ecological health, and enable species to migrate in response to climate change. It will also allow everyone to enjoy this beautiful beach in perpetuity. Acquisitions like this meet all three 30x30 key objectives, as they protect biodiversity, advance climate action, and expand equitable access to nature.

Deer Creek Beach, Ventura County

## Pathway 3: Increase Voluntary Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are a well-established way to help maintain lands for open space, wildlife, ecological health, and scenic enjoyment while providing financial incentives to private landowners to maintain sustainable agricultural/ranching practices. State agencies continue to work with non-government partners to expand opportunities for easements and to address barriers for interested landowners.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- Approximately 529,500 acres of lands protected under conservation easements were added to [CA Nature](#) as 30x30 Conserved Areas during the past year.
- CNRA is pursuing process improvements to conservation easement programs through enhanced federal-state interagency coordination.
- New collaborations to fund larger, more expensive conservation easements have been forged between state agencies, regional entities, and a range of non-governmental groups including land trusts and environmental conservation organizations.



YMCA Camp Jones Gulch, San Mateo County

### Pathway 3 in Action: YMCA Camp Jones Gulch Conservation Easement

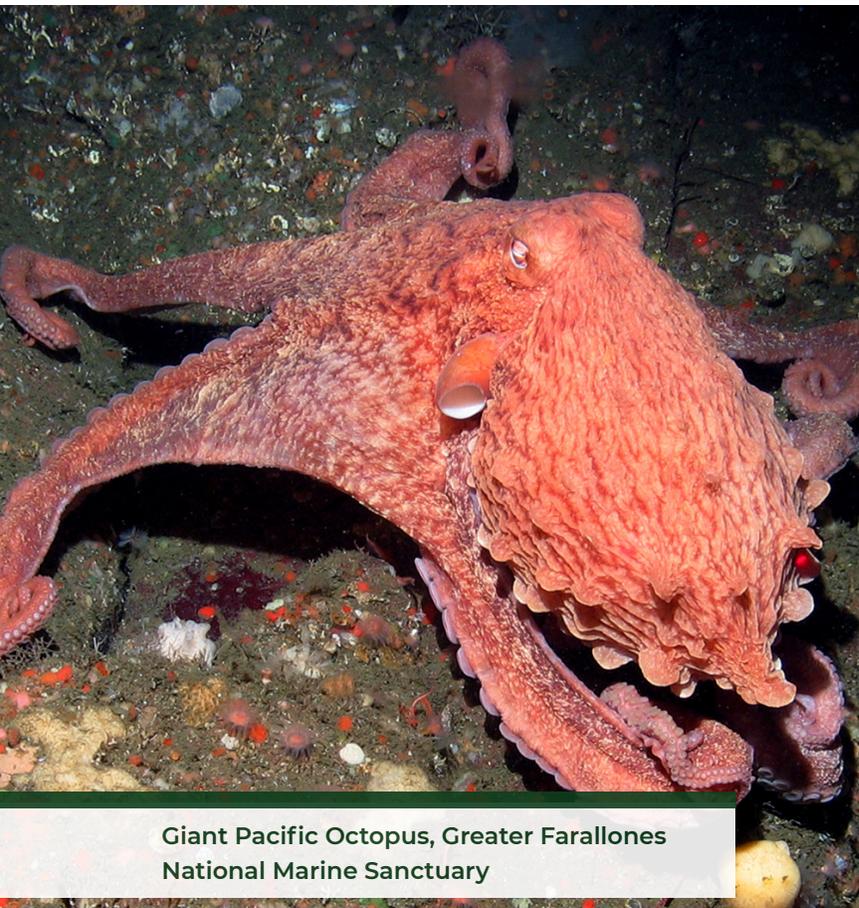
The YMCA Camp Jones Gulch conservation easement conserves 920 forested acres that contribute to 30x30 biodiversity, climate, and access objectives. This area will continue to provide opportunities for youth development, environmental education, recreation, and community service, but now, will also be managed to conserve the site's exceptional natural resources. Located in the Pescadero Creek Watershed headwaters, the property features stream habitat for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout. It is also home to 39 acres of rare, old-growth redwood forest and 668 acres of young redwood, Douglas-fir, and hardwood forests as well as mature oak and riparian woodlands. This \$9,625,000 project was carried out by the Sempervirens Fund and made possible by many partners, including the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Peninsula Open Space Trust, WCB, CDFW, and SCC.

