



<https://www.counties.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/CCRA-LegCon-2026-Leg-Update.pdf>

*Great Blue Heron in Surfgrass, Sands Beach, Santa Barbara  
Susan Cook*

# Coastal Act 101

CSAC Legislative Conference  
5/21/26

# What I Will Cover:

- The Coastal Act
- CZMA
- The Coastal Commission
- Policy and Program Areas
- Highlights from 50 years of Coastal Protection



# Origins of the Coastal Act

- Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969
- Loss of public access to the shoreline
  - Sea Ranch in Sonoma County
  - Gated communities and other exclusive development in southern California
  - Public walled off from public tidelands
- Increased intensity of development along coast
- Growing coastal protection movement (McAteer-Petris Act)



# Proposition 20 (1972)



CALIFORNIA Proposition 20

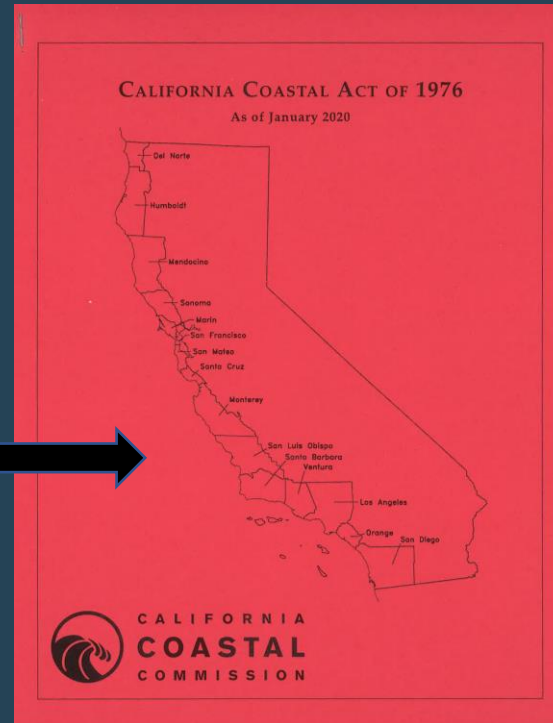
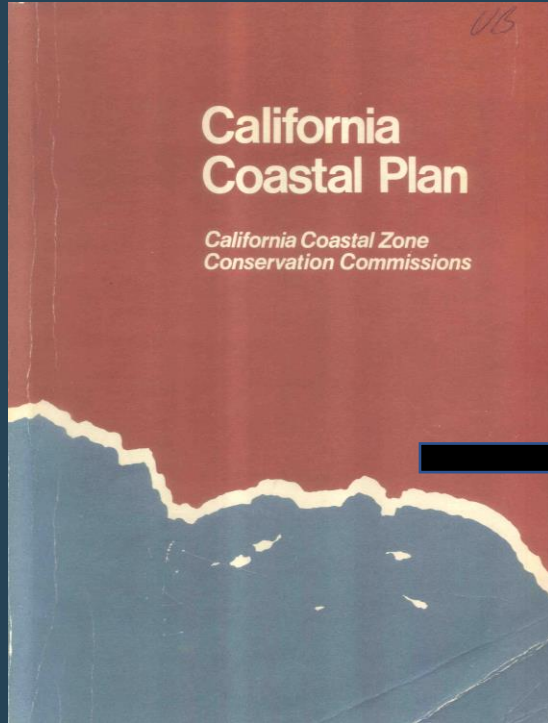
Save Your Coast **Yes on 20**  
California Coastal Alliance

**THE COASTAL INITIATIVE**



Prop 20 led to development of the California Coastal Plan in 1975, with 162 policy recommendations.

The Coastal Plan was submitted to the Legislature in 1975 and led to the California Coastal Act of 1976.



## The Sacramento Bee

Locally owned and operated for 119 years

JAMES McCLATCHY, founder, editor, 1857-1883  
C. K. McCLATCHY, editor, president, 1883-1936  
WALTER P. JONES, editor, 1936-1974

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### Editorials

## Saving The Coastline

Thanks to a stunning display of leadership by Gov. Brown, another battle has been won in the continuing campaign to save California's coastline.

After an 11th-hour intervention by Brown, the Senate passed, 25 to 14, a bill putting permanent controls on development of the 1,072-mile Pacific Ocean front, from the Oregon border to Mexico.

The moment of truth arrived Monday night, climaxing a year of public discussion and long backstage attempts at compromise with real estate developers and organized labor.

Sen. Jerry Smith, D-Saratoga, who was carrying the bill strongly supported by California conservationists, could round up only 18 of the 21 votes needed for the bill's passage. Proposition 20, the coastal protection initiative passed by the voters in 1972, will expire at the end of this year. Without the bill, the state would have had no control over seaside development.

Brown stepped in, worked out a compromise with organized labor and delivered the votes to Smith.

