

# California Central Coast Joint Venture C3JV

## Strategic Scoping Document

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### Long-Range Vision of Success

Conservation now means that in 30 years the Central Coast of California will support a diversity of ecosystems, vibrant bird and other wildlife populations, and healthy human communities.

### Our Mission

The California Central Coast Joint Venture will support collaborative and coordinated science, policy, management, restoration, education, and protection to ensure the long-term ecological and economic health of the Central Coast region.

### Geography

The California Central Coast Joint Venture ranges from the Pacific Coast side of San Mateo County in the north to Ventura County in the south, from the interior coast range to 200 nautical miles out to sea (including the Northern Channel Islands).

### Why establish a California Central Coast Joint Venture?

The C3JV is collaborative partnership made up of organizations and individuals that share a common commitment to the conservation of the ecosystems of the Central Coast.

**Importance of the region.** The Central Coast region has superlative ecological diversity with habitat types that include coniferous old-growth forests, oak woodlands, grasslands, chaparral, coastal scrub, riparian forests, dunes, sloughs, and estuaries. Just off shore, the California Current supplies nutrient-rich water to some of the world's most productive marine and island ecosystems. Tourists from around the world are attracted to the area due to its outstanding natural beauty, rich history, and culture. The agriculturally developed Salinas, Pajaro, Santa Maria, and Ventura valleys are among the most fertile and economically productive in the nation. Ranching and rangelands produce much more than food, they capture and retain the water we all rely on, sequester carbon, and provide essential wildlife habitat. The productive marine ecosystems support large commercial and recreational fisheries as well as numerous ecotourism opportunities like whale watching, diving, and kayaking. The dividends of this rich coastal environment are high biological diversity, essential ecosystem services, and vital economies.

**Threats to the region.** California's Central Coast faces an array of interacting threats. With predicted climate change impacts added to the stressors of habitat conversion, invasive species, disease, pollution, and the exploitation of natural resources we face new challenges to

the economic, cultural and ecological well-being on the Central Coast. Key threats to the region include:

- **Sea level rise** imperils ecosystems such as rocky intertidal, beaches, coastal wetlands, and estuaries and at the same time poses great risks to our human communities through flooding, erosion, and impacts to infrastructure.
- **Diminished water quantity and quality**, from increasing demands, changing hydrological patterns, and pollution, impacts virtually everything we do in the Central Coast, from agricultural production to safe and adequate drinking water to healthy ecosystems.
- **Extreme weather patterns** resulting from a changing climate will bring more powerful storms and more severe and frequent drought and will change timing and intensity of precipitation events which will threaten agricultural viability, human safety, wildlife, and ecosystems in the region.
- **Land conversion**, whether from development or as a result of food safety practices that eliminate both native and non-native vegetation, causes a wide variety of issues including habitat and species loss, increased erosion, loss of water infiltration, and decreased water quality.
- **Wildfire severity and frequency**, a result of suppression and climate change, put communities in the wildland-urban interface at risk, increase flooding and erosion, damage ecosystems, and threaten many species.

**Multiple benefit solutions.** We all need safe and healthy food, clean and abundant water, and functioning natural ecosystems. Hence the need for projects that address multiple goals is clear and pressing. Multiple benefit solutions are those that address natural and human communities and acknowledge the value and interdependence of human dominated and natural systems simultaneously for the ecological, economic, and cultural qualities they provide. These include recreation, tourism, flood control, carbon sequestration, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, and fisheries.

**A partnership approach.** A partnership approach will increase the impact of an individual agency's, organization's, or land steward's ability to achieve conservation goals through a coordinated approach that creates synergies and efficiencies. The C3JV will reach out to and coordinate with complimentary partnership efforts such as the California Landscape Conservation Cooperative, the Southwest Climate Science Center, and the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition as well as a wide array of agencies and organizations to ensure our work fits into a larger context. Specifically C3JV aims to attract additional resources and funding to the region that will:

- Develop and compile region-wide baseline/current condition information
- Identify and prioritize conservation needs
- Coordinate ecological restoration and management for multiple benefit results
- Cultivate and prioritize conservation research
- Monitor project impacts for effectiveness

**Proven track record.** United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Joint Ventures, created as part of the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan, have been highly successful and are considered a national model for delivering habitat and bird conservation built upon a foundation of sound science, solid research, commitment, and cooperation. For example, as of February 2011, the 21 established Joint Venture partnerships have leveraged public and private resources to secure and invest \$5 billion on conservation of 17.3 million acres of habitat.