## Pathway 4: Enhance Conservation of Existing Public Lands and Coastal Waters

Strengthening existing environmental protections and improving management capacity increases the number of places that meet the definition of “durably protected” 30x30 Conservation Areas. Coordination across state agencies and with federal partners, along with key policy improvements, can give public land managers the tools they need to reach this benchmark. By improving management practices for the long term, these areas can greatly contribute to climate mitigation and resilience while moving California ever closer to its 30x30 goal.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- Programs that advance California's 30x30 goal are being supported by increased collaboration and coordination via California's Biodiversity Council (CBC), a partnership of federal, state, and local resource management and environmental protection agencies.
- OPC began working closely with federal partners to strengthen biodiversity protections in California's federally managed National Marine Sanctuaries.
- CNRA formally supported several federal land designations, including the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument Expansion, which will further California's 30x30 goals.



Giant Pacific Octopus, Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

### Pathway 4 in Action: Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Update

The Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is currently in the process of updating its management plan. OPC has begun working closely with Sanctuary leadership to align the state's 30x30 effort with strong protections for coastal and marine biodiversity in the new management plan. State and federal managers will work together with local tribes, fishing communities, conservation organizations, and Sanctuary stakeholders to identify the top threats to biodiversity within the Sanctuary, such as whale ship strikes and kelp loss, and collaboratively develop conservation measures that address these threats. The final management plan is expected in 2024.

## Pathway 5: Institutionalize Advance Mitigation

This increasingly popular conservation method takes the strategic approach of protecting large areas that can be utilized to mitigate biodiversity and habitat impacts in advance of a project's implementation. These properties are typically endowed to support long-term management and protection. Putting required mitigation in place before a project's environmental impacts occur can reduce losses that would otherwise happen between the start of development and the completion of restoration. Additionally, using larger contiguous blocks of land areas for mitigation generally leads to reduced administrative and applicant effort and higher-quality conserved areas that meet species and habitat goals.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- As of 2021, Caltrans can use highway overpass and underpass crossings as sources of advance mitigation under SB 790, signed by Governor Newsom.
- The Caltrans Advance Mitigation Program received \$30 million that can be used with existing or new Regional Conservation Investment Strategies, aiding in advance mitigation planning.
- Caltrans has completed five final Regional Advance Mitigation Needs Assessments since the release of the Pathways to 30x30 strategy in April 2022. In total, 14 final assessments have now been completed, with at least one in each district and multiple drafts in progress.
- CDFW's Regional Conservation Investment Strategies, which identify potential areas for multiple-benefit mitigation, continued to be developed in 2022, including one draft and one final strategy and a public draft of the program guidelines.



Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing,  
Santa Cruz County

### Pathway 5 in Action: Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing

CDFW and Caltrans capitalized on an innovative opportunity to build a highway crossing as advance mitigation for future wildlife impacts. The purchase of just over \$3 million advance mitigation credits helped fund the wildlife crossing at Laurel Curve on Highway 17 in Santa Cruz County. Completed in early 2023 in partnership with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, this project now connects more than 700 acres of conserved habitat and is already being used by local wildlife.

## Pathway 6: Expand and Accelerate Environmental Restoration and Stewardship

As the preceding year of drought, wildfires, and floods has shown us, simply protecting existing habitat is not enough. To ensure that the state's incredible natural treasures are made more resilient to climate change, we need to expand and accelerate restoration and stewardship to protect biodiversity and increase the sustainability of California's ecosystems. This work spans a broad array of both public and private landscapes, waterways, and seascapes to maximize long-lasting environmental and community health. A cornerstone of this work is CNRA's [Cutting Green Tape](#) initiative, which aims to increase the pace and scale of restoration through regulatory, policy, and process reform.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- Four new habitat restoration programmatic permits or authorizations have reduced application and approval times by up to 50%; authorizing agencies include CDFW, USFWS, State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Coastal Commission (CCC).
- CNRA and two of its funding departments — WCB and CCC — have simplified major processes for their most popular grant programs to improve accessibility and decrease the burden for applicants.
- Seventeen projects have been approved (and five more are under review) for CDFW's new Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects program, streamlining permitting for environmentally beneficial projects by WCB, SCC, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, several local governments, and two Regional Water Quality Control Boards.



