California State Lands Commission
2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan
LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

A Message to Residents of the Golden State

The State Lands Commission is pleased to offer our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, guiding us in a time that calls for being open, flexible, and forward-thinking.

This plan takes stock of the world as it presents itself in this new decade and is the result of both reflection and a focused action: listening. We sought out diverse and varied voices from across our state to help us understand, consider, and interpret issues throughout our immense and varied landscape. We listened, then brought the initial findings together and asked for more feedback during public meetings and in further listening sessions with California Tribal Governments, Commission staff, key stakeholders, and trustees. The result is a plan offered by the Commission but reflecting the voices and input from community and industry sectors statewide.

Through its actions, the Commission secures and safeguards the public’s access rights to natural navigable waterways and the coastline and preserves irreplaceable natural habitats for wildlife, vegetation, and biological communities.

This plan directs us in our need to address issues such as climate change and the resulting sea-level rise, environmental justice, sustainability and opportunities with renewable resources, social justice and equity, and the promotion and educational opportunities surrounding public access. The plan leverages technology for innovation, invites incorporation of blue and green economies, and outlines contemporary strategies that are future-oriented. Every part of this plan has been shaped with the knowledge that our state is immense, representing many different thoughts and needs, and that the Commission’s role is to be a connection point and to provide collaborative leadership.

This plan enables the Commission to adapt to emerging challenges, while creating a meaningful framework to prompt state policy goals, promote public access, and enforce the protections of the Public Trust Doctrine. The Commission and its staff are committed to implementing the goals and strategies in this strategic plan, continuing to be a model of effective, nimble government, providing the highest levels of stewardship and transparency, and embracing opportunities for inclusiveness and representation in all aspects of our public engagement.
The challenges that we have experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic—the impacts on our economy, and the changing nature of our industries and communities—mean we will need to work together as we navigate upcoming challenges and additional opportunities. Through partnerships, communication, and with the help of our guiding principles and values, we can develop solutions and a way forward for Californians, our public lands, and our collective future.

We hope you will continue to stay engaged with the Commission and to lend your voice to the work we do on behalf of all Californians. We want to hear from you!

Best Regards,

California State Lands Commission

There are many ways for you to connect with the Commission, to participate in the decision-making process, and to stay up-to-date on Commission activities.

- Attend public meetings, which are held throughout the year and in accordance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act
- Submit a written comment before a public meeting
- Read staff reports—which are posted to our website regularly—from the public meetings
- Send us an email
- Subscribe to our e-lists
- Contact a representative in any of our field offices

We look forward to hearing from you!
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MISSION

The California State Lands Commission provides the people of California with effective stewardship of the lands, waterways, and resources entrusted to its care based on the principles of equity, sustainability, and resiliency, through preservation, restoration, enhancement, responsible economic development, and the promotion of public access.
EXECUTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

This document was developed in 2020—a year defined by change and challenge. Created in the midst of a global pandemic and a time when California was experiencing the emerging consequences of climate change, the 2021-2025 California State Lands Commission Strategic Plan Update (Update) reflects the need to rapidly adjust and evolve to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The Update reflects an array of insights garnered from the public, staff, sovereign tribal partners, and a range of stakeholders as they viewed the future from their altered way of life in an increasingly virtual world.

Change is inevitable, but how the Commission responds to the challenges that change brings, and how it adapts and embraces the opportunities that come from it, has a profound effect on the results. For the Commission, this means that strategic planning is not just an exercise completed once every five years. The Commission’s strategic planning is dynamic and responsive, driving deliberative action every day in all that it does.

In many ways, this Update was well-timed. In 2020, the state and nation collectively began to review, analyze, plan, and look ahead to how we can do better, be more inclusive, and make decisions that protect our environment as climate change accelerates. Inclusivity, accessibility, equity, sustainability, and environmental justice serve as foundational values and intersectional lenses through which to view each application, process, issue, and decision. The Commission keeps these values top-of-mind as it approaches all activities and statewide responsibilities.

As an Update, the plan considers the Commission’s historic roles, accomplishments, and results it has achieved during the five years of the previous Strategic Plan. The work completed over these years took many forms, including:

- Providing, in partnership with the California Department of Justice, a legal guide detailing the public’s rights to access and use California’s navigable waterways
- Launching the 2019 OSCAR system (Online System for Customer Applications and Records) to streamline and automate application and permitting processes
- Implementing, through the Marine Invasive Species Program, the first of their kind in the U.S., and one of the first in the world, biofouling management regulations to better protect California waters from species introductions
- Offering full virtual access and on-demand replays for all Commission meetings
- Adopting a meaningful and mutually beneficial Tribal Consultation Policy
- Returning over 16,000 acres of land to the California Coastal Sanctuary to never be developed for offshore oil or gas production
- Generating revenue for the State of California general fund and California’s State Teachers Retirement System through leasing activities
- Expanding oil spill prevention activities and staff-led monitoring programs

Just as important as those results were how they were achieved. By working together, collaborating, and strengthening partnerships, the Commission achieved more meaningful and effective outcomes.

This Update also attempts to address the challenges and opportunities of the unsettling time the Commission now encounters. These include the need to:

- Proactively address climate change and sea-level rise
- Justly transition to a post-petroleum economy
EXECUTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- Ensure environmental and social justice through our decisions, actions, and activities
- Exercise leadership as conveners and builders of consensus on vexing cross-sector issues and to establish policy alignment
- Explore the evolving Public Trust principles to reflect the values and needs of a changing society to ensure Public Trust lands and resources are protected and accessible for all people of California
- Embrace and safeguard multi-benefit School Lands and resource management stewardship that equitably balances responsible local and regional economic development, supports living wages, environmental protection, and revenue generation
- Redouble technological advancement and innovation efforts to better serve the people of California

As is the case with many complex issues, the necessary responses to each one often intersect with other drivers. For example, strategic goals and actions addressing climate change and transitioning to a post-petroleum economy will involve revisiting appropriate uses of Public Trust lands and protection of Public Trust resources.

