CAL CAP

California Landscape Conservation and Adaptation Partnership

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Collaborative Landscape Conservation in a Changing World

Photo Courtesy of Gordon-Reedy

Photo Courtesy of Point Blue Conservation Science

VISION

California supports diverse and thriving ecosystems through lasting collaborative conservation partnerships.

MISSION

To foster integrated land- and seascape conservation and climate adaption strategies to benefit California's exceptional biodiversity and human communities.

FIVE-YEAR GOAL

We will foster cross-sector collaborations, which enable partners to work towards securing California's biodiversity in the face of climate change and other major stressors, tackling challenges that are too large or complex for any one individual partner to address alone, while also prioritizing efforts that provide benefits to all Californians.

INTRODUCTION

The California Landscape Conservation and Adaptation Partnership (CALCAP) is an alliance of public and private land managers and scientists committed to solving natural resource challenges that are too large or complex for any single entity to meaningfully tackle alone. CALCAP focuses on climate change with the goal of conserving California's exceptional biodiversity and fostering healthy landscapes and communities for all Californians. Recognizing that successfully addressing these challenges requires diverse perspectives, CALCAP will strive to broaden the range of participants to be inclusive of voices representing Tribes, environmental justice groups, and others.

CALCAP acknowledges that the condition and health of our natural resources are rapidly changing in ways that are unexpected and unfamiliar due to climate change, and that addressing these challenges requires existing and novel conservation approaches. Our approach to conservation goes beyond providing best management practices and includes creating the conditions whereby conservation can be creative, relationships are diverse and strong, goals are inclusive, progress toward collective goals are assessed and efforts evolve adaptively, multiple perspectives are heard, and responsibility is shared.

CALCAP believes in:

- Creativity and synergy through the sharing of all types of expertise and technical skills, including local knowledge and indigenous traditions,
- A dynamic and responsive approach to conservation based in experimentation and learning,
- Information sharing, access, accountability, and transparency, and
- Bringing people together to create interdisciplinary, cross-boundary solutions to benefit California's natural and human communities.

This Strategic Plan provides a pathway for CALCAP members to take actions that help them meet their individual missions and goals while contributing to a cohesive strategy for greater conservation impact in the nation's most biodiverse state.

DISTINCTIVE CAPABILITIES

CALCAP's distinctive capabilities of convening, linking science and management, and identifying innovative and creative approaches to climate change adaptation provide an essential service within California's conservation community. Many agencies, organizations, networks, and partnerships are actively engaged in natural resource conservation and, in this context, CALCAP aims to provide added value by focusing on its distinctive capabilities to the benefit of all efforts and initiatives.

Photo Courtesy of Jenny Erbes

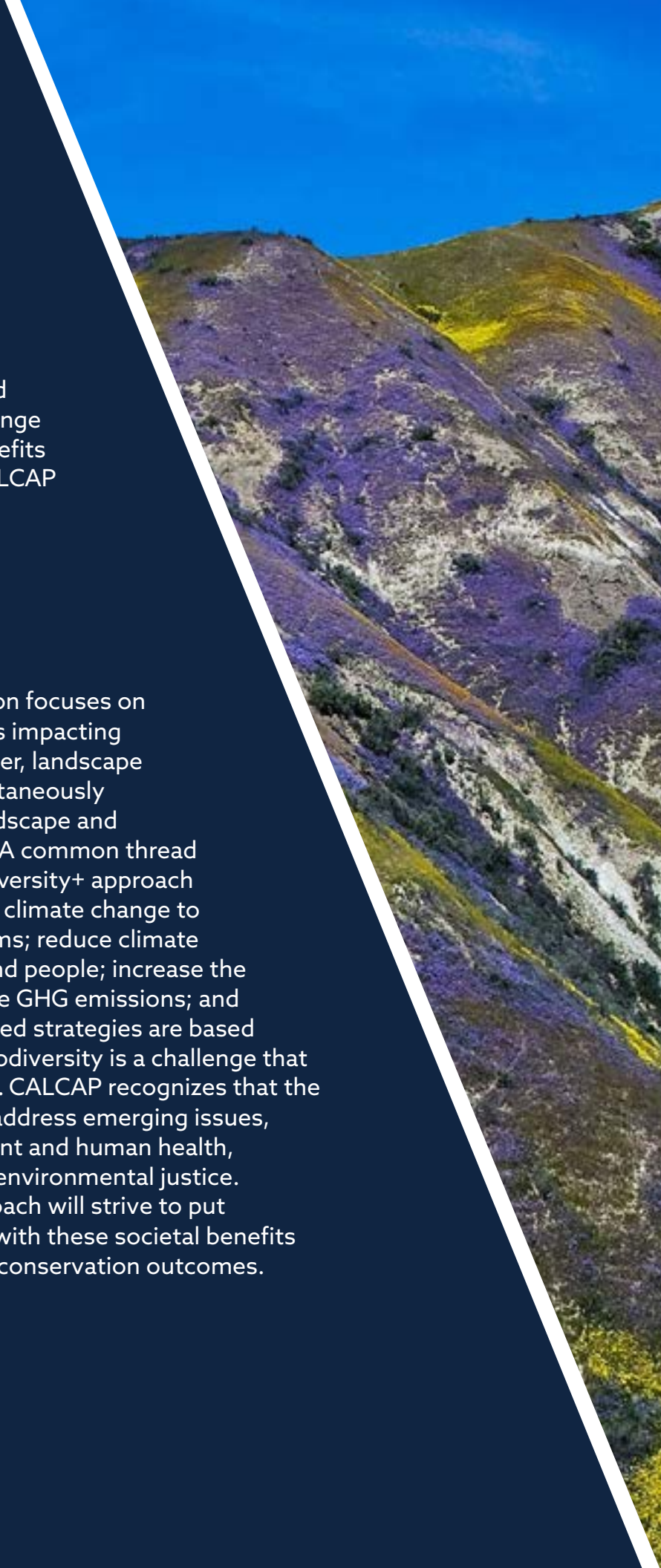
DISTINCTIVE CAPABILITY		DESCRIPTION
CONVENING	Strong Partner Ecosystem	CALCAP has a committed membership and an even larger network of partners with a track record of active participation. CALCAP cultivates these partnerships and seeks to build new ones.
	Assembling Voices	CALCAP provides a forum for and enables its network partners to have discussions and share ideas on the climate-smart conservation of biodiversity that are relevant to their work and will help them achieve their missions.
	Relevant Topics	The collective CALCAP mind brings highly relevant, thought-provoking topics to the network to stimulate discussions that will lead to conservation action.
LINKING SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT	Network Breadth and Depth	The members of CALCAP are scientists, resource managers, and other professionals engaged in conserving California's natural resources who bring multiple perspectives on how science and resource management can best interact. This includes people who are "on-the-ground" practitioners with expertise on what works and what is needed, applied scientists from boundary-spanning organizations, and people with deep knowledge of policy around resource management.
	Sharing	CALCAP promotes the sharing of information in a variety of ways, including in-person, presentations and webinars, and the Climate Commons online platform. Such sharing will allow for collaborative learning, discovery, and conservation action.
CREATING INNOVATIVE CONSERVATION STRATEGIES	Safe Space	CALCAP provides a safe, judgement-free forum where the network members can take risks with new ideas and concepts without impacting the strategy or culture of any individual entity. Some of these ideas may challenge current conservation norms and practices.
	Innovation	There is collective acknowledgment that new ideas and technologies may be needed to develop solutions that can result in more successful conservation outcomes.

GUIDING THEME

CALCAP is focusing on the theme of biodiversity, and in particular the need to address the impacts of climate change and to include additional societal benefits of our collective work – a concept CALCAP refers to as "Biodiversity+."

CLIMATE-SMART BIODIVERSITY+

The CALCAP approach to conservation focuses on Biodiversity+, which addresses issues impacting biodiversity, ecosystem services, water, landscape connectivity, and wildfire while simultaneously considering the benefits of these landscape and seascape features to all Californians. A common thread that connects all aspects of the Biodiversity+ approach is the need to address the impacts of climate change to sustain vibrant and diverse ecosystems; reduce climate change impacts on plants, wildlife, and people; increase the ability of ecosystems to adapt; reduce GHG emissions; and enhance carbon sinks. These integrated strategies are based on the knowledge that conserving biodiversity is a challenge that cannot be solved by any single entity. CALCAP recognizes that the realm of conservation is evolving to address emerging issues, such as links between the environment and human health, sustainable development goals, and environmental justice. Hence, CALCAP's Biodiversity+ approach will strive to put biodiversity conservation in context with these societal benefits to achieve greater and more durable conservation outcomes.



THE CHALLENGE

Human population growth, invasive species, habitat loss and fragmentation, and altered fire and water regimes are impacting California's ecosystems every day. Climate change is already exacerbating these issues – there are tangible, large-scale expressions of human-caused climate change happing every day in California. (e.g., wildfire). Further, as climate change accelerates over the coming decades, the effects on California will become even more evident.

We are now dealing with increasingly frequent and extreme wildfire, unprecedented land subsidence, large-scale tree die-offs, mass insect declines, sea level rise, devastating drought, and so much more. These same issues not only impact biodiversity and ecosystem function, they also have profound negative impacts on human health and wellbeing, especially among California's under-resourced communities.

CALCAP can harness its powers of convening, linking science and management, and innovating adaptation strategies to improve conservation success in the face of climate change and other stressors by improving resilience and adaptability of vulnerable species and ecosystems. Amid these challenges, collaborative, large-scale efforts will be critical for successfully sustaining biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems within California.

Photo Courtesy of Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Transit to Trails Program

COMPLEX AND EVOLVING CALIFORNIA

California has greater biological diversity than any other state in the U.S. and is a global biodiversity hotspot. Not only is California home to more plants and animals than any other state, it also has the highest number of endemic – or unique – species. Because these endemic species are found nowhere else in the world, their fate rests exclusively with California's conservation efforts. California's natural landscape is also incredibly diverse, with a myriad of ecological communities, including low deserts, mountain meadows, grasslands, rivers, redwood forests, rocky coastlines, submarine canyons, and so much more. Such exceptional diversity supports the well-being of all Californians and is a measure of the state's biological wealth.

Simply put, California's exceptional biodiversity is a product of the complexity and variability of its climate, soils, landforms, and geographic position. Such complexity has created conditions for the development of a wide array of specialized habitat types and has been the principal driver in the evolution of a highly distinctive flora and fauna.

California is complex in other important ways. It is the most populous and one of the most culturally diverse states in

the nation, with a population projected to reach 50 million by the middle of this century. California's economy is incredibly diverse and is the largest in the United States – the fifth largest in the world. California is the number one agricultural producer in the country, and its farmers and ranchers produce more than 400 agricultural commodities.

Despite biological, cultural, and economic wealth, California has the dubious distinction of being tied with Florida and Louisiana for the highest poverty rate in the nation. Many of the disadvantaged communities in California are without access to safe drinking water, and some are exposed to the worst air quality in the nation.

The state's massive economy, diverse industries, and projected growth demand investments in transportation, housing, water, sewage treatment, communications, education, public health, and so much more. At the same time, California has ambitious goals to address climate adaptation and mitigation and is embarking on a path to secure the future of its native biodiversity.

To achieve diverse, complex goals, California has developed and is developing important guiding documents. To optimize solutions, capitalize on synergies, and minimize impacts from conflicting strategies, there is a need to look across plans to expose commonalities and conflicts to create a resilient California.

EXAMPLES OF THE DIVERSE AND IMPORTANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS IN CALIFORNIA

SAN DIEGO MULTISPECIES CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The Multiple Species Conservation Program was developed to preserve a network of habitat and open space, protecting biodiversity and enhancing the region's quality of life. This plan was the first of numerous Natural Community Conservation Planning efforts in California. It was developed by the City of San Diego and other cities in partnership with resource agencies.

CALIFORNIA 2030 NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This draft implementation plan is a collaborative effort by the California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Environmental Protection Agency, California Air Resources Board, and Strategic Growth Council. It aims to coordinate all natural and working lands programs under a united approach that will move us toward our combined goal of maintaining a resilient carbon sink and improved air and water quality, water quantity, wildlife habitat, recreation, and other benefits.

CALIFORNIA STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

The State Wildlife Action Plan examines the health of wildlife and prescribes actions to conserve wildlife and vital habitat before they become rarer and more costly to protect. The plan also promotes wildlife conservation while furthering responsible development and addressing the needs of a growing human population.

SAFEGUARDING CALIFORNIA PLAN

The state's roadmap for everything state agencies are doing and will do to protect communities, infrastructure, services, and the natural environment from climate change impacts. This holistic strategy primarily covers state agencies' programmatic and policy responses across different policy areas, but it also discusses the ongoing related work with coordinated local and regional adaptation action and developments in climate impact science.

FOREST CARBON PLAN

The Forest Carbon Plan considers opportunities to establish California's forests as a more resilient and reliable long-term carbon sink, rather than a greenhouse gas and black carbon emission source. The plan provides multiple strategies to promote healthy and resilient wildland and urban forests that protect and enhance forest carbon and the broader range of public benefits from all forests in California.

CALIFORNIA ESSENTIAL HABITAT CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

The California Department of Transportation and California Department of Fish and Wildlife commissioned this project acknowledging that a functional network of connected wildlands is essential to the continued support of California's diverse natural communities in the face of human development and climate change. The project is intended to make transportation and land-use planning more efficient and less costly, while helping reduce dangerous wildlife-vehicle collisions.

WATER RESILIENCE PORTFOLIO

The California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture will work to identify and assess a suite of complementary actions to ensure safe and resilient water supplies, flood protection, and healthy waterways for the state's communities, economy, and environment. The portfolio will integrate and build on programs, policies, and investments already in place to build a climate-resilient water system.

STRATEGIC PLAN TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA'S COAST AND OCEAN

A plan by the California Ocean Protection Council that envisions all California communities enjoying thriving ecosystems, clean water, healthy food, secure infrastructure, ready public access to the coast and ocean, and an inclusive blue economy that advances ecosystem health, offers meaningful work, and reverses past injustices.

Photo Courtesy of Darian Spencer

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND ACTIONS

The following objectives, strategies, and actions[1] provide CALCAP members with the direction needed to make progress toward the Five-Year Goal by leaning into the collective capabilities of convening, linking science and management, and creating new climate adaptation strategies.

CALCAP acknowledges that any strategic plan will be challenged by a dynamic world, one where political winds shift, new policies emerge or recede, and societal priorities evolve. Hence CALCAP is committed to an adaptive planning approach where the objectives, strategies, and actions are reassessed annually, and modifications made and adopted as needed.

[1] Following Open Standards (https://cmp-openstandards.org/), we use the following definitions: Objective – A formal statement detailing a desired outcome of a plan or project, such as reducing a critical threat. An objective should be specific, measurable, results-oriented, time-limited, and practical. Strategy – A set of actions with a common focus that work together to achieve specific goals and objectives. Action – A specific set of tasks undertaken by project staff and/or partners to reach one or more objectives. Sometimes called an activity, intervention, response, or strategic action.

OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen California's conservation community – its voice, capacity, alignment, relationships, and opportunities for collaboration

STRATEGY 1.1

Support partner and stakeholder alignment broadly across conservation initiatives to improve biodiversity outcomes in California

Actions

1. Develop a user-friendly assessment to show common conservation goals and activities of key existing and emerging initiatives and partners in California, including summaries of actions and measures from regional assessments and adaptation strategies, as well as implementation and knowledge gaps to address

2. Make the assessment available via the CALCAP website and Climate Commons, and proactively disseminate to key audiences (e.g., funders, implementers)

3. Prioritize and ensure alignment and synergy, and avoid duplication, with other existing and emerging state-led biodiversity initiatives and coalitions

4. Convene/co-host with the California Landscape Stewardship Network and other initiatives regional biodiversity stakeholder roundtables that focus on developing regionally specific activities that help achieve state-led initiative or coalition goals and CALCAP goals

STRATEGY 1.2

Contribute to making conservation in California more inclusive, working toward diverse communities having equitable say and benefits from conservation outcomes

Actions

1. Expand Tribal representation on CALCAP and revitalize the CALCAP Tribal Team

2. Expand CALCAP membership to include environmental justice representation

3. Model and promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity (DEI) training for all California natural resource partners

4. Establish, model, and share case studies and protocols for assessment of project impacts or benefits to under-resourced communities

STRATEGY 1.3

Build capacity, resources, and durable relationships to advance conservation goals

Actions

1. Host convenings with the primary goal of building durable relationships for conservation, in which trust building, highly effective partnership, and DEI principles are modeled and practiced

2. Identify partner needs and assess CALCAP capacity to support stakeholder network development, outreach, engagement, facilitation, and collaborative proposal development

3. Activate a CALCAP funding working group that proactively monitors and discusses how to leverage funding opportunities, focusing near-term on funding for goals/projects that align with current funding opportunities and state priorities (e.g., California Biodiversity Initiative, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund), and identifies and matches partners with each other and funding sources

4. Connect partners who have overlapping goals and/or may have similar actions in the pipeline

5. Host a centralized opt-in inventory of partner activities, restoration, and protection measures, sortable by region (including marine) and type of activity

OBJECTIVE 2

Enable and promote science – with an emphasis on applied science – that addresses the multiple benefits of biodiversity conservation

STRATEGY 2.1

Develop a science needs assessment for climate, biodiversity, and multiple benefits by ecoregion

Actions

1. Convene practitioners and researchers by ecoregion to identify and highlight research needs of high importance, especially to practitioners

2. Compile information on applied science focused on multiple benefits and create a relevancy toolkit to help conservation professionals draw links between biodiversity and other societal benefits, such as clean water, human health, and the economy

3. Identify the primary additional benefits critical to each region, with input from local communities

4. Promote and support multi-benefit science, including influencing and linking funders to scientists, and influencing key plans to identify research needs relevant to multiple benefits

5. Present science needs assessment findings to the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and others to align on synergies

STRATEGY 2.2

Coordinate research objectives and provide opportunities to contribute to the body of scientific knowledge

Actions

1. Identify common information gaps and research priorities across regional and statewide initiatives

2. Create a place on the Climate Commons to share and update partners about upcoming and ongoing research, while continuing to develop the Climate Commons as a repository for scientific knowledge

3. Convene stakeholders to align on whether there is a need for a statewide baseline and biodiversity trends assessment and, if so, outline a high-level process for its design and development

4. Crosswalk research needs assessment with state-led biodiversity goals to ensure priority projects are aligned and developed in coordination

STRATEGY 2.3

Link science to planning and actions by facilitating communication among researchers, practitioners, decision-makers, and policy-makers

Actions

1. Identify and promote use of decision-support tools to assess trade-offs and optimize investment in, and outcomes from, actions

2. Host convenings regularly where researchers and practitioners can interact and share lessons learned from application of science to implementation

3. Develop several case studies of the application of multiple benefits to policy or decision making

4. Develop a webinar series or series of short videos for science-sharing, including examples of interactions between researchers and practitioners

5. Identify and create opportunities for collaboration on multiple benefit science, including between scientists and practitioners as well as between researchers

OBJECTIVE 3

Advance innovative climate-informed management, restoration, and protection strategies and activities that will achieve conservation goals related to biodiversity, water, landscape connectivity, ecosystem services, and wildfire into the future

STRATEGY 3.1

Help partners develop and test climate-informed biodiversity conservation strategies and activities at regional, statewide, and place-based scales

Actions

1. Identify or develop new scalable and transferable best management practices from the broader inventory of partnership efforts

2. Incorporate climate-informed conservation principles into biodiversity conservation strategies and activities

3. Provide support to partners through peer matching for cooperative brainstorming and review of innovative strategies in development, including conceptual testing of transferability of approaches

STRATEGY 3.2
Disseminate and promote climate-informed conservation best management practices, and innovative strategies and activities to a broad network of policy makers and practitioners

Actions

1. Develop communication pathways to highlight, inspire, and teach new approaches and best management practices to a broad network of partners

2. Develop a suite of example case studies to demonstrate new practices in action

3. Create a series of webinars for broad information and skills transfer and host webinars and field visits where success stories can be shared

4. Support institutionalization, including funding mechanisms for, best management practices in key policies, programs, and restoration grants

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

CALCAP is defining this Strategic Plan's success not as acres protected or species declines reversed, for example, but as creating the conditions where conservation entities in California are working together, effectively and efficiently, such that biodiversity is protected and enhanced in a way that will persist beyond the timeline of any plan. The success of this Strategic Plan thus looks like:

- The CALCAP Strategic Plan inspires broadened leadership among CALCAP members, with all member organizations engaged in some aspect of Plan implementation.
- There is an increase in effective collaborative and interdisciplinary conservation efforts, with deepened synergies among local, regional, and state plans.
- Through strengthening CALCAP and strengthening relationships in California, we will have built a conservation community that is a durable and resilient force for conservation in California.

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