Trinidad Head, Humboldt County

### Pathway 6 in Action: Tribal Marine Stewards Network

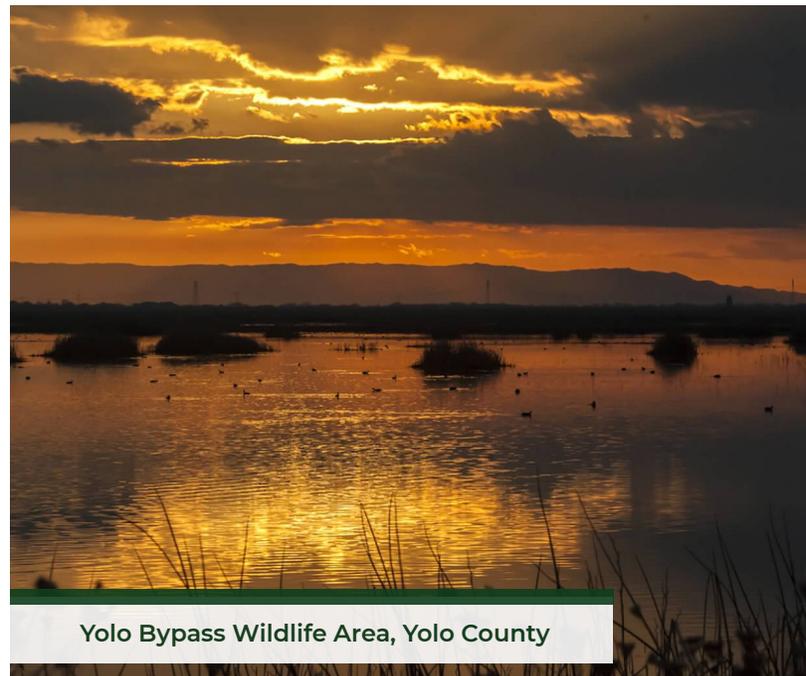
One of the most significant advancements in restoration and stewardship in California last year was the public launch of the [Tribal Marine Stewards Network](#), which was supported by a \$3.6 million investment from OPC. The Network represents an important step in returning stewardship and management of ocean and coastal territories to California Native American tribes. By weaving together traditional practices and western science, the Network's five tribes are now collaboratively stewarding, protecting, and restoring resources within their ancestral territories.

## Pathway 7: Strengthen Coordination Among Governments

Conserving 30% of California's lands and waters, an enormous undertaking, requires strategic coordination between agencies at all levels and California Native American tribal governments. Local governments have particular insights and connections into their communities, including those historically excluded from these kinds of processes. Teamwork makes the dream work, but—to ensure that the dream benefits everyone and to increase equity within decision-making—these partnerships must continue to be strengthened.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- As previously noted, \$70 million for new, dedicated funding administered through the [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program](#) not only includes conservation planning, but also implementation and land return projects.
- California State Parks and California Native American tribes have begun collaborative management and shared stewardship of specific park units through two new memoranda of understanding.
- As already noted, programs that advance California's 30x30 goal are being supported by increased collaboration and coordination via CBC.
- California was awarded more than \$2 million in funding for three conservation and restoration projects through the federal America the Beautiful Challenge.



Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, Yolo County

### Pathway 7 in Action: America the Beautiful Challenge Awards in California

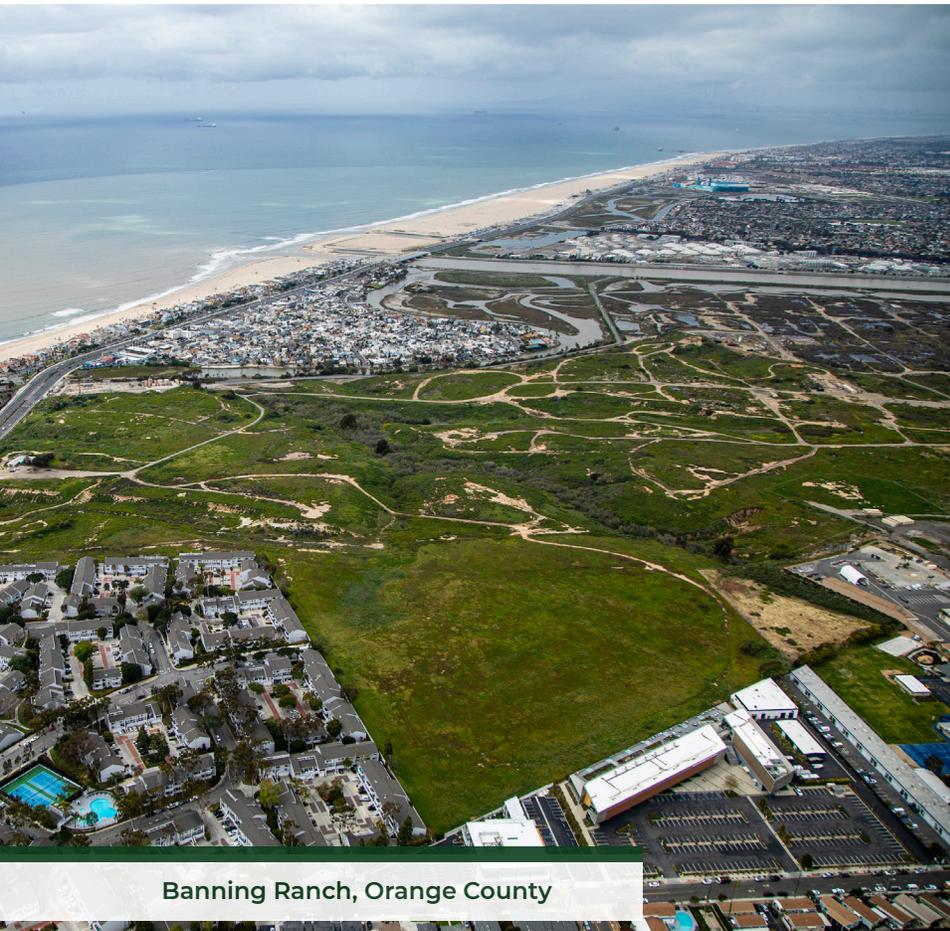
- **Floodplain and Tidal Wetland Restoration Design in the Yolo Bypass of the Sacramento River** was awarded to the California Department of Water Resources to develop designs and engage stakeholders in restoring these essential habitats. It applies a new sustainable floodway management regime using infrastructure and operations that mimic historical conditions, benefit native salmonoids, and support multiple existing land uses.
- **Western Klamath Community Stewardship to Benefit At-Risk Species and Native Plant Diversity** was awarded to the Mid Klamath Watershed Council to remove invasive plants in forested and riparian areas and enhance salmonid habitat within the Klamath and Six Rivers National Forests. It also engages local volunteers and youth in project implementation and data collection.
- **Riparian Habitat Restoration for At-Risk Bird Species on Working Lands in Southern California** was awarded to the American Bird Conservancy to improve watershed health and riparian habitat for imperiled birds (including the southwestern willow flycatcher) through regenerative grazing and habitat management on private lands.

## Pathway 8: Align Investments to Maximize Conservation Benefit

While there is a wide array of existing funding—including state, federal, private, and non-governmental organization sources—enhancing coordination among them maximizes 30x30's effectiveness. This means improving communication and priority-setting amongst these various entities. These partnerships increase the visibility of available funding programs, which helps build public support. They also build the capacity needed to enhance and sustain this work, gather the best available science, and track progress.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- The Governor and the legislature allocated \$668.7 million in the 2022–2023 state budget for Nature-Based Solutions. Of this, more than \$115.8 million has been committed thus far to 83 projects that will advance 30x30.
- Grant guidelines have been released for new programs that support 30x30, including the [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program](#) through CNRA, the [Climate Smart Land Management Program](#) through DOC.
- CNRA is partnering with philanthropy and outdoor-industry groups to leverage state and federal funding to make progress toward 30x30.