The Commission’s values and guiding principles provide the overarching foundation for every strategy and action. Working with the values and guiding principles in mind will support decision-making that provides sustainable, equitable benefits. The plan sets forth actions to unify state agencies for environmental protections that provide coastal resiliency grounded in science, partnerships, communication, and local support. By working with partners; listening to the people of California; looking for new and innovative ways to manage lands, natural resources, and businesses in California; and prioritizing actions and activities that put all people at the center of the conversation, the Commission achieves better results. These results must be shared equitably and enjoyed by all people of California, both now and in the future.

In addition to affirming its ongoing commitments, the Update includes new strategic focus areas, goals, and actions. Many actions will yield near-term results, while others represent investments in a series of steps to be taken to achieve long-term outcomes. The featured strategies are:

1. Leading Climate Activism
2. Prioritizing Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
3. Partnering with Sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities
4. Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs
5. Leveraging Technology
6. Committing to Collaborative Leadership
7. Building a Reimagined Workforce

For more information on the strategies, we encourage you to explore this full Strategic Plan Update.
ABOUT THE STATE LANDS COMMISSION

Strategic plans consider four basic things:

- Where an organization has been and where it is now
- The drivers of change the organization must navigate and leverage to be successful in the future
- The optimal responses to those drivers of change
- The strategies and actions needed to achieve the desired results

The Commission is committed to performing all the necessary duties required to achieve its mission. This plan focuses on the strategies required to successfully meet the demands of the future.

The following establishes the foundation for the strategies. It considers the rich history of the Commission, its vision for the future, the values and principles driving its culture and decisions, and its success in achieving goals outlined in the previous 2016-2020 California State Lands Commission Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan).

History

Established in 1938 by the California Legislature, the Commission manages four million acres of tide and submerged lands and the beds of natural and navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits. These are often referred to as sovereign lands or Public Trust lands and stretch from the Klamath River and Goose Lake in the north to the Tijuana Estuary in the south and the Colorado River in the east, and from the Pacific Coast three miles offshore in the west to world-famous Lake Tahoe in the east; and includes California’s two longest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin. The Commission is also the trustee of approximately a half-million acres of land, known as School Lands, that were granted to the state by the U.S. Government in 1853, and which are managed for the benefit of the State Teachers Retirement System. The Commission’s Public Trust lands and School Lands are each subject to specific statutory and common law trust responsibilities that the Commission carries out on behalf of the state. For more detail on the types of lands managed by the Commission, please see the Additional Resources section and map at the end of this Update.

Since its creation, 20 Lieutenant Governors, 11 State Controllers, and 32 Finance Directors have led the Commission. Notably, 2019 marked the first year in its 81-year history that the Commission was led entirely by women: Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, State Controller Betty Yee, and Department of Finance Director Keely Bosler, along with the Executive Officer of the Commission, Jennifer Lucchesi.

Public Trust

The Commission is passionate about its role as a steward of the Public Trust. The public’s right to use California’s waterways for commerce, navigation, fishing, boating, natural habitat protection, and other water-oriented activities is protected by the Commission under the common law Public Trust Doctrine (Doctrine). Historically, the Public Trust has referred to the public’s fundamental right to use its waterways to engage in “commerce, navigation, and fisheries.” Public Trust principles have legal roots in the Justinian Code laws of Rome and the 1215 Magna Carta. Under this ancient Doctrine, monarchies (sovereigns) granted the right of use of the waterways. It is remarkable, as it established a right of common people that has endured throughout centuries, when many people had very few rights. More recently, the common law Doctrine has evolved to reflect the modern era and the values and needs of an evolving society.

The Commission also oversees the management of sovereign Public Trust lands and resources granted in trust by the California Legislature to approximately 70 local jurisdictions. The lands generally consist of prime waterfront lands and coastal waters, including the state’s major ports and harbor districts.
California State Lands Commission Jurisdictional Map

The purpose of this map is to show the Commission’s jurisdiction conceptually. The data represented in this map is general in nature and subject to change. It does not include all lands and resources within the Commission’s jurisdiction and does not purport to show precise boundaries.
Revenue

Over the nine decades it has been in service, the Commission has generated over $11.8 billion for the State of California. In the last full calendar year of 2019, with 234 staff positions, the $164 million revenue and net profits generated by the Commission equated to a $638,461 return in revenue per position. The Commission actively continues to streamline processes; work across departments; collaborate with other agencies; coordinate with applicants and lessees; and inclusively engage communities, stakeholders, and tribal partners to operate more efficiently.

Integrity

When forming the Commission, the Legislature sought to ensure fiscal integrity and accountability by selecting as Commissioners two constitutional officers of the state who answer directly to the statewide electorate, the Lieutenant Governor, and the State Controller, and the two principal financial officers of the state—the State Controller and the Governor’s Director of Finance. The Commission faithfully executes these responsibilities. Transparency through public engagement is assured by all Commission actions and decisions being made at properly noticed public meetings.

Activities

The Commission is fully committed to its roles as land and resource trust managers. It is vigilant in the preservation and protection of its assets and dedicated to making sound policy, economic, and environmentally responsible judgments in the best interest of the state’s beneficiaries—the people of California.

Through its actions, the Commission secures and safeguards the public’s access rights to natural navigable waterways and the coastline, and preserves irreplaceable natural habitats for wildlife, vegetation, and biological communities.

It also protects state waters from marine invasive species introductions and prevents oil spills by providing the best achievable protection of the marine environment at all marine oil terminals in California and at offshore oil platforms and production facilities.

Vision

The California State Lands Commission is a recognized leader that champions equitable and sustainable public land management and balanced resource protection for the benefit and enjoyment of all current and future generations of the people of California.

Values

The California State Lands Commission embraces the following core values that shape and define all our activities and outcomes.