The governor, through his negotiations with the California Federation of Labor and the Building and Construction Trades Council, had saved the day for the conservationists.

The compromise measure will make the Coastal Commission, created by Proposition 20, permanent and will give it the power to determine and enforce environmental standards on seaside development. The commission's six regional commissions, which have upheld the environmental standards during the past four years, will be continued for two more years if the statewide commission decides the workload demands it.

This is a reasonable compromise with the original proposal which would have continued the regional boards for four years.

The question of who controls the scenic land in California and who should control it — and under what terms — is due for increasing attention in the coming years.

The creation of a permanent statewide coastal commission is but one example of what Californians should be doing to preserve scenic areas throughout the state.

The senators and assemblymen who stood up for coastal protection and worked for passage of the bill deserve the appreciation of everyone who would preserve the scenic beauty of California's coast.



Victory At Sea



The Coastal Act protects coastal resources and promotes priority land uses.

## Chapter 3 Coastal Act Policies

- Coastal Development
- Public Access and Recreation
- Coastal Hazards
- Environmentally Sensitive Habitat
- Marine Environment
- Water Quality
- Scenic and Visual Resources
- Coastal Agriculture
- Archaeological & Paleontological Resources
- Commercial Fishing & Recreational Boating
- Energy & Industrial Development



*Reflections of Yesterday, King Salmon, Humboldt County, Penny Whitehead*



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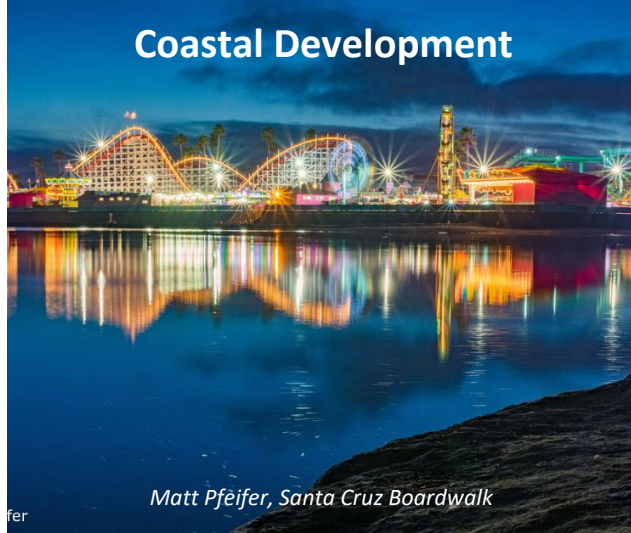
## Marine Environment