Banning Ranch, Orange County

### Pathway 8 in Action: Banning Ranch

Banning Ranch includes 387 acres of lowlands and coastal bluffs in West Newport Beach near where the Santa Ana River meets the Pacific Ocean. This \$97 million acquisition was finalized in December 2023 by the Trust for Public Land and made possible by funding from many partners, among them, CNRA, WCB, CDFW, SCC, USFWS, and a large gift from the Randall Family. Banning Ranch now connects nearly 1,000 acres of conserved coastal lands and waters, creating a contiguous reserve system including the Huntington Beach wetlands, the Simunek slough, Talbert Regional Park, Canyon Park, Fairview Park, and the Santa Ana River. Over the next several years, Banning Ranch will undergo substantial clean up and limited restoration to convert former oil fields into a coastal park that can be opened to the public.

## Pathway 9: Advance and Promote Complementary Conservation Measures

30x30 Conservation Areas work best when nearby places are also conserved and managed in complementary ways. Combined, they increase connectivity, habitat, biodiversity, species protections, and ecosystem function. In addition, the variety of conservation practices used outside defined 30x30 areas offer unique opportunities for partnership and innovation. We must continue to better understand how these help meet 30x30 conservation goals and how best to support these efforts.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- › Habitat connectivity projects across the state, such as the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing in Southern California and Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing in the Santa Cruz Mountains, provide critical wildlife corridors in the face of a changing climate.
- › \$66 million in grants from the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils Program funded 940 projects, dramatically increasing support for complementary conservation areas and climate-smart agriculture practices and recognizing the importance of underground biodiversity in our soils.
- › Close to \$100 million was awarded for restoration and reforestation projects from CAL FIRE's Forest Health Program and almost \$23 million was awarded through their Forest Legacy Program across 31,700 acres of conservation easements. These programs aim to provide more resilient and sustainable forests while also mitigating climate change, protecting communities

from fire risk, strengthening rural economies, and improving California's water and air.

- › Almost \$30 million was awarded through CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program for sustainable urban forest projects. These projects will help local communities create green spaces, increase long-term benefits for surrounding communities, improve public understanding of and appreciation for city trees, sequester and store carbon, protect communities from extreme heat, and advance urban forest management. CAL FIRE is also in the process of awarding \$117 million for green schoolyards.
- › OPC has initiated work with scientists, fishing communities, conservation organizations, and others to complete an inventory of spatial management measures in California's coastal waters—such as water-quality protection areas, research reserves, military closed areas, and area-based fisheries management measures—and to assess these areas' contributions to biodiversity conservation.

### Pathway 9 in Action: The North Coast Resource Partnership

The [North Coast Resource Partnership](#) is a coalition of California counties and Native American tribes working together on integrated regional planning and project implementation. By coming together in this way, they hope to help enhance natural and working lands, built infrastructure, local economies, and community health. A recent \$10 million grant from CAL FIRE's Forest Health Program will help the partnership implement project priorities identified in their Regional Wildfire Resilience Plan, a shared vision for how to help their watersheds, firesheds, forests, and communities recover from and adapt to extreme events such as wildfire, flooding, and drought, as well as impacts from climate and social change.

## Pathway 10: Evaluate Conservation Outcomes and Adaptively Manage

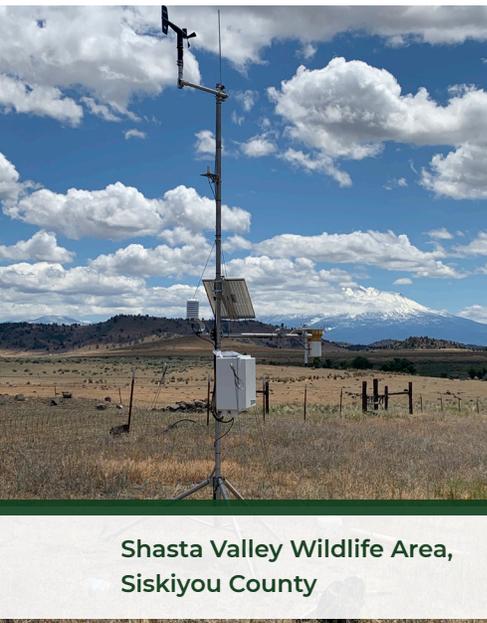
Adaptability is essential to sustain momentum and be effective in an everchanging world. Even core assumptions, planning principles, and strategies must be continually evaluated and updated, especially in the face of a changing climate. Effective conservation relies on up-to-date science, and consistent long-term monitoring data, to track progress and determine how to adapt as needed. Understanding what outcomes to aim for and how and when to shift course must also be based on integrated tribal knowledge, respect for their traditions and expertise, and inclusion in decision-making processes.

Notable accomplishments that advanced this Pathway in the past year include:

- CNRA's new [Resources Agency Project Tracking and Reporting](#) system captures investment outcomes using performance-based criteria, which is helping inform management and funding decisions to

strategically enhance California's highest-need areas.

- State agencies are coordinating funding and monitoring efforts through [California's Scoping Plan](#) update and [California's Fifth Climate Assessment](#), to enhance ongoing learning and the adaptive management of conserved landscapes.
- The State Legislature continues to be an important partner in implementing Pathways to 30x30. In February 2023, a Senate Natural Resources and Water subcommittee hearing on 30x30 California highlighted important progress and helped identify opportunities for future collaboration.
- CDFW, in partnership with the OPC, released the first [Decadal Management Review](#) of the state's marine protected area (MPA) network, providing compelling scientific evidence that MPAs are helping protect coastal and marine biodiversity and charting a course for their adaptive management. The Decadal Management Review highlights the need for continued MPA monitoring and evaluation to meet the Marine Life Protection Act goals.



Shasta Valley Wildlife Area,  
Siskiyou County

### Pathway 10 in Action: California Climate-Biodiversity Sentinel Site Network

Decades of long-term monitoring are crucial to understanding how ecosystems change over time at local, regional, and statewide scales. This, in turn, informs management strategies and actions to conserve California's biodiversity for future generations. The California Biodiversity Network (CBN), in partnership with the CDFW Science Institute, Lands, and Wildlife Diversity Programs, are establishing a Climate-Biodiversity Sentinel Site Network to continuously monitor public lands statewide. The network uses scientific-grade sensors to monitor climate, wildlife, and plants for the purposes of determining overall ecosystem health, identifying emerging biodiversity threats, and seeing how species and ecosystems are adapting to climate change.



## Collaboration

CNRA promotes and coordinates Pathways to 30x30 implementation, but success fundamentally relies on collaboration with many others. This past year, CNRA's work has been focused on building the 30x30 Partnership to engage and empower all those working towards this initiative's ambitious goal.

**Photo:** Santa Ana River, Riverside County

## Public Funding

California has made unprecedented investments in protecting biodiversity, expanding access to nature, and tackling climate change. As mentioned, the 2022–2023 California State Budget Act committed \$668.7 million this fiscal year to nature-based-solutions programs to support 30x30 across the state. So far, \$115.8 million of those funds has been invested in 83 different conservation projects. There are also several new conservation-funding programs, including the [Tribal Nature Based Solutions Program](#) through CNRA, the [Climate Smart Land Management Program](#) through DOC.

CNRA continues to collaborate with federal partners to leverage and align funding to promote biodiversity protection, expand access to nature, and take action on climate change. CNRA is also working with other state agencies to find opportunities to advance conservation projects through the federal Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, both of which were passed in 2022.

## 30x30 Partnership

The [30x30 Partnership](#) is an alliance of conservation partners open to anyone who is interested. This organizational hub for dialogue, shared learning, coordination, and strategic planning was featured in CNRA's in-person and virtual 30x30 events during fall 2022. The standing-room-only crowd was a statement to how the Partnership brings people together to find creative approaches to conservation in the name of 30x30.

[Stay up to date on the 30x30 Partnership by joining the California Nature mailing list!](#)

Over the past year, the 30x30 Partnership has also benefited greatly from the support of these groups:

### 30x30 Partnership Coordinating Committee

The inaugural [30x30 Partnership Coordinating Committee](#) (PCC) was selected by the California Natural Resources Secretary and includes 19 respected state leaders who bring broad regional representation and a range of expertise. PCC members are key community organizers who act as conduits of information and ideas between their constituents and the CNRA, which can then elevate local and regional 30x30 implementation opportunities.

### California Biodiversity Council

[CBC](#) continues to meet regularly to provide a venue for collaboration among local, state, and federal resource management and environmental protection agencies. This shared space has been an effective way for the state to collaborate with the federal government on “America the Beautiful,” the national counterpart to California's initiative to conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030.



### 30x30 Partnership in Action: 30x30 Virtual Expo Series

In November and December 2022, Jennifer Norris, Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat, and partners from across state agencies held a series of webinars to share more about programs, funding, and other resources available to help everyone reach California's 30x30 goal. Each Virtual Expo provided an opportunity for partners to ask questions about grant processes, funding opportunities, and more.

## California Biodiversity Network

[CBN](#) secured funding to begin implementing research priorities identified in the [Pathways to 30x30 Appendix D, “Advancing Science in Support of 30x30.”](#) CBN’s regular gatherings are centered around four roundtables: 1) Systematic Conservation Planning, 2) Biodiversity Informatics and Community Science, 3) Climate-Biodiversity Sentinel Sites, and 4) Stewardship.

## Ocean Protection Council

[OPC](#) is spearheading the effort to conserve coastal waters for 30x30. This year, OPC supported CDFW in completing the first-ever Decadal Management Review of California’s MPA Network. OPC also began working with federal partners to strengthen conservation in California’s federally managed National Marine Sanctuaries, and has kicked off an assessment of the biodiversity benefits of other spatial management measures in California’s coastal waters. OPC has held public workshops on key topics related to the conservation of coastal waters, and continues to work on the highest research priorities and information gaps identified in the [Pathways to 30x30 Appendix E](#).

## Tribal Partnerships

The 2022–2023 California State Budget Act allocated \$70 million for a new [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Grant Program](#). This program is part of CNRA’s commitment to working towards meaningful partnerships with California Native American tribes and supports tribal-led efforts that employ multibenefit solutions to help reach the 30x30 goal. CNRA released draft grant guidelines to the public for the new funding program in February 2023. CNRA is also reaching out to tribal leaders and governments to request consultations on draft grant guidelines language.

## Communications and Engagement

Public input was critical for developing the Pathways to 30x30 strategy and remains a

priority for its implementation. In addition to the 30x30 Partnership Kick-Off event, CNRA has employed a range of ways to inform and be informed over the past year, including:

- **Webinars** have been a forum to share information and resources and hear partners feedback.
- **Local Meetings and Field Visits** have focused on community priorities and conservation successes.
- **A new 30x30 newsletter** shares regular updates and examples of 30x30 in action.
- **The Community Conversations blog** acts as a platform for experiences and perspectives of 30x30 partners.
- **Dedicated 30x30 social media** engages with partners, increases access to resources, shares real-time updates, and amplifies success stories.
- **Tribal consultations** have supported Pathways to 30x30 implementation and helped establish the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program.

## CA Nature

CNRA received \$250,000 in the 2022–2023 California Budget Act to maintain and update [CA Nature](#). These GIS applications and their underlying data have proven effective in tracking progress toward the initiative’s goal and are widely used by partners to identify opportunities for 30x30 conservation projects. Updates include improvements to the California Protected Areas and California Conservation Easement Databases to increase tracking of acres conserved, and a toolkit to help partners better understand and record how future conservation projects fit into 30x30 Conservation Areas.



## Onward Together

There is much to celebrate about how far we have come.