- **Inclusivity** – We value diversity at all levels and are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where people with different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences are able to lend their strengths and unique insights to further the Commission’s mission and progress.
• **Accessibility** – We strive to provide access to our lands and resources, all Commission materials, staff, and public meetings by addressing physical barriers and continually considering technology, educational opportunities, and communication pathways to benefit people of California of all abilities.

• **Equity** – We commit to practices and activities that prioritize racial justice, visibility, and representation, ensuring that all voices are heard, all communities are treated fairly and equitably, and the burdens and benefits stemming from our actions are equitably distributed.

• **Environmental Justice** – We are committed to advancing environmental justice through more inclusive decision-making that addresses the disproportionate burdens of past decisions and practices on disadvantaged communities and Native Nations.

• **Sustainability** – We understand the multi-generational impacts of our decisions. We seek opportunities and commit to actions that responsibly grow our economy, facilitate a just transition to a carbon neutral economy, support living wages, protect the environment and biodiversity, and that prioritize sustainable practices and outcomes for current and future generations.

• **Visionary** – We are forward-thinking and continuously seek new and innovative ways to be more effective public land and resources stewards.

• **Responsible Economic Growth** – We support our grantees, lessees, stakeholders, and partners in their efforts to balance sustainability and equity with economic growth. We strive to seek out opportunities to help our grantees and lessees implement and execute environmentally conscious practices that support inclusive job growth, living wages, healthy communities, and a resilient economy.

• **Integrate Native American Perspectives** – We are committed to respecting and recognizing the sovereign rights and heritage of tribal governments, learning from, and collaborating with them to integrate their unique and valuable knowledges and practices, including traditional ecological knowledges,¹ into land management decisions. We are committed to working cooperatively to protect tribal cultural resources and to identify opportunities for co-management of and access to natural lands that are within Tribes’ ancestral territories and under the ownership or control of the Commission.

### Guiding Principles

The Commission protects the lands and resources entrusted to its care through balanced management, marine protection and pollution prevention, adaptation to climate change, and ensuring public access to these lands and waters. The principles serve as the foundation of this work and are the standards that inform decision-making and shape the culture. The Commission is committed to:

• **Public Health and Safety** – Prioritizing and embedding public health and safety in every decision and action, including reducing and mitigating adverse impacts on vulnerable communities, to the extent feasible.

• **Stewardship** – Seeking balance among competing uses and the long-term protection of lands and resources, consistent with constitutional, statutory, and common law provisions.

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¹ Traditional Ecological Knowledges (TEK), or Indigenous Knowledges (IK), refers to the “...evolving knowledge[s] acquired by indigenous and local peoples over hundreds or thousands of years through direct contact with the environment, is location–specific, and includes relationships between plants, animals, natural phenomena, landscapes and timing of events used for lifeways, including but not limited to hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry” (USFWS 2011).
• **Accountability** – Responsibly and meaningfully explaining decisions and actions and being responsive to public input.

• **Integrity** – Adhering to the highest ethical standards in all aspects of our work and service to the public.

• **Engagement** – Ensuring robust, transparent, and meaningful public outreach and engagement that is inclusive and accessible.

• **Quality** – Providing superior public service through our expansive and unique professional staff expertise.

• **Solution-Oriented** – Addressing complex, multifaceted problems through collaborative decision-making centered in science, inclusive public input, and informed by traditional ecological knowledges.

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**Values**
- Inclusivity
- Accessibility
- Equity
- Environmental Justice
- Sustainability
- Visionary
- Responsible Economic Growth
- Integrate Native American Perspectives

**Guiding Principles**
- Public Health and Safety
- Stewardship
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Engagement
- Quality
- Solution-Oriented
REFLECTING ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The 2016-2020 Commission Strategic Plan focused on performing responsible land and resource management of more than four million acres of sovereign lands, consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine, as well as almost a half million acres of School Lands, while addressing future challenges. The Commission actively engaged people in California and other government agencies by integrating technology for effective operations and transparent communications.

Despite unforeseen external events (including the bankruptcies of two oil and gas lessees and the subsequent plugging and abandonment activities of their operations, major wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis), the Commission met all major goals and high-level strategies. However, some of the detailed targeted outcomes in the implementation work plan had to be deferred or were not completed in order to address unplanned events. Notable Commission accomplishments during the past five years include:

- Use of inclusive processes, including convening an Environmental Justice Working Group that crafted a formal Environmental Justice Policy and Implementation Plan.
- Dedicated more than 16,000 acres to the California Coastal Sanctuary, protecting offshore lands and resources that can no longer be used for oil and gas production.
- Plugged and abandoned all 50 wells on Rincon Island and all 24 state onshore production wells as part of the Rincon Well Abandonment Project, plugged and abandoned the Piers 421 production well, and plugged and abandoned three legacy wells at Summerland Beach, all ahead of schedule and under budget.
- Sponsored Assembly Bill 585 (Limón, Ch. 123/19) that minimizes the state’s future financial liability for decommissioning oil and gas infrastructure and ensures all lessees fulfill their decommissioning obligations.
- Approved the decommissioning of Units 2 and 3 of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.
- Entered into a landmark collaboration agreement with the California Coastal Commission, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the California Coastal Conservancy for public engagement and a planning process to inform the development of a contemporary coastal access program at Hollister Ranch in Santa Barbara County.
- Approved a landmark boundary line and easement agreement with more than 180 shoreline property owners at Donner Lake that clarifies public/private property ownership and secures public access rights to the lake.
- Approved a patent transferring an approximately 38.75-acre parcel of state-owned School Lands possessing significant cultural value and history to the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation in Inyo County.
- Investigated the Cemex coastal sand mining operation and reached a settlement, in partnership with the Coastal Commission and the city of Marina, with Cemex in 2017 to cease active sand mining by December 31, 2020. Cemex stopped its mining operations ahead of schedule.
- Launched a new online system that allows the public to access, submit, and track lease and permit applications. With this new tool, the Commission can preserve and make publicly available digital copies of historical records that provide insight into its lands and resources.
- Launched a new web-mapping application for state waters offshore in San Diego, designed to help users better understand the dynamic ocean space and ocean-related data offshore in San Diego County.
• Transitioned information technology tools and services to be more secure and to support remote work models.