Jill Matyuch, Laguna Beach

Matyuch

## Coastal Development



Matt Pfeifer, Santa Cruz Boardwalk

fer

## Environmentally Sensitive Habitat



Diane Crouse, Oceano Dunes

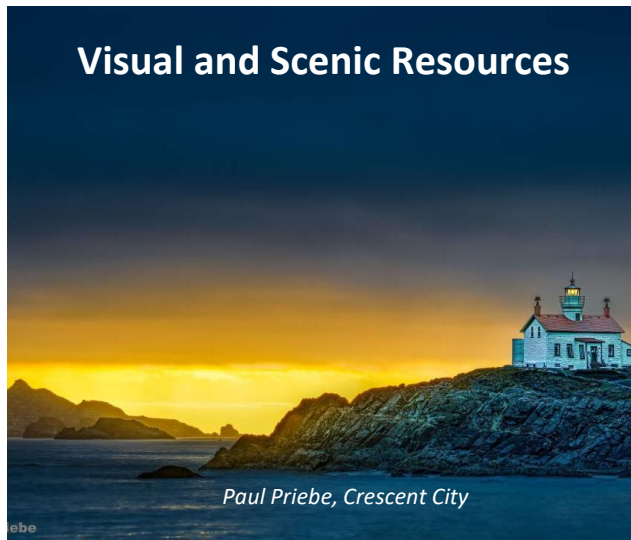
## Energy



Shane Keen, Moss Landing



## Visual and Scenic Resources



Paul Priebe, Crescent City

ebe

## Public Access and Recreation



Kevin Kielty, Newport Beach

# Coastal Zone



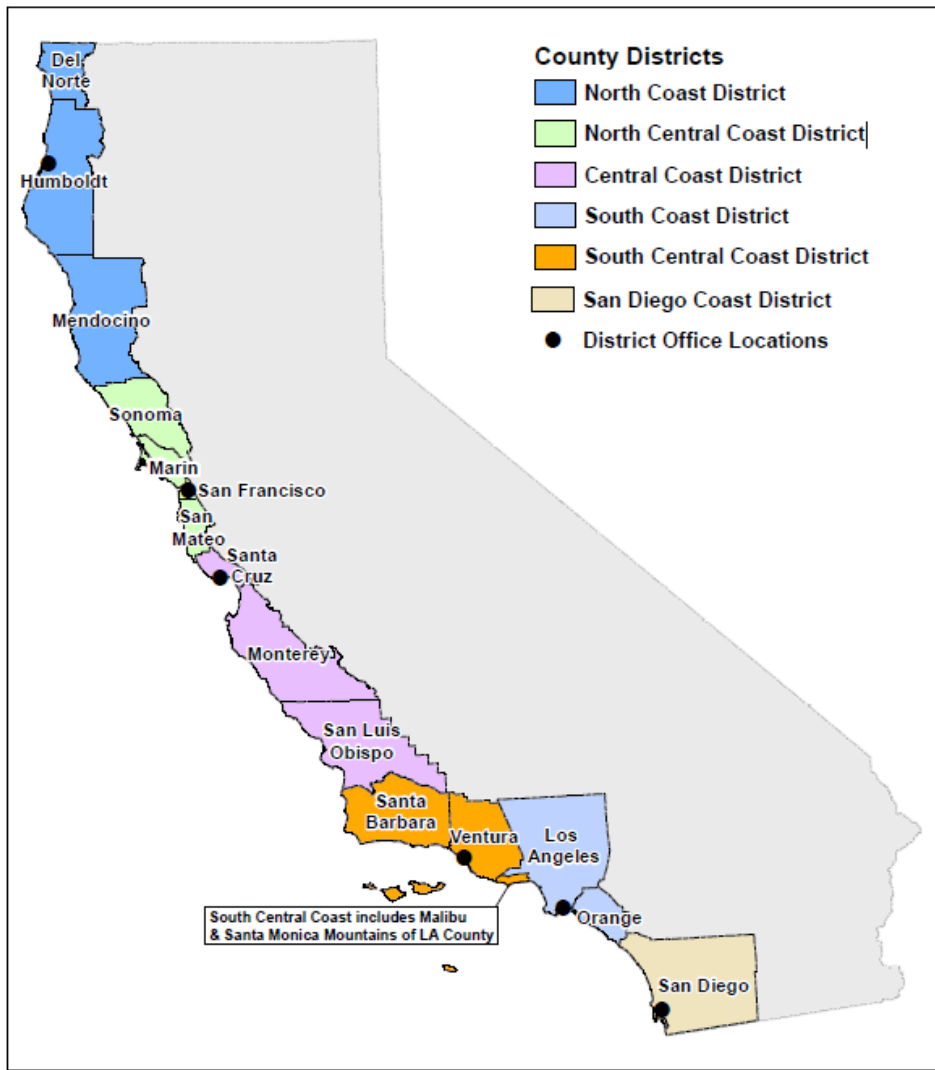


# The Coastal Zone, Defined

The Coastal Zone (CZ) is a legislatively-defined geographic region that establishes the area regulated under the Coastal Act, encompassing both land and water areas along the length of the California coastline from the Oregon border to the Mexico border. The Coastal Zone boundary (CZB) defines the California Coastal Commission's boundary of authority.

*Take a closer look:  
See what the CZ  
looks like around  
Santa Cruz:*





In partnership with coastal cities and counties, the CCC plans and regulates the use of land and water in the coastal zone.

## LCP = Local Coastal Program



Photo Courtesy of the California Coastal Commission

## Coastal Development Permits (CDPs)

Issued directly by the Commission for development activities that occur in the Coastal Zone or by local governments with certified LCPs.



Photo Courtesy of the California Coastal Commission

## Local Coastal Programs (LCPs)

Developed in collaboration with local governments; include Land Use Plans; certified LCPs transfer permitting power to local government

# Local Coastal Programs

Coastal Act Section 30500 requires local governments to prepare a **Local Coastal Program (LCP)** for the Coastal Zone portion of its jurisdiction

