



Informational Item
August 15, 2023

Item 8

Implementation of 30x30 in Coastal Waters: Progress and Next Steps

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Location: Statewide

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Safeguard Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Communities in the Face of Climate Change

Objective 1.3: Improve Understanding of Climate Impacts on California’s Coast and Ocean

Goal 2: Advance Equity Across Ocean and Coastal Policies and Actions

Objective 2.1: Enhance Engagement with Tribes

Objective 2.2: Enhance Engagement with Underserved Communities

Goal 3: Enhance Coastal and Marine Biodiversity

Objective 3.1: Protect and Restore Coastal and Marine Ecosystems

Introduction

Coastal and marine ecosystems in California and worldwide are threatened by climate-driven change including ocean warming, intensified marine heat waves, ocean acidification, and sea-level rise, with consequences for biodiversity, livelihoods, access, and cultural and traditional practices. To avoid the effects of a warming planet and safeguard the earth’s biodiversity, scientists around the world urge conservation of 30% of the planet’s land and water habitats by 2030.

In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20, advancing biodiversity conservation as an administration priority, and elevating the role of nature in the fight against climate change. As part of this Executive Order, California committed to the goal of conserving 30% of our lands and coastal waters by 2030 (the “30x30” initiative).

In April 2022, the California Natural Resources Agency released its document [Pathways to 30x30](#), which defines conservation for the purposes of the state’s 30x30 initiative, and details strategies and opportunities for achieving 30x30. For the purposes of California’s 30x30 goal, an area is considered a “30x30 Conservation Area” if it meets the following definition: **“Land and coastal water areas that are durably protected and managed to sustain functional ecosystems, both intact and restored, and the diversity of life that they support.”**

California’s 30x30 initiative is part of an international movement to combat climate change, protect biodiversity, and build a more resilient future. On December 19, 2022, at the Biodiversity Conference of Parties in Montreal, more than 190 countries agreed on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to protect nature and halt biodiversity loss worldwide. The framework calls for conservation action at an unprecedented scale and includes a commitment to conserve 30% of the planet’s land and oceans by 2030.

OPC’s Role and Approach

OPC is leading the state’s effort to conserve 30% of coastal waters by 2030. As outlined in [Pathways to 30x30](#), our approach in coastal waters includes four main strategies (described in more detail below): adaptively managing the state’s marine protected area (MPA) network; strengthening biodiversity conservation in National Marine Sanctuaries; supporting tribally led conservation through the creation of Indigenous Marine Stewardship Areas; and exploring the role of other spatial management measures to provide durable biodiversity benefits (e.g., areas established for the purposes of fisheries management or to improve water quality).

Over the last six months, OPC has hosted several information webinars, created outreach materials including a [fact sheet](#) outlining our approach and responses to frequently asked questions, met with partners including tribal leaders, fishermen, boaters, environmental non-profits, and has been participating as an active member of the [30x30 Partnership Coordinating Committee](#). We hired two new 30x30 Program Managers to build necessary capacity to advance this ambitious conservation initiative and have developed detailed work plans and timelines to direct critical next steps to address data gaps and scientific questions, community outreach, and tribal consultation and engagement. Details on each 30x30 strategy, along with progress and next steps are provided below.

Key Strategies

Adaptively Managing Our State's MPA Network

Strategy: The State's MPA network, which covers 16% of state waters, meets the definition of conserved as MPAs were designed to safeguard ecosystem function and health, are durably protected, and have already shown positive outcomes for biodiversity.

Adaptively managing California's MPAs to ensure these areas continue to provide strong protections for coastal and marine biodiversity, especially in the face of climate change, is a key component of achieving the 30x30 target. The State has just completed the first [Decadal Management Review](#) of the MPA network, which has resulted in a set of [prioritized recommendations](#) to guide adaptive management of MPAs moving forward. These recommendations include actions related to MPA governance, the MPA management program, and MPA network performance. Future changes to MPAs (e.g., boundary or regulation changes) will occur through the MPA adaptive management process. Such changes would need to be science-based and community-driven and would be implemented by the California Fish and Game Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to better meet the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act. **There is not a separate process to expand existing or create new MPAs to achieve the 30x30 goals.**

Next Steps: OPC and CDFW will work with partner agencies, tribes, coastal communities, and others to implement near-term, medium-term, and long-term recommendations from the Decadal Management Review. CDFW and the California Fish and Game Commission are actively developing a process to evaluate petitions for possible changes to the MPA network based on scientific findings, community input, equity outcomes, and other factors. Proposed guiding principles for petition evaluation are anticipated to be considered at the August Fish and Game Commission meeting.

Enhancing Conservation in National Marine Sanctuaries

Strategy: California is home to four National Marine Sanctuaries (NMSs), three of which cover almost 41% of state waters: Greater Farallones NMS, Monterey Bay NMS, and Channel Islands NMS. California's NMSs were established to conserve unique natural and cultural resources and include areas of exceptionally high biodiversity. While Sanctuaries provide important conservation benefits for marine life and habitats, each Sanctuary has different regulations and policies that will need to be assessed to determine whether they meet the Pathways' definition of conserved.

OPC is working closely with federal partners to identify threats to Sanctuary resources (e.g., water quality, whale ship strikes, etc.) and opportunities to address these threats through strengthened biodiversity protections.

Next Steps: Over the next year, OPC will continue collaborating with the Greater Farallones NMS through their Sanctuary management plan update (which is characterizing key natural resources and evaluating threats and vulnerabilities to these resources) to align those efforts and potential increased biodiversity conservation with the State’s 30x30 efforts. We will also continue coordination with Monterey Bay and Channel Islands NMSs and analyze current management plan strategies and activities in all three sanctuaries as part of the analysis of other spatial management measures in state waters described below.

Exploring the Role of Other Spatial Management Measures in California's Coastal Waters

Strategy: California’s coastal waters include a range of spatial management measures beyond MPAs or National Marine Sanctuaries, such as areas created to protect water quality or maintain sustainable fisheries. Understanding the extent to which these, and other spatial management areas are durable and provide biodiversity benefits that meet the definition of a 30x30 conserved area is a top priority for OPC; however, the first step is having a comprehensive inventory of these spatial management measures along the coast and in San Francisco Bay.

Next Steps: OPC is developing a centralized inventory and map of spatial management measures in state waters. Following inventory completion, OPC will initiate an evaluