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Staff Report 61 (Informational)

INTRODUCTION:

Since 2015 the Commission has utilized formal Strategic Plans to establish long-term priorities, guide organizational direction, and support the Commission's mission to responsibly manage California's public lands and natural resources. To ensure these plans meet the current needs of the Commission, the State, and the people of California, the Commission's Strategic Plan is updated at 5-year intervals.

The most recent Strategic Plan covered the period of 2021 – 2025, and over the last eight months Commission staff have been in the process of preparing a new strategic plan that will run through 2031. This staff report will review staff's efforts and progress in preparing the 2027-2031 Strategic Plan, give an overview of the basic framework of this plan, and outline the next steps in this effort.

DISCUSSION:

The Commission formally adopted its first Strategic Plan in 2015 ([Item 117, December 18, 2025](#)). This plan was the culmination of significant stakeholder collaboration and identified four strategic goals. These goals were developed for the purpose of positioning the Commission as a leader in land and resource management, prioritizing transparency, promoting environmental protection, and leveraging technology to more effectively serve the people of California.

Subsequently, the [2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan](#) built upon the progress achieved under the previous plan and identified emerging challenges and opportunities for the Commission to focus on during the plan's period. This plan did an excellent job of leveraging stakeholder participation to identify drivers of change and included ambitious goals to address emerging issues faced by the Commission.

During this plan's period staff did an admirable job of advancing the plan's goals; however, staff also recognized a disconnect between the plan's more aspirational

targets and staff's work. Therefore, the 2027 – 2031 Strategic Plan effort has sought to build on the progress of the previous plan and maintain the Commission's momentum as a leader in addressing both current and future resource management challenges while also recentring the new Strategic Plan through a staff-led effort.

To that end, the current Strategic Plan endeavor began with an invite for interested staff to participate as part of the Strategic Plan team. This team first convened in February and has met regularly since then to ensure the planning effort continues to be guided by staff feedback. In addition to this larger planning team, a smaller cohort of volunteer Strategic Plan leads have endeavored to keep the planning effort on track and continuously worked to develop the plan with an emphasis on incorporating staff's input.

The Strategic Plan team's early meetings led to the development of a survey that was sent out to all staff in an attempt to better understand staff's opinions about the 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan, and staff's views on what the new strategic plan should focus on. This survey provided the planning team with invaluable data and was fundamental in the development of the new plan's foundation.

In the intervening months, the Strategic Plan team has engaged in an iterative development process that has included numerous rounds of brainstorming, drafting, presentation, feedback, and revision. The result of this effort is a framework for the final plan, focus areas grounded in staff input, and goals that reflect the concerns of a unified Commission team.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Commission's 2021 – 2025 Strategic Plan recognized that the rapidly changing world around us represents a call to action, and that the Commission has both a responsibility and a unique opportunity to answer this call. In response to the opportunities identified during this plan's development, the plan established a framework with seven strategic focus areas and accompanying goals intended to address challenges faced by the Commission. Building on this framework, the new Strategic Plan will use a similarly nested series of Focus Areas, Goals, Objectives, and Milestones to guide the Commission's energies through 2031.

Focus Areas: The new Strategic Plan's arrangement will begin with Focus Areas. These Focus Areas reflect major themes that will shape the Commission's work over the plan's duration. These broad themes will define the overarching areas where

the Commission will concentrate its efforts and resources through 2031. These focus areas also represent fundamental components of the Commission's mission that have been central to our work in the past and will likely continue to be core elements of the Commission's mission well beyond the 2027 – 2031 strategic plan.

Goals: Following the Focus Areas, the next level within the plan's framework will be Goals. The Goals represent desired outcomes within the Focus Areas and illustrate what success will look like at the end of the plan's period. Multiple Focus Areas may be represented in specific goals.

Objectives: In turn, each Goal will have associated Objectives. The Objectives provide specific, actionable steps that staff will use to achieve the Goals. Fulfilling the Objectives will lead to accomplishment of each Goal.

Milestones: Finally, the Objectives will have related Milestones. The Milestones are specific progress indicators that will help staff track advancement toward accomplishing the Objectives and, through these, each Goal.

An example of how these Focus Areas, Goals, Objectives, and Milestones will be organized is provided in the attached Exhibit A.

EXHIBIT:

A. Draft Outline with Focus Areas and Example Goals, Objectives, and Milestones

NEXT STEPS:

As staff continues developing the Strategic Plan, the next steps will be to engage with the public and Tribal communities to ensure the plan is responsive to the needs and concerns of all stakeholders. This engagement will take the form of two general listening sessions for anyone interested in providing input and five targeted Tribal round tables to ensure that Tribal nations and communities are given ample opportunity to participate in the plan's development.

These listening sessions and round tables will be held over the rest of 2026. Following these outreach efforts, staff will integrate public input to ensure that both public and staff feedback guide the plan's final version. A draft Strategic Plan will then be made available in early 2027 for Commission and public review. This draft plan will be open for public comment for at least 30 days, following which staff will make any necessary revisions based on received comments before presenting a final

Strategic Plan for Commission approval. It is anticipated that the final Strategic Plan will be presented to the Commission for approval in April 2027, subject to change based on the Commission's meeting schedule.