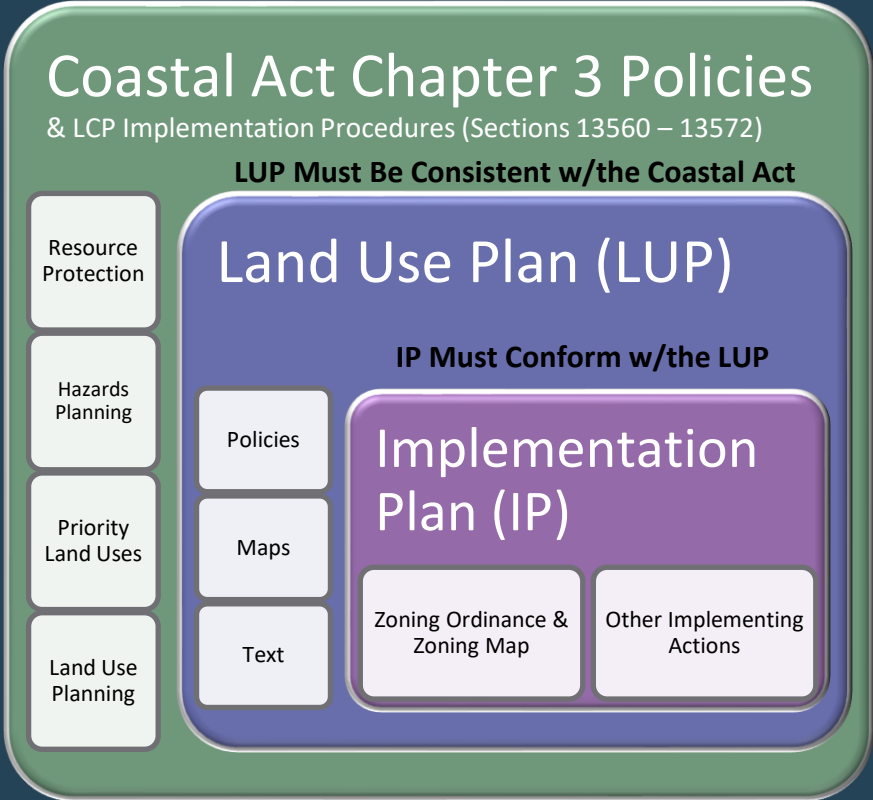
An **LCP** is defined under the Coastal Act as a local government's (CA 30108.6):

- (a) land use plans,
- (b) zoning ordinances,
- (c) zoning district maps, and
- (d) ... other implementing actions

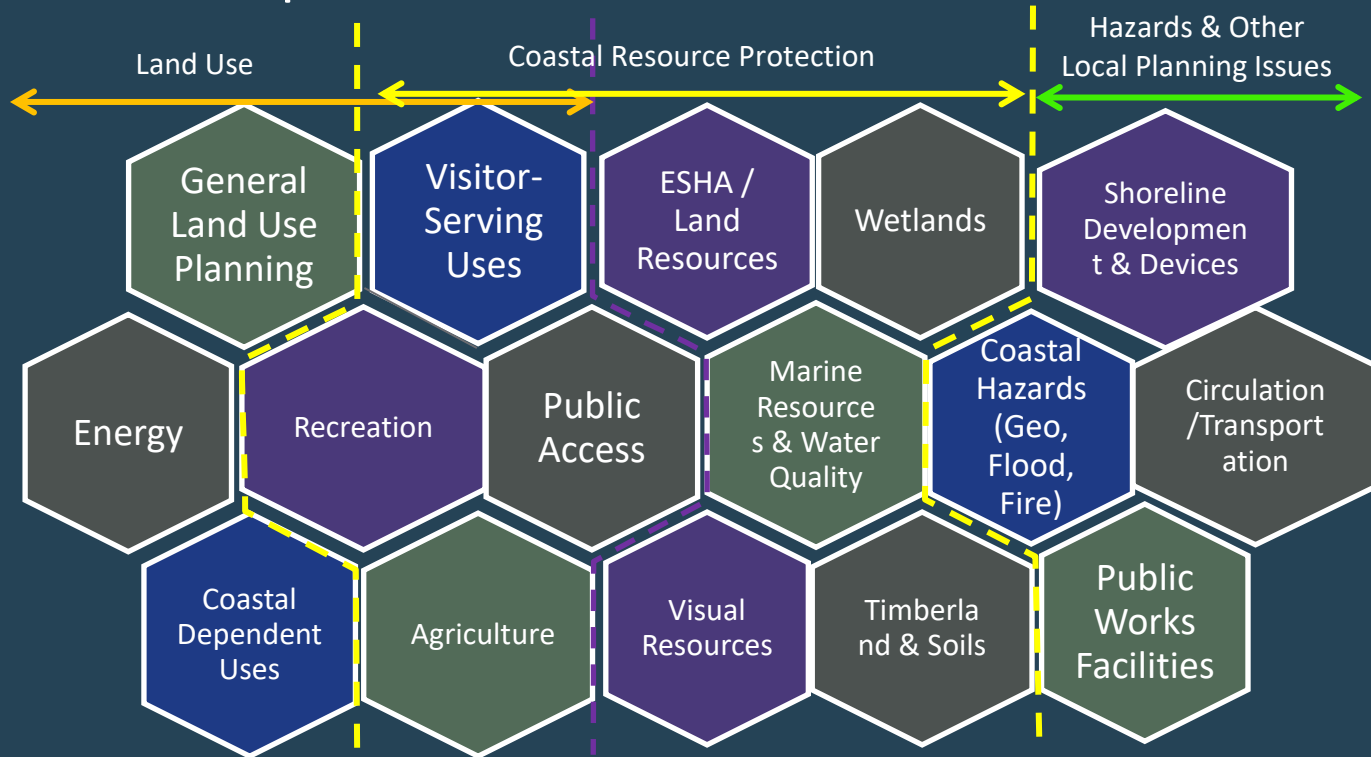
*...when taken together, meet the requirements of, and implement the provisions and policies of the Coastal Act.*



# LCP Standard of Review



# Typical LUP Topics



# Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)

CZMA

National Coastal Zone  
Management  
Program (CMP)



*San Francisco Bay  
Conservation and Development Commission*



# About the Agency

- Appointed Commission
- Professional Staff of ~200 employees in 7 offices
- Programs and Units ranging from planning, permitting, and enforcement to public education, mapping, and technical services.



# Commissioners



*Photo Courtesy of the California Coastal Commission*



*Photo Courtesy of the California Coastal Commission*

12 voting members

- 6 are public members
- 6 are locally elected officials

1 environmental justice rep

3 non-voting members from

- Resources Agency
- Caltrans
- State Lands Commission



# Agency Units and Programs

## Regulatory & Planning

- District Planning & Permitting
- Transportation
- Energy, Ocean Resources, and Federal Consistency
- Enforcement

## Statewide Policy and Support

- Executive/Federal Programs
- Environmental Justice
- Tribal Coordination
- Statewide Planning
- Technical Services
- Mapping
- Legislative
- Legal
- Public Education
- Administrative



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# District Offices



- North Coast – Arcata
- North Central Coast & Headquarters – San Francisco
- Legislative – Sacramento
- Central Coast – Santa Cruz
- South Central Coast – Ventura
- South Coast – Long Beach
- San Diego Coast – San Diego



# District Planning & Permitting

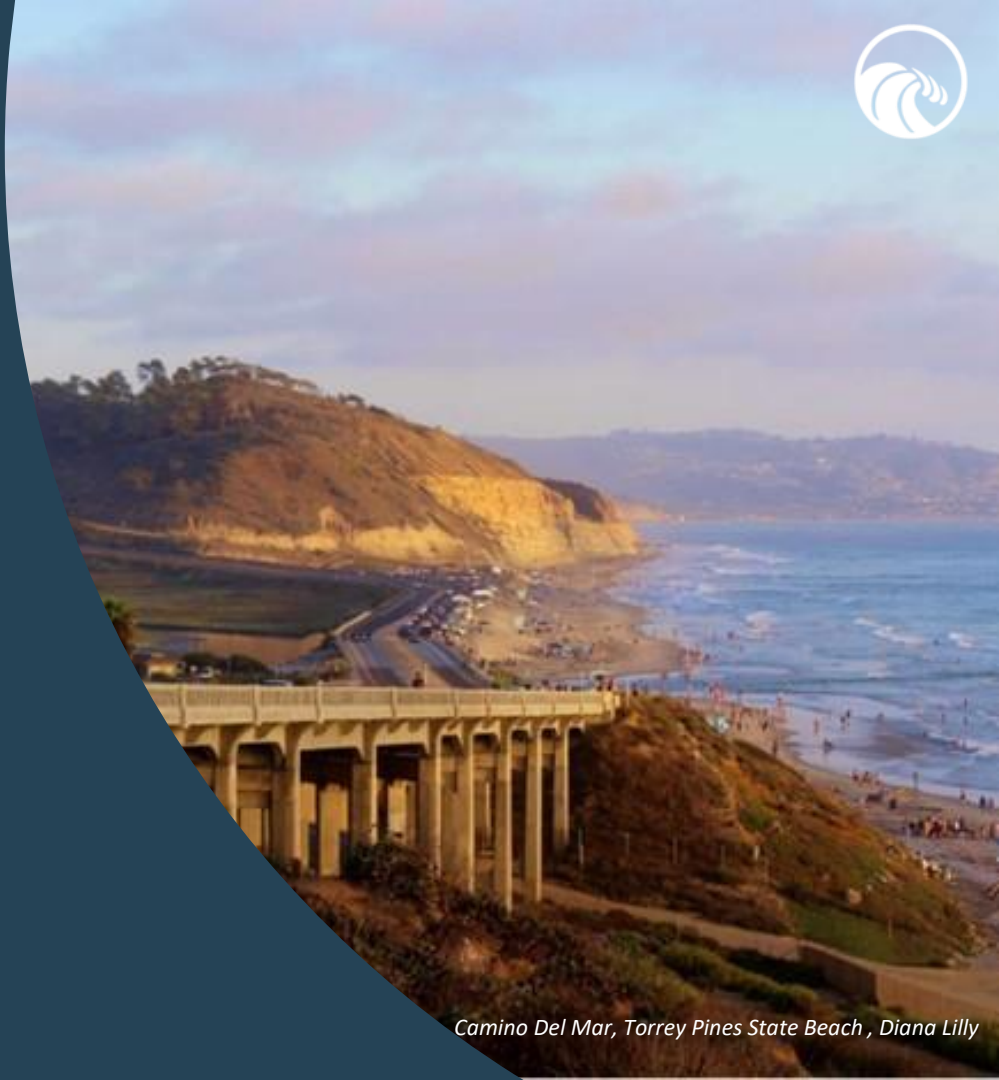


- Reviews coastal development permit applications for conformity with Coastal Act
- Analyzes and monitors coastal land use plans and zoning ordinances prepared by cities and counties in the coastal zone for conformity with Coastal Act
- Prepares written recommendations to the Commission on permit applications and other matters
- Reviews compliance by applicants with the terms of previously issued coastal permits
- Provides information to permit applicants and members of the public regarding the Commission's regulatory and planning programs



# Transportation

- Reviews coastal development transportation projects, such as roads, bridges, bike paths, pedestrian trails, and rail networks
- Ensures critical infrastructure resiliency
- Broadens multi-modal transportation and coastal public access opportunities
- Coordinates with Caltrans to facilitate review of proposed regional statewide transportation plans, state and local highway projects, and transportation corridor adaptation efforts
- Works with regional transportation agencies and local governments on LCPs



# Energy, Ocean Resources, and Federal Consistency



- Reviews energy and offshore development projects and federal agency activities. For federal activities, a **consistency determination or certification** must be made as required by the Coastal Zone Management Act
- Topics of Interest:
  - Offshore wind, Renewables, and Oil and Gas
  - Aquaculture
  - Desalination
  - Military Activities
  - Power Plants and Transmission



# Enforcement

- Ensures compliance with the Coastal Act, including with all terms and conditions of CDPs
- Requires removal of development placed without permits
- Protects all resources along the coast, including by requiring removal of violations that block public access to the coast and by requiring restoration of areas damaged by unpermitted development
- Requires additional mitigation to offset the impacts of violations
- Has authority to issue Cease and Desist and Restoration Orders and Administrative Penalty Actions



*Super Bloom at the Bolsa Chica Wetlands  
(female Allen's hummingbird) Dante Vasco*

# Executive Unit and Federal Programs



## Executive

- Leadership team sets agency-wide policy and supports strategic plan implementation
- Oversees all Units and Programs
- Plans and Supports Monthly Commission Meetings

## Federal Programs

- Collaborates with federal partners (such as NOAA and other Coastal Management Programs)
- Manages federal funding and related programming
- Oversees Commission's state and federal fellowship programs



*Great Blue Heron in Surfgrass, Sands Beach, Santa Barbara  
Susan Cook*

# Administrative Units

- Fiscal & Business Services
- Accounting
- Human Resources (HR)
- Information Tech (IT)
- Support Staff



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# Public Access

- Over 1150 public access sites along the coast
- Maximizes public access to and along the coast
- Maximizes public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone
- Works toward equitable coastal access for all



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# Environmental Justice



Ensures environmental justice principles are considered in all permitting and planning decisions

COASTAL ACCESS

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

RESPECT TRIBAL CONCERNS

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

HABITAT & PUBLIC HEALTH

PARTICIPATION IN PROCESS

CLIMATE CHANGE



CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY



UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED – MARCH 8, 2019

# Tribal Coordination

- Supports staff in implementing the Tribal Consultation Policy through internal guidance
- Strengthens relationships with Native American Tribes, while encouraging further outreach and collaboration
- Assists district staff in creating special conditions to protect tribal cultural resources in staff reports



## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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



### California Coastal Commission Adopted Tribal Consultation Policy

Adopted: August 8, 2018

#### I. BACKGROUND

In recent years, the State of California and the Federal government have adopted a number of executive orders, statutes, guidance documents, and other policy directives intended to improve communications between public agencies and federally- and non-federally-recognized California Native American Tribes (Tribes) and to protect Tribal cultural resources.