The C3JV aims to bring this effective approach of collaborative conservation to the species, ecosystems, and people of the Central Coast.

**Niche.** There is currently no USFWS Joint Venture serving the Central Coast region of California. The Central Coast needs a *coordinated* effort to set conservation targets, assess the impact of environmental change (e.g., the impacts of sea-level rise, water availability/quality, fire frequency/severity, and likely land use changes over specific time frames), and identify, implement and monitor management actions aimed at enhancing wildlife, ecosystems, and the benefits we derive from them to sustain both ecologic integrity and the vibrant economies the region is known for. Such an effort, as proposed by the formation of a C3JV, will also serve to leverage funding and other opportunities to advance conservation in the region.

**Is the CC3JV a USFWS Joint Venture?** Not yet, though this document represents a move in that direction. Traditional bird habitat Joint Ventures are part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Migratory Bird program and were initiated as non-regulatory, multi-partner collaboratives to achieve the conservation goals of the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Today the Joint Venture mission has expanded to include all native birds and the habitats they rely on with 18 habitat and 3 species-based Joint Ventures that cover nearly all of the US and Canada as well as the northern half of Mexico. These Joint Ventures receive operational funding from the USFWS with specific bird and habitat conservation achievements expected each year.

While the conservation of birds, and the use of birds as indicators of ecosystem health and environmental change, will be a key facet to the C3JV, we recognize the importance of developing conservation solutions for a wide range of resource issues that have multiple benefits for all wildlife and people. A multi-species/resource approach is somewhat novel for USFWS Joint Ventures but not unprecedented as several existing Joint Ventures address issues pertinent to but not directly targeted at birds.

Like the other USFWS Joint Ventures, the C3JV will be a self-directed collaborative partnership of government agencies, tribes, non-government organizations, corporations, and individuals. A Joint Venture's activities typically fall into the following six categories:

- Biological/ecological planning and prioritization
- Project development and implementation
- Monitoring, evaluation, adaptive management and applied research
- Communication, coordination, education and outreach
- Policy input and coordination

- Fundraising in support of the above

### **What can the partner organizations of the C3JV accomplish?**

Working collaboratively, some examples of what we can accomplish together include:

- Establish, employ and report on a common set of measurable multi-benefit conservation targets for the region to drive adaptive management, policy, and funding into the future.
- Inform, prioritize, and deliver coordinated land- and seascape-scale conservation for all natural resources, from water and air to wildlife and plants.
- Identify and employ surrogate species as indicators of change (climate, land use, fisheries, and other impacts).
- Develop programs that work directly with urban centers to promote, highlight and support multi-benefit conservation projects through improved education about the nature and impacts of human disturbances to birds and other wildlife resources on land and in the water.
- Assess and develop mitigation and adaptation strategies for future impacts of climate change on key current and future conservation areas including the impacts of sea-level rise, drought, fire regime, flooding, and invasive species on habitats and species.
- Develop research and incentive-based landowner programs to address concerns regarding the balance between food safety, water quantity and quality, and the long-term viability of agriculture with wildlife communities.
- Promote efforts with stakeholders in the agricultural community to identify sustainable and economically viable approaches toward improving water quality and quantity, and addressing overall watershed function on the Central Coast.

### **What are the next steps?**

1. Secure funds to hire a full-time coordinator for a minimum of two years. To be successful, the C3JV needs a dedicated coordinator to keep momentum, ensure tasks are complete, write proposals, and coordinate information and action.
2. Formalize an organizational framework within the Core Partners Group to codify how decisions are made, establish a steering committee, and guide collaboration.
3. Develop a concept and scope of work for an “Implementation Plan” that will:
  - a. Characterize the biodiversity, ecosystem services, land use patterns, and management responsibilities on the Central Coast;
  - b. Assess threats to the region’s ecologic and economic values;
  - c. Set measurable short- and long-term conservation targets;
  - d. Examine how local- to global threats will impact the conservation values/targets of the Central Coast, and forecast long-term responses in the landscape; and
  - e. Identify conservation opportunities and actions, from site-specific to regional scales that will facilitate adaptation to climate change and ensure protection of conservation values and stable economies.
4. Secure funds to hire a contractor to draft the Implementation Plan and coordinate process to get input from all partners.



General Geographic Scope of C3JV. Final geographic scope will be agreed upon by surrounding JVs and National JV office.