Exhibit A

California State Lands Commission

Strategic Plan 2027–2031

**Draft Outline with Focus Areas and Example Goal,
Objectives, and Milestones**

Strategic plan arrangement

The 2027 – 2031 strategic plan is arranged into four levels moving from broad concepts to detailed progress indicators. From broadest to most detailed, these levels are: Focus Areas, Goals, Objectives, and Milestones.

- **Focus Areas:** The Focus Areas reflect major themes that will shape the Commission's work during the 2027-2031 strategic plan period. These broad themes will define where the Commission concentrates its efforts and resources during the plan's period.
- **Goals:** The Goals are the next level in the Strategic Plan's arrangement and represent desired outcomes within the Focus Areas. These goals illustrate what success would look like at the end of the plan's period.
- **Objectives:** The Objectives exist within each Goal and provide specific, actionable steps to achieve the Goals. As the objectives are fulfilled, the Goals will be accomplished.
- **Milestones:** Finally, the Objectives have related Milestones. The Milestones are specific progress indicators that will help the Commission track its progress toward accomplishing the Objectives and, though these, the Goals.

Strategic Plan Elements

Focus Areas

1. Responsible and Sustainable Stewardship
2. Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs
3. Partnering with Sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities
4. Optimizing Operational Performance

Example Goals, Objectives, and Milestones

Goal: Improve Tribal engagement and advance pathways for Tribal Nations to utilize state lands

Relevant Focus Areas:

- Partnering with Sovereign Tribal Governments and Communities
- Responsible and Sustainable Stewardship

Objectives

- Commit to Tribal awareness and outreach across operations.
 - Embed recognition of Tribal Nation interests into organizational practices and ensure early, often, and meaningful engagement with Tribal Nations throughout the decision-making process. Reinforce the Commission's Tribal Consultation Policy and state priorities.
- Expand Tribal access, stewardship, and partnership opportunities.
 - Support Tribal Nations interested in access, stewardship, utilization, restoration, and shared management of state lands and resources. Expand educational outreach and implement practices that support effective partnerships.

Milestones

- Strengthen staff understanding of Tribal sovereignty, government-to-government relationships, Tribal cultural resources, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge; provide all staff with training on these topics within 24 months.
 - Related Objective: Commit to Tribal awareness and outreach across operations.
- Provide internal staff guidance on respectful Tribal engagement.
 - Related Objectives: Commit to Tribal awareness and outreach across operations.
- Incorporate Tribal Liaison engagement into the early stages of staff's application processing.
 - Related Objectives: Commit to Tribal awareness and outreach across operations; Expand Tribal access, stewardship, and partnership opportunities.

- Optimize contracting workflows for Tribal partners, including utilization of Article 13 and the addition of on-call Tribal consultants.
 - Related Objectives: Commit to Tribal awareness and outreach across operations; Expand Tribal access, stewardship, and partnership opportunities.

Goal: Proactively lead evolution of the Public Trust Doctrine

Relevant Focus Areas:

- Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs
- Responsible and Sustainable Stewardship

Objectives

- Advance integration of Public Trust protections with environmental justice, Tribal justice, and other equity initiatives.
 - Explore ways to incorporate Public Trust protections with equity initiatives in lease terms and through guidance to grantees of Public Trust lands to ensure the Commission's stewardship reflects modern Public Trust needs and equitable access for all Californians.
- Modernize and clarify Public Trust protections to reflect contemporary public needs and development patterns.
 - Update understanding of Public Trust needs on both submerged and filled lands to help balance competing demands for these lands while ensuring Public Trust protections are maintained.
- Explore how the Public Trust Doctrine can support sea level rise adaptation and other critical climate resiliency efforts.
 - Examine the relationship between Public Trust principles, sea level rise adaptation, climate-resilient land management, and nature-based solutions to facilitate adaptation and sustainability of Public Trust lands and resources.

Milestones

- Create a guidance document regarding development on Public Trust lands with the goal of improving stakeholder knowledge to facilitate the implementation of Public Trust consistent development that

increases coastal resiliency and equitable access to Public Trust resources.

- Related Objective: Explore how the Public Trust Doctrine can support sea level rise adaptation and other critical climate resiliency efforts.
- Hold at least one engagement session per year to connect with environmental justice and Tribal communities, and legislative grantees of Public Trust lands to gather information on their needs and to provide education on the Public Trust Doctrine.
 - Related Objectives: Advance integration of Public Trust protections with environmental justice, Tribal justice, and other equity initiatives; Modernize and clarify Public Trust protections to reflect contemporary public needs and development patterns.
- Work with stakeholders to secure increased public access to Public Trust lands across at least 25 linear miles of these lands by 2031, with a focus on environmental justice and Tribal communities.
 - Related Objective: Advance integration of Public Trust protections with environmental justice, Tribal justice, and other equity initiatives.
- Provide a guidance document clarifying permissible uses on Public Trust lands to improve stakeholder understanding regarding the interplay of Public Trust protections and uses on Public Trust lands.
 - Related Objectives: Modernize and clarify Public Trust protections to reflect contemporary public needs and development patterns; Explore how the Public Trust Doctrine can support sea level rise adaptation and other critical climate resiliency efforts.
- Prioritize coordination with partner agencies for review of multi-benefit projects that provide critical shoreline resiliency and protection of Public Trust lands and resources.
 - Related Objectives: Modernize and clarify Public Trust protections to reflect contemporary public needs and development patterns; Explore how the Public Trust Doctrine can support sea level rise adaptation and other critical climate resiliency efforts.