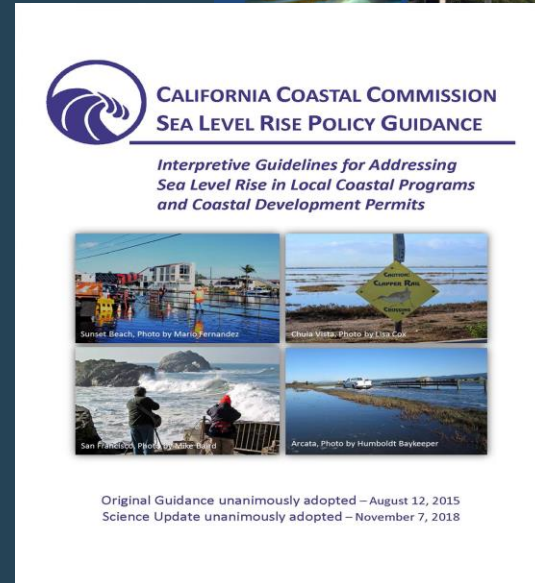
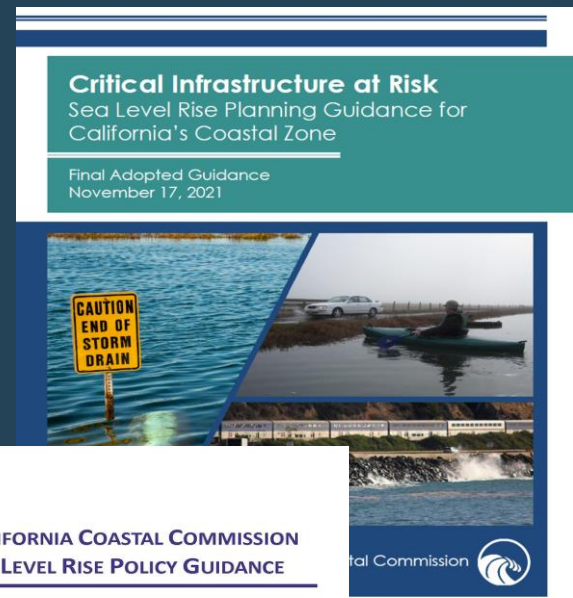
It is important to recognize that the entirety of the State's Coastal Zone was originally indigenous territory that likely has cultural significance at some level or another. Long before the coastal areas were colonized by white settlers, each coastal area had significance to the local indigenous communities. This significance is part of the State's history, which is full of centuries of land theft, suppression, and aggression, pushing indigenous people from coastal (and other) regions early in the colonization and settlement of the State. For decades, even after native people were already excluded from coastal areas by settlers and state and federal officials, expressions of indigenous culture, religion, and values led to aggression and persecution, including periods of genocide. Tribes were forced to abandon many coastal areas.

As a result of these policies, Tribes were still not safe to use traditional lands on the coast, and Tribal communities had to endure Tribal children being taken away and forced to attend boarding schools. These are some factors that have led to the suppression of knowledge about Tribal cultural areas.

California has the largest number of Tribes in the contiguous United States, with the highest number of Tribes in the State of California (through the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)) and the highest number of Tribes in the State of California (through the National American Indian Heritage Commission (NAHC)) currently acknowledging 55 additional Tribes. Efforts to improve communication and coordination between Tribes and the State, and between Tribes and federal and state laws and guidance documents promoting Tribal participation in government planning processes (e.g., the California Coastal Act, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)). For example, the state

# Statewide Planning

- Researches and develops policy guidance
- Develops and provides training materials
- Conducts outreach to local governments and engages with partner agencies
- Administers the Commission's LCP grant program
- Addresses emerging issues through special statewide projects and federal grant programs
- Current research topics include: sea level rise, coastal access, nature-based adaptation strategies, wildfire resilience, affordable housing, and public trust



# Ecology

- Reviews biological reports, wetland delineations, etc.
- Conducts site visits to evaluate on-the-ground conditions
- Makes ESHA and wetland determinations
- Determines appropriate mitigation measures and requirements to compensate for impacted resources
- Reviews restoration, mitigation, and monitoring plans
- Reviews monitoring reports for compliance with special conditions and provides guidance on adaptive management



*Sea star and Surfgrass, Montaña de Oro State Park  
Bill Bouton*

# Water Quality

- Analyzes water quality issues in projects
- Analyzes water quality policies and implementation measures new/updated LCPs
- Reviews construction-phase and post-development water quality plans
- Recommends Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Reviews technical reports on water quality, stormwater management, hydrology, and soils
- Develops and reviews Special Conditions and findings for staff reports, and reviews condition compliance



# Geology and Engineering

- Analyzes geology and engineering aspects of projects (e.g., coastal hazards) and provides technical support/recommendations
- Develops technical guidance documents and provides training
- Attends state/regional working groups/workshops and brings technical perspective of Commission Staff
- Facilitates connections with academics and researchers to engage with best available science





# Legislative

- Tracks the status of bills affecting the Commission and California's Coastal Program and coast-related legislation
- Represents the Commission in the Capitol
- Builds and maintains relationships with legislators, the administration, and Capitol staff
- Advocates for policy to protect coastal resources and access
- Assists coastal legislators with addressing constituent concerns
- Tracks the Commission's annual budget



# Legal

- Provides advice to Commission staff on legal issues related to proposed coastal development, LCP certifications, and enforcement orders
- Reviews documents and reports for consistency with Coastal Act and other laws
- Drafts and reviews documents to be recorded to protect open space and provide public access
- Responds to Public Records Act requests
- Works with Attorney General's office in relation to litigation by and against the Commission



*Two Pelicans Sporting Breeding Plumage, Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz, Karen Cohen*

# Public Education

- Provides Whale Tail Grants for coastal and marine education
- Manages Coastal Cleanup Day, Adopt-A-Beach, CA King Tides Project, and Boating Clean & Green Program (in partnership with State Parks)
- Works on marine debris policy and plastic pollution prevention
- Develops K-12 educational resources
- Offers Art, Poetry, Photo, and Video Contests for youth and adults



*A Memory Shell, Katy Wang, Mountain View*



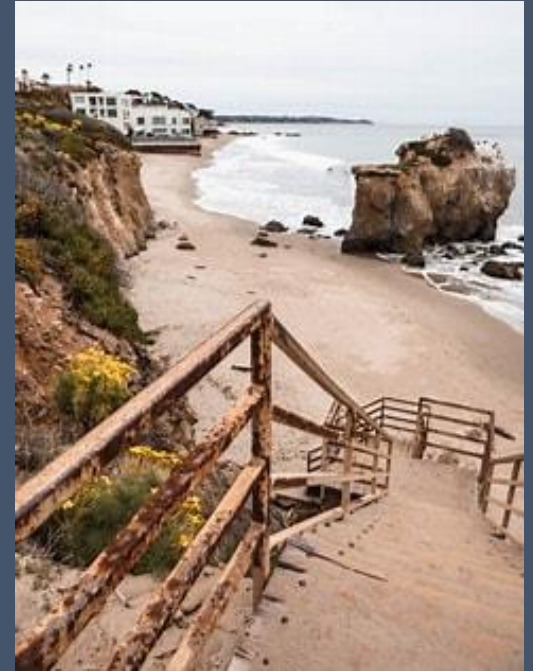
A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, there are brown, eroded cliffs with some green vegetation. A sandy beach is visible in the middle ground, surrounded by large, dark rocks. The ocean is blue with white waves breaking against the shore. In the distance, a person can be seen standing on a cliff edge. The sky is overcast.

# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT

Protecting and enhancing California's coast and ocean for present and future generations

# Protecting and Expanding Public Access

- Secured 200 + public accessways
- Expanded California Coastal Trail
- Focus on multi-modal and ADA access
- Landmark Enforcement Actions





# Lower cost accommodations and housing



- Created over 1,200 lower cost over night accommodation (hotel rooms, cabins, camp sites, hostel beds)
- Prevented demolition of over 1,100 existing affordable housing units



# SLR and Climate Adaptation Approaches

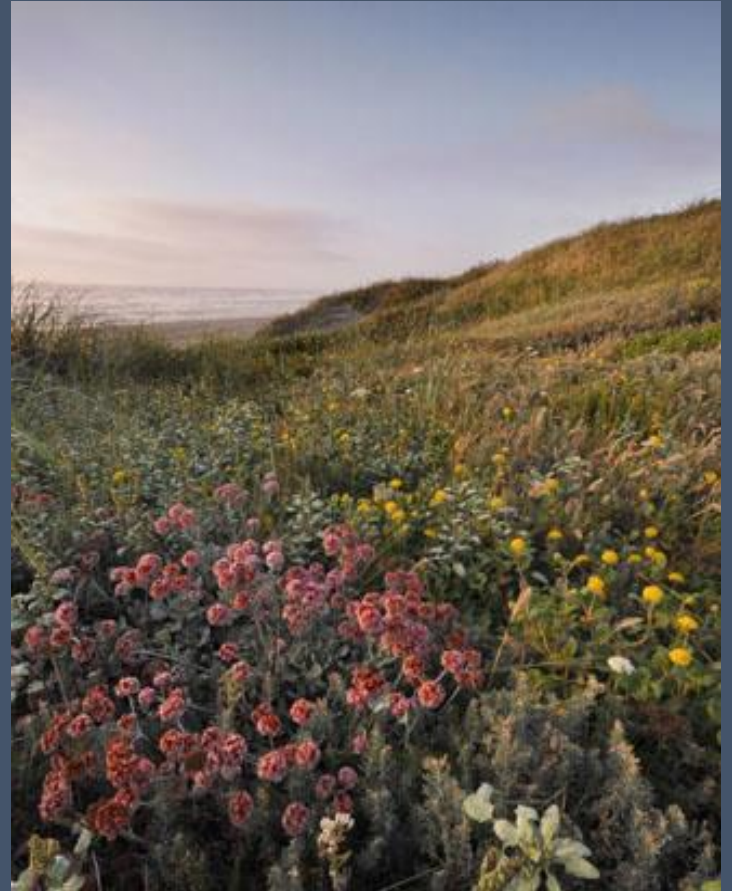


# Habitat Conservation and Restoration



Conserved over 12,000 acres through open space and conservation easements

Played key role in restoration of Ballona, Bolsa Chica, San Dieguito, Malibu and San Elijo Lagoons, and the Eel River



# Protecting California's Iconic Coastal Places



Hearst Ranch  
Sea Ranch  
Crystal Cove  
Trestles Beach  
Martin's Beach  
Newport Banning  
Ranch

# Stay Connected

- FB: California Coast
- Twitter: thecac coast
- IG: thecaliforniac coast
- LI: California Coastal Commission
- Youtube: CACoastalCleanupDay or The California Coastal Commission

