

Staff Report 68 (Informational)

INTRODUCTION:

In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued [Executive Order N-82-20](#) which establishes a state goal of conserving 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. The [30x30 initiative](#) is intended to help accelerate conservation of California's lands and coastal waters through voluntary, collaborative action with partners across the state to meet three objectives: conserve and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change. California's 30x30 work is part of a larger global effort to increase biodiversity conservation. Currently, nine states have 30x30 goals: California, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, and Vermont. In 2025, Maryland became the first state to reach 30x30.

The [2022 Pathways to 30x30 Strategy](#) defines 30x30 Conservation Areas and provides a framework for accelerating conservation efforts throughout the state, highlighting key pathways to advance critical conservation actions. Pathways to 30x30 emphasizes and elevates the role of collaborative partnerships and voluntary efforts from land managers, communities, California Native American tribes, environmental stewards, and other partners in driving progress toward the 30x30 goal. In June 2025, the Ocean Protection Council released the [Roadmap to Achieving 30x30 in California's Coastal Waters](#), a science-based roadmap building on Pathways to 30x30 to define conservation in coastal waters and provide criteria for identifying 30x30 Conservation Areas in coastal waters.

California is at the halfway point for its 30x30 goals. According to the [2025 Annual Progress Update](#), released in July by the California Natural Resources Agency, California is on track to meet its goals, having conserved nearly 26.1 percent of land and 21.9 percent of coastal waters. The Commission is an active partner in the effort to protect and conserve the state's incredible biodiversity and manages nearly 200,000 acres of land that contribute to the state's 30x30 goal.

DEFINING AND TRACKING 30x30

As part of the 30x30 Initiative, the California Natural Resources Agency led an effort to identify 30x30 Conservation Areas that are defined as areas that are durably protected and managed. The State's [CA Nature](#) platform includes a suite of interactive mapping and visualization tools that track and visualize 30x30 Conservation Areas. The initial assessment of 30x30 Conservation Areas used existing classifications and designations made by federal, state, and local governments, pulling from best available datasets, including the [California Protected Areas Database](#), the [California Conservation Easements Database](#), and the [Protected Areas Database of the U.S.](#)

To be considered to count toward 30x30, lands and waters are assessed under the GAP Code System, a system developed by the [U.S. Geological Survey's GAP Analysis Project](#) and used in the Protected Areas Database of the U.S. The four - level classification system indicates the degree of biodiversity protection a particular area receives. GAP code 1 signifies the strongest protection measures on conserved lands, while GAP 4 indicates an area with no known directives to maintain natural conditions. Areas classified as GAP codes 1 and 2 are generally consistent with the definition of state's 30x30 Conservation Areas as they include areas with a high degree of durable protection and management for biodiversity and ecosystem values. Areas classified as GAP codes 3 and 4 are protected areas that largely support California's 30x30 objectives but may be subject to other activities that support economic, recreational, or military needs. Although not counted towards the 30x30 acreage totals, Other Effective Conservation Measures, such as urban tree canopies, native plant landscaping, community gardens, and wildlife crossings, are another important category of areas that support the state's biodiversity and conservation goals.

STATE LANDS COMMISSION'S PARTICIPATION

The California Natural Resources Agency conducted an initial assessment of 30x30 Conservation Areas in 2023, and in August 2024, requested that the Commission review an extensive dataset of Commission-managed lands that had been classified via the GAP Code System for accuracy and to identify additional 30x30 Conservation Areas. Staff reviewed over 300 parcels classified as 30x30 Conservation Areas and coordinated with the California Natural Resources Agency

to clarify interpretations of durable protections in the context of the Commission's authority and obligations.

Staff reviewed the dataset and determined that the areas classified as GAP 1 and 2, nearly 200,000 acres, aligned with the state's definition for 30x30 Conservation Areas. Most of these lands are unleased school lands near and adjacent to federally protected lands, such as Bureau of Land Management Wilderness areas, Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, and Inyo National Forest. Leased lands included as counting toward 30x30 include lands leased to public agencies, such as California State Parks, for the Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park in Big Sur and to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the Fagan Slough Ecological Reserve. Other Commission-issued leases on 30x30 Conservation Areas authorize facilities, such as transmission cables and railroads, and activities, such as grazing, that are compatible with the state's 30x30 objectives and criteria.

As part of staff's continued collaboration with the California Natural Resources Agency and contribution to the 30x30 initiative, staff attended the [30x30 partnership summit](#) in San Diego on August 14, 2025. The summit, commemorating the 30x30 halfway point, included presentations, discussions, and connections with 30x30 champions throughout the state. The themes were sustain, strengthen, and succeed.

NEXT STEPS:

The state's 30x30 Initiative seeks to conserve and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change—objectives that strongly align with the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy and efforts to advance climate resilience. Staff continues to support 30x30 and are assessing Commission-managed lands classified as GAP Code 3 and 4 Is to determine whether there are candidates for 30x30 Conservation Areas. Staff are also developing an internal process for efficiently tracking and updating the status of 30x30 Conservation Areas when necessary. Staff intend to develop a set of internal criteria to use for assessing lease activities that could be compatible with 30x30 and work to identify activities to support the state's 30x30 goal through Other Effective Conservation Measures.