• Automated several business and communications processes, including the Marine Invasive Species Program web entry, eDiscovery, website content, and digitization.

• Hosted Prevention First Symposiums in 2016 and 2018.

• Adopted a meaningful Tribal Consultation Policy in 2016.

• Approved a lease for the use of state lands for the Mavericks Surfing Challenge that ensured equal compensation for each category of the Women’s Division and Men’s Division competitions.

The next five-year strategic planning cycle and beyond will bring rapid advancements along with environmental and social changes that will offer new opportunities for innovation in the Commission’s management of its lands and resources. The Drivers of Change section highlights issues and topics heard during stakeholder interviews, tribal roundtable discussions, and individual consultations conducted during 2020, from Commission staff, and from public input gathered during Commission meetings. You are also invited to share your thoughts over the coming years on ways to embrace change and more effectively and meaningfully manage the Commission’s lands and resources. We welcome your feedback during Commission public meetings, via email or postal mail, or via a phone call—whatever way is easiest for you.
DRIVERS OF CHANGE

This Strategic Plan Update responds to new imperatives to adjust and evolve. With a vast amount of land and resources under the Commission’s charge, changes and challenges are an inevitable part of its work. While the responses to these challenges may at times be difficult, they are rooted in creating new opportunities.

Listening to California’s tribal partners, stakeholders, leaders, businesses, community groups, members of the public and the Commission staff, afforded an opportunity to understand the drivers of change from varied points of view. Gathering this information helped identify emerging issues, drivers, stressors, and challenges that are urgent, far-reaching, and will require future-focused actions. They are a collection of what California is experiencing and likely to experience as we navigate the coming decade. The following drivers of change were frequently mentioned by stakeholders representing a range of sectors and tribal partners.

- Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise
- Environmental, Economic, and Social Injustice
- Support of Tribal Self-Governance and Self-Determination
- Evolving Public Trust Principles and Values
- Post-Petroleum Era
- Renewable Economies and Sustainability
- Policy Configuration
- Technological Advancements
- Workforce Investment

Following is more about each of the drivers of change.

Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise

The over four million acres of lands and resources under the Commission’s jurisdiction are experiencing and will experience disproportionate impacts from climate change. As a state with a historically variable climate, California is considered one of the most “climate-challenged” regions of North America, as climate change makes extreme conditions more frequent and severe. California is already experiencing among the most extreme series of natural events in its recorded history: warmest average temperatures, intense fire activity, rapid sea-level rise, and flood and drought events occurring in the same water year. California will continue to experience increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, declining snowpack, frequent droughts, severe wildfires, and heavy precipitation events—impacting the state’s lands and resources.

As greenhouse gas emissions trap energy from the sun, the oceans absorb more heat and sea temperatures increase. From 1900 to 2016, California’s coastal waters have warmed 1.26°F. Exceedingly warm ocean temperatures (as occurred off the Coast of California from 2013-2016) can produce unprecedented events, including the mass abandonment of sea lion pups and California’s record-setting drought. Additionally, rising air temperatures and number of dry days associated with climate change increases California’s risk for extreme fire activity. The risk of frequent and intense wildfires threatens the Commission’s forested and School Lands.

California is one of 25 global biodiversity hotspots, largely due to the state’s varying climatic conditions. Climate change is expected to result in habitat shifts and declines in biodiversity, on land and along the coast. Warming temperatures will also facilitate the spread of invasive species, pests, pathogens, and disease.
Along the coast, California’s 2018 Fourth Climate Change Assessment outlines a stark future. From that report, “The coastal region, which stretches over the Commission’s 1,200 miles of shoreline, is an economic powerhouse that contributes nearly a half-billion dollars a year to the state’s GDP, 3 billions in wages and salaries, and pre-pandemic over a half million jobs in 2013. Rising sea levels, warming ocean waters, increasing acidity, and decreasing dissolved oxygen levels will have effects that ripple far beyond the three-quarters of Californians who live in coastal counties. Under mid to high sea-level rise scenarios, 31 to 67 percent of Southern California beaches may completely erode by 2100 without large-scale human interventions. Damages in the state’s major population areas would total in the billions from inundation of residential and commercial buildings under 20 inches of sea-level rise, which is close to the 95th percentile of potential sea-level rise by the middle of this century. A 100-year coastal flood, on top of this level of sea-level rise, would almost double the costs.”

Sea-level rise, and associated flooding and coastal erosion, also pose a risk to tribal cultural resources and heritage, as important plants may get inundated, fishing sites may be lost, coastal village sites would be submerged, and erosion could expose previously buried materials. Beach loss due to rising seas and erosion would also result in the loss of important coastal gathering areas that Native people have used for ceremony for millennia.

Inland waterways are also likely to experience variations of extreme flood events and impaired flows. Models developed by the United States Geological Survey, based on California’s historic continuous rainfall event from December 1861-January 1862, indicate an extreme storm would overwhelm and potentially alter historic river systems and devastate much of California, disproportionately impacting the Central Valley, and affecting a quarter of California’s homes. Climate change and sea-level rise are and will continue to challenge how the Commission manages its lands and resources. The Commission must work with communities, tribal governments, and stakeholders to equitably respond, adapt, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Environmental, Economic, and Social Injustice

Extreme climate change driven events coupled with a global pandemic have exacerbated the physical risks and financial insecurity of California workers and families. As the fifth-largest world economy, California was already home to the highest effective rate of poverty among the 50 states. Growing income inequality, inequities in public access to natural spaces, and a dramatic re-emergence of the worst of the nation’s sometimes ugly past has created an urgent need to address structural racism and implicit bias.

In the year 2020, injustice became more visible and vocalized than ever before. Unequal vulnerabilities can no longer be ignored; as they threaten individual lives, our shared health, our public lands, and our collective prosperity. Both the climate and vulnerable communities have been harmed by fossil fuel and other forms of

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3 Gross Domestic Product

CSLC Strategic Plan 2021-2025
resource extraction, which result in negative impacts on both the land and people.

The updates in this 2021-2025 Strategic Plan build on the framework established by the Commission’s 2016 Tribal Consultation Policy, 2018 Environmental Justice Policy and Implementation Plan, and Government Alliance on Race and Equity work, and it makes justice central to all the Commission’s efforts and decisions going forward. The Commission has a long-standing commitment to addressing injustices, particularly those faced by California’s Native Americans and people unjustly burdened by pollution of all kinds. Collaborating and partnering with tribal governments and communities allows the Commission to make land and resource management decisions that are rooted in respect and reciprocity.

Conservation and ecosystem stewardship require holistic approaches that invite and incorporate traditional ecological knowledges, rely on best available science, and ensure multidisciplinary collaboration across the state with tribal governments and communities, agencies, and other entities. Looking at state lands management from these multiple perspectives allows for more informed, equitable, and meaningful outcomes.

More than equity is being demanded of government. Communities facing unjust burdens from historic and ongoing marginalization must be included in decision-making and provided the tools and resources needed to thrive on their own terms. Extractive harms to communities in the name of profit must be curtailed and where economic value is created by Commission actions, an opportunity to benefit from that value, by those impacted, should be evaluated. Opportunities may include a focus on local employment, investment in community economic development enterprises, and participation in the community’s cultural and educational social infrastructure.

The Commission seeks to be a part of the needed transformation to build and support community capacity to respond to present and future challenges. It is important that all people and communities have an early and active voice in decisions that will impact them, and where extractive harms to communities in the name of profit are curtailed.”
Support of Tribal Self-Governance and Self-Determination

On June 18, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-15-19, which acknowledges and apologizes on behalf of the state for historical “violence, exploitation, dispossession and the attempted destruction of tribal communities” which dislocated California Native Americans from their ancestral land and sacred practices. This Executive Order established the California Truth and Healing Council, which bears witness to, records, examines existing documentation of, and receives California Native American narratives regarding the historical relationship between the State of California and California Native Americans.

This Update builds on the framework of mutual respect and meaningful partnership established by the Commission’s 2016 Tribal Consultation Policy, and additionally draws on recent statewide initiatives to address and reverse the destructive impacts from the historical violence, exploitation, dispossession, and the attempted destruction of Native people and culture. Supporting tribal self-determination, among other things, means the Commission commits to a continuous relationship; incorporating a Native American perspective component throughout its programs and activities is both comprehensive enough to address most Native concerns into planning activities, and flexible enough to consider viewpoints that need to be incorporated into specific project decisions.

Since time immemorial, California Native American Tribes have stewarded and managed the lands and resources in the region. Prior to the western contact that resulted in their decimation, tribal people existed in sophisticated societies throughout the state, implementing complex land and resource management practices as diverse as California’s myriad landscapes and ecosystems. These knowledges, acquired through direct experience and contact with the environment, and passed down through generations of elders, are foundational to sustainable and equitable management of California’s lands and resources. These knowledges are often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge. When the Commission refers to incorporating traditional ecological knowledges in its land and resource management practices and decisions, it means that the Commission will learn from and collaborate formally with California Native American Tribes on ways to integrate traditional ecological knowledges. In making these commitments, the Commission recognizes that acknowledging the indigenous peoples of the land it now manages must be more than a token gesture; that there must be intention and meaningful practice that seeks to undo the erasure and trauma experienced by indigenous people throughout colonial history and into the current day.

Through the framework of the 2016 Tribal Consultation Policy and 2018 Environmental Justice Policy, the Commission supports tribal self-determination and self-governance through formal consultation and meaningful engagement while also seeking opportunities for co-stewardship. For example, at its June 23, 2020 meeting, the Commission authorized issuance of a patent to the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation of approximately 38.75 acres of state-owned School Lands located north of Cartago, Inyo County. This action was the culmination of a successful government-to-government consultation and returned to tribal ownership land possessing significant cultural value to the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation. Currently, the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation relies on this site, and
many others in its ancestral territory, to remain connected to the Tribe’s ancestral and cultural history. Governor Newsom’s subsequently issued Statement of Administration Policy on Native American Ancestral Lands provides further momentum to continue to pursue opportunities for: agreements or memoranda to allow for access and co-management of natural lands; grantmaking for protection and management of natural lands; purchase or transfer of land to tribal ownership; and development of policies and practices to ensure preferential tribal access and use of ancestral lands. Taking actions like these increase equity and result in enhanced stewardship of Commission lands by improving tribal access to sacred sites and cultural resources; facilitating protected access for sustenance gathering, hunting, and fishing; providing increased opportunities for education, community and economic development, and investment in public health and infrastructure; and increasing the use of traditional ecological knowledges for effective land and resource management.

**Evolving Public Trust Principles and Values**

The Commission provides stewardship of the state’s sovereign lands in service to the people. This foundational responsibility includes requirements to protect Public Trust lands, access, the waters, and the integrity of the ecosystem for current and future generations. In practice, this means that before the Commission and its grantees make any decision to approve or deny any request for a lease, permit, or other action, this duty is preeminent and must satisfy the solemn and perpetual trust responsibility. While it has always been the rule, climate change is likely to amplify demands to balance two or more competing Public Trust uses and mitigate cumulative impacts so that the Public Trust and public uses are not impaired or subordinated to private or non-trust public uses. Climate change and the attendant frequency of extreme events will amplify stressors on both coastal and inland waterways and between competing Public Trust uses and private or non-trust consistent uses.

The Commission’s stated values and principles inform all its decisions; however, the values to be considered in weighing competing demands on the trust are not prescribed. The Commission must be prepared to respond to explicit requests to articulate how these values will be exercised.