In the short time since Governor Newsom's Nature-based Solutions Executive Order N-82-20 in 2020, California has taken important steps toward achieving 30x30. As a state, we defined what would be mapped and counted towards the 30% goal and brought together the best available data and visualization tools to track progress.

**Photo:** Ishxenta State Park, Monterey County

There have been challenges along the way, including connecting partners to achieve large-scale conservation, working with imperfect data, and ensuring adequate and continuous stewardship funding. Nevertheless, it is exciting to see how we have come together to creatively overcome these obstacles.

For instance, while many are excited to be part of 30x30, it has been difficult to effectively connect partners across geographic boundaries and sectors. In response, CNRA formed the [30x30 Partnership](#), whose members are bringing together local and regional colleagues and creating new partnerships to spearhead 30x30 work. The 30x30 Partnership has already been successful in identifying and linking local efforts to increase the scale of conservation.

To improve the accuracy and accessibility of the information we are using to make critical decisions, CNRA has partnered with GreenInfo Network to collect and refine conservation-areas data from across California. A new

toolkit now in development will help more accurately document and report on acres conserved. GreenInfo Network is also working on a systematic review and update of land conservation data statewide.

Last, we are working together to find creative solutions to address the struggle of securing durable funding for ongoing 30x30 Conservation Area stewardship and monitoring. Additionally, CBN is conducting an assessment to determine stewardship workforce development needs and opportunities.

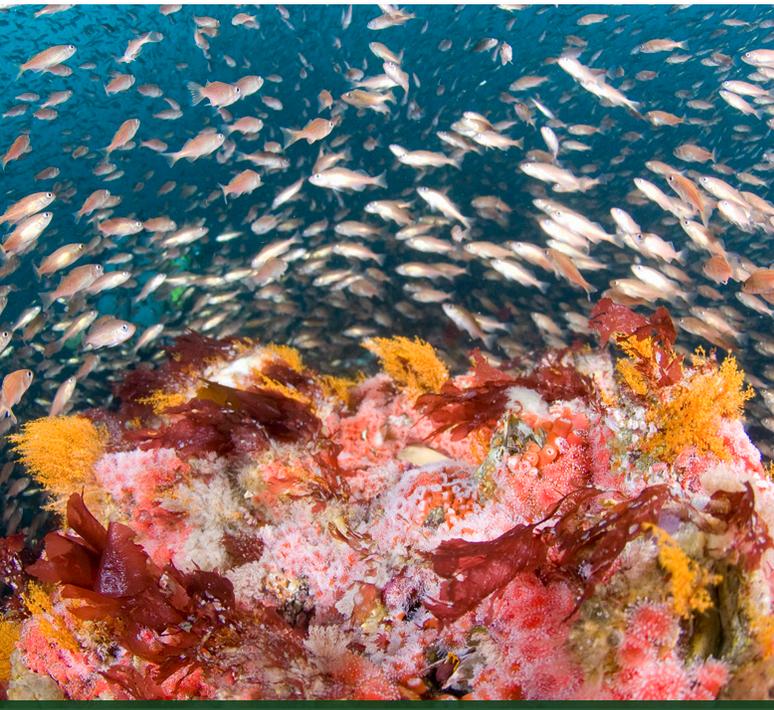
During the next year the 30x30 Partnership will:

- Focus on the near-term strategic actions (outlined in [Appendix B](#) of the Pathways strategy) that jumpstart progress toward the 30x30 goal,
- Work with partners to improve processes to track projects and communicate progress, and
- Continue building relationships and amplifying the 30x30 Partnership and local 30x30 efforts through tribal consultations, webinars, workshops, and a conference.

To durably conserve 30% of California's lands and coastal waters, and to do it well, is the opportunity of a lifetime. But we are never just working for ourselves. What we do now will affect the well-being of our human and natural communities for generations to come.

We are also never just working by ourselves. In a place as large and diverse as California, reaching the ambitious 30x30 goal will take all of us, together. No one agency or organization will get us where we need to go. Rather, creative, locally led collaborations backed by supportive programs, policies, and funding at all levels of government is required.

30x30 is truly by and for us all.



Reef, Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary

# Pathways to 30x30 Annual Progress Report

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