**Post-Petroleum Era**

California is in the midst of a climate crisis due to the use of fossil fuels. The state has an abundant supply of crude oil and accounts for approximately 10 percent of the U.S. crude oil refining capacity. California’s most valuable oil and gas resources are primarily located in and adjacent to some of the state’s most spectacular waterways, beaches, and coastline. The Commission administers much of this land, and the controversy over how best to manage these lands has been ongoing since 1921, when the first oil and gas development was permitted.

To this day, non-tax revenues from oil and gas-related leases and trustee arrangements benefit the state’s general fund by multi-millions of dollars annually. Commission staff have been successful in both managing production leases and regulating various oil and gas transportation and processing facilities to prevent oil from entering California’s marine environment.

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Heightened concerns about potential environmental damage resulting from an oil spill, and the desire to avoid marring the coast with unsightly development, eventually outweighed the desire to generate revenue from new offshore development. In 1969, the Commission placed a moratorium on new oil and gas leases. Since that time, the Commission, over many administrations, has affirmed the need to discontinue oil and gas operations in California’s offshore areas. More recently, it has taken strong stances on moving the state towards the just transition from fossil fuel dependence.

Meanwhile, leases issued prior to 1969, and ancillary leases related to operations on federally administered offshore lands, continue to generate significant revenue. Some of those revenues are specifically allocated to oil spill prevention and monitoring for the existing operations.

Annual income to the state from oil and gas revenues already swings widely—by more than $50 million in just the last three years—as revenues mirror the rise and fall of oil and gas prices. Furthermore, as oil and gas wells diminish in number, the costs of extraction continue to rise. The industry itself has long-term plans to discontinue California operations as they become unprofitable.

The charge to the Commission in the coming decade is complex. Leveraging its vast land resources, it has the potential to repurpose existing infrastructure, advance green and blue sustainable energy opportunities, and to ensure environmental stewardship and fiscal integrity of any remaining oil and gas enterprises.

Renewable Economies and Sustainability

The state actively seeks to reduce the world’s dependency on fossil fuels. California has focused efforts to increase energy efficiency and implement alternative technologies. This combination has slowed the state’s growth in energy demand.Remarkably, even as the world's fifth-largest economy and with many energy-intensive industries, California remains one of the lowest per capita energy consumers.

The state has aggressively sought opportunities to utilize alternative energy sources and leads the nation as a top producer of renewable energy. Advancements in wind- and wave-energy, solar power, and battery storage capabilities have made green economy and blue economy possibilities more viable and productive.

The Commission-managed lands are working lands that under the Public Trust and the School Lands Trust provide multiple benefits to the people of California. While the Commission’s revenue generation historically constitutes just a small percentage of California’s overall general fund, adequate funding is essential to its operations and the programs that it supports. Implementing equitable revenue replacement sources—transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable and sustainable options—will help fund the Commission’s vital work well into the future.

Policy Configuration

The Commission is among many government bodies that share authority over a significant
portfolio of working lands in California. The fragmented and overlapping authority shared between federal, tribal, state, and local governments—not to mention multiple agencies within each of these governments—is often a barrier to more sustainable activities.

Businesses and organizations seeking authorization to use public lands must navigate a series of approval processes that can be unnecessarily complex, and in some cases, contradictory. These applicants seek better coordination among the agencies to improve efficiencies, reduce conflicting directives, and change practices to allow more effective and efficient use of resources. The Commission realizes that supporting and encouraging positive change is an underused regulatory approach that could drive remediation, justice, and climate resilience.

Many stakeholders see an opportunity for the Commission, with its vast landholdings and the extraordinary statewide stature of its members and its professional staff, to address conflicts. These stakeholders express a desire for the Commission to increase its policy influence on issues that are fragmented and are hopeful that the Commission has the reach and visibility to call for more effective outcomes. Stakeholders cite the need for collaboration across all levels of government and disciplines related to climate change, biodiversity, ocean health, forest management, green energy, water-dependent blue commerce, and other policy topics.

The Commission has long viewed collaboration and successful partnerships as a foundation for serving the people of California and achieving strategic goals. The Commission is a member of multiple state boards, commissions, and conservancies and a signatory to significant cooperative interagency agreements with state and federal agencies. The Commission is uniquely suited to serve as a convener and moderator of important alignment initiatives to improve the integration of policies and practices and how they are implemented.

Technological Advancements

Technology has advanced rapidly in the last decade, exemplified by evolving smart devices and their widespread use and enhanced cloud services. Adopting information technology at the Commission has focused on reducing IT-related security risks, enabling mobile work models, creating and managing digital content, automating business processes, providing useful decision support tools, and facilitating collaboration. The adoption of technology has been good, but has been limited by funding, internal technical expertise, and user acceptance.

The Commission must continue to support the same fundamental areas as in the past. Because everything the Commission does associates to a point on the ground, continued Geographic Information System (GIS)-based maps are vital to communicating visual information internally and to the public. Another technological area of focus includes continuously deliver tools, processes, and training to reduce information security risk as threats become more sophisticated and costly. An emphasis is put on mobility and the need to continue the transition to more reusable “build-to-order” cloud services, and to accelerate solutions for staff and public consumption that are accessible anytime and anywhere.

Another focus includes digital content to enhance the creation, storage, and usefulness of digitized content. Storage costs need to be managed, useful metadata implemented, richer search capabilities enabled, and more content created.
Sources of content will come from the digitization of paper, photo, and video content from drones and smart mobile devices. The Commission will continue to enhance automated processes to continuously identify, document, improve, and automate time-consuming and error-prone business processes. Both internal and public business processes need to be prioritized by value and costs. And technological focus will include decision support systems to continue implementing new business intelligence capabilities and GIS visual/modeling tools while emphasizing collaboration to continue implementing new tools, processes, and the adoption of collaboration tools.

**Workforce Investment**

Few expect the workplace of the last decade to be the same in 2021-2025. Traditional interactions and relationship building among staff and with partners, lessees, and stakeholders have been reconfigured in a time when affiliations and partnering may be more critical than ever. Staff will be called upon to create new forms of interactions and trust-building.

The skills and expertise of Commission staff are widely acknowledged. As one stakeholder put it, the Commission and its relatively small staff have always “punched above their weight.” As the Commission’s work and priorities change, its workforce will also be required to adapt and acquire new skills. Furthermore, longtime Commission staff are expected to retire during the next five years. Succession planning and transfer of knowledge for these personnel will be essential. These two factors together, while organizationally challenging, will also create new opportunities, including an opportunity to help existing, valued staff professionally grow and acquire new skills and diversify the workforce to better reflect California’s population.

The Commission will be called upon to reimagine the workplace and organizational structures will need to be adjusted to respond to new realities.
CALL TO ACTION

There has never been a time when the path forward has been so challenging. Climate change, the necessity for social and environmental justice, navigating an economy adjusting to a pandemic and evolving industries, and the unyielding need for stewardship and conservation of public lands are among the challenges to be addressed.

This time also offers technology able to swiftly change the way we communicate, evaluate, and respond to every level of experience. New developments have opened opportunities in green and blue industries that allow for continued economic growth that is both sustainable and thoughtful in regard to the communities where they take place. It is possible to manage resources and make changes that protect the environment, grow the economy, and uplift and empower communities, providing more equitable realities and brighter futures for all Californians.


These are words heard clearly—from our Commissioners, Governor Newsom, state leaders, Native Nations, stakeholders, lessees, grantees, Commission staff, and the people of California in every region and community statewide. These empowering words echo as constant reminders of what the Commission has the responsibility to do, what it has the opportunity to change, and the role it has as a governmental leader and visionary change maker in California.

The drivers of change present both challenges and opportunities. As is the case with many complex issues, the optimum response to one driver is often intersectional with responses to the other drivers. For example, strategic goals and actions addressing climate change and transitioning to a post-petroleum era will involve revisiting appropriate uses of Public Trust and School Lands and resources as well as balancing competing priorities, benefits, and impacts.

The Commission responds to this call to action with seven 2021-2025 strategic focus areas and accompanying goals:

1. Leading Climate Activism
2. Prioritizing Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
3. Partnering with Sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities
4. Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs
5. Leveraging Technology
6. Committing to Collaborative Leadership
7. Building a Reimagined Workforce

While Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs pertains specifically to Public Trust Lands, each of the other focus areas apply to both the Commission’s School Lands and Public Trust Lands. The following section outlines the Commission’s intentions in these focus areas for the next five years.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS

Leading Climate Activism

Climate change threatens the people, environment, communities, and economy of California. California leads the nation and the world with bold climate policies, and the Commission will do its part to contribute to tackling this global challenge. The Commission will work to advance California’s climate and clean energy legal and policy framework to:

1. Proactively address climate change by leveraging the lands and resources under its jurisdiction to:
   a. Justly transition activities responsible for carbon emissions.
   b. Seek and facilitate carbon neutral, renewable energy revenue-generation activities.
   c. Identify and evaluate the benefits and impacts around opportunities for carbon sequestration and participation in carbon markets.
   d. Support innovative emission-reduction strategies on state lands, including evaluating the potential of mitigation strategies, such as coastal restoration and protection.
   e. Identify opportunities to implement strategies on state lands that support climate adaptation and resilience, such as habitat protection and floodwater storage.

2. Partner, collaborate, and engage with sister agencies, tribal governments, lessees, grantees, communities, and stakeholders to:
   a. Evaluate all proposals for land use in the context of climate resilience and, where feasible, identify the need to analyze and map climate change impacts through studies such as vulnerability assessments and to assess and select adaptation strategies through adaptation plan.

b. Create unified and coordinated policies and actions that leverage the full force of the state’s expertise and assets.

c. Support land-use planning that considers options for climate migrants displaced from their homes and employment.

d. Enhance climate-resilient green infrastructure.

e. Identify opportunities for co-management of lands and invite and incorporate traditional ecological knowledges and cultural practices in the tool set for understanding and responding to climate change.

Prioritizing Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

The Commission affirms that incorporating environmental justice and equitable treatment into its current work is not sufficient to correct past practices and structural injustices. In addition to continuing implementation of the 2018 Environmental Justice Policy and Implementation Plan, the Commission will work to address injustice and remove institutional barriers by enhancing its existing environmental justice policies and to:

1. Evaluate all actions to proactively incorporate correction of historic actions that displaced populations and created structural inequities.
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS

1. Ensure engagement of affected communities in decision-making.
2. Prioritize projects contributing to community social and economic opportunity and lowered CalEnviroScreen scores.
3. Actively facilitate transactions resulting in co-management and repatriation of traditional lands.

2. Evolve relationships among projects, lands, and the communities in which they occur.
   a. Honor and accommodate access to traditionally important lands for cultural uses, including ceremonies and gatherings.
   b. Where feasible, incorporate lease requirements that ensure meaningful benefits to the regional community (i.e., Community Benefit Agreements) to:
      i. Affirm benefits from private enterprise will benefit the communities in which they occur.
      ii. Increase employment opportunities in disadvantaged communities.
      iii. Protect Public Trust and School Land resources.

Partnering with Sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities

The Commission respects and recognizes tribal self-determination and self-governance. Through the framework of the Commission’s 2018 Tribal Consultation Policy, the Commission will:

1. Proactively seek opportunities to partner with tribal governments and communities to:
   a. Uplift and incorporate traditional ecological knowledges into land and resource management practices and decisions.
   b. Facilitate collaborative discussions among tribal governments, sister agencies, and stakeholders.
2. Routinely evaluate, refine, and update tribal consultation and engagement strategies.
   a. Explore opportunities to educate Commission staff about the Commission’s Tribal Consultation Policy and respectful tribal engagement practices.
   b. Seek to institutionalize meaningful engagement and relationship-building with tribal governments and communities in the Commission’s policies and planning.

Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs

The Commission embraces an evolving Public Trust Doctrine that is reflective of a modern era and changing societal values and needs while also respecting the traditional principles of the Trust, including navigation, fisheries, and commerce. The Commission commits to proactively contributing to its fulfilment. The Commission will:

1. Work towards creating an outreach, communications, and implementation plan to improve understanding of the Public Trust and options to access its benefits. The plan will:
   a. Identify potential partnerships with institutions and organizations with shared
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS

b. Include targeted communication strategies for:
   i. Climate-vulnerable communities
   ii. Traditionally underserved communities
   iii. California Native American Tribes
   iv. Ports, harbor districts and local governments
   v. Water-dependent industries and businesses

2. Ensure informed decision-making for Commission actions by augmenting decision criteria to evaluate and address:
   a. Balancing of competing demands for Public Trust lands and resources.
   b. The essential role of the Public Trust in enriching the lives of the public and protecting the environment for future generations.
   c. The need to implement and execute environmentally conscious practices that support inclusive job growth, living wages, healthy communities, and a resilient economy.

3. Maintain fiscal integrity through transparency, accountability, and:
   a. Efficient and effective management of the revenue-generation portfolio.
      i. Continue efforts to utilize technology to reduce costs and automate routine functions.
   b. Identification of new, sustainable, and responsible revenue streams, including but not limited to:
      i. Evaluate potential for Commission-driven project requests for proposals with desired revenue-generating activities such as solar, geothermal, wind, and wave energy.
      ii. Investigate opportunities such as repurposing of lithium discharges from geothermal operations as an income stream.
   c. Improve methods for monitoring funding streams generated from the management of granted Public Trust lands and resources for which the Commission retains trust responsibilities.
   d. Address current and future risk and liabilities.

4. Convene collaborative dialogues to evaluate the need for policies that:
   a. Carefully examine existing and proposed nonrenewable extractive practices on state lands, for pursuing a just transition to renewables.
   b. Identify the appropriate response to significant land-use changes that may adversely affect public and private uplands as sea levels rise and the Commission’s jurisdiction increases.
   c. Enhance understanding of the Public Trust to increase advocacy for its appropriate use and protection.
   d. Support our grantees, lessees, tribal partners, stakeholders, and partners in their efforts to build thriveability and balance sustainability and equity with economic growth.

5. Explore community stewardship agreements and policies to engage the public in the management of public lands and resources and provide additional oversight and protections for Commission lands.
Leveraging Technology

The Commission recognizes that technology will be a key factor in responding to communication, analytical, and workforce requirements—particularly in an era where much of the work will be required to occur remotely. The Commission will align priorities and seek resources to continue technological advancement and innovation efforts that support and enhance the Commission’s mission by:

1. Expanding the use of virtual environments to extend communications and provide venues to inform and listen.
2. Expanding the creation and use of digital content to improve internal and public understanding of difficult issues with supporting data.
3. Capitalizing on new technologies and advancements to:
   a. Improve decision support
   b. Improve data security and risk reduction
   c. Improve process efficiency and enhanced staff support

Committing to Collaborative Leadership

The Commission, with its extraordinary trust assets and constitutional membership is uniquely positioned to provide statewide leadership in all the Strategic Focus areas. The Commission will exercise this leadership through the following actions:

1. Serve as a convenor and mediator of planning and policy dialogues to:
   a. Support statewide initiatives to improve climate change resilience and address environmental threats.
   b. Identify options and create joint, interagency, interdisciplinary actions to address the pressing concerns identified in the Commission’s strategic focus areas.
   c. Address conflicts in policy and planning to address difficulties experienced by

   resource managers and project proponents faced with state-imposed competing demands and requirements.

2. Advance innovation and create clarity of direction by offering continual, robust opportunities for stakeholder and public engagement, and institutionalizing this relationship building so that the process and relationships live through the Commission and not just through individual staff members or leaders.

“The Commission embraces an evolving Public Trust Doctrine that is reflective of a modern era and changing societal values and needs while also respecting the traditional principles of the Trust, including navigation, fisheries, and commerce. The Commission commits to proactively contributing to its fulfilment.”
Building a Reimagined Workforce

The coming decade will change the Commission’s ways and types of work. The Commission will:

1. Identify required new skill sets and determine options for:
   a. Classification adjustments
   b. Retraining
   c. Recruitment

2. Provide training and educational resources for staff related to evolving land and resource management best practices, renewable energy development, project management, the Environmental Justice Policy, the Tribal Consultation Policy, equity, and new or relevant issue areas to prepare and empower staff for emerging challenges.

3. Implement succession management and transfer-of-knowledge plans.

4. Evaluate the Commission organizational chart and reorganize as needed to reflect new work streams.

5. Implement increased use of multi-disciplinary approaches to existing and new work efforts to eliminate organizational silos and improve efficiency.
   a. Leverage use of field staff to facilitate improved monitoring of Commission assets.

6. Prevent overdependence on a small number of highly skilled staff for time-critical tasks.
   a. Create skills redundancy to increase the number of personnel available to support critical functions.
   b. Identify opportunities for job enrichment through cross training.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

After reading through the California State Lands Commission 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, you may have additional questions or want more information about the Commission’s land-management role and our programs. To make it easier for you to access material that is referenced in the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, we’ve created a landing page on our website with links to additional resources and related documents.

https://www.slc.ca.gov/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-2021-2025/

This website link will provide you with quick access to our Tribal Consultation Policy, Environmental Justice Policy, various Commission programs, as well as more information about the Public Trust Doctrine and the School Lands Trust. The Commission is eager to share this information with you in an effort to educate, inform, and to encourage participation in our ongoing work on behalf of the people of California.
The following table is a compiled list of sources from which all photos in this Strategic Plan can be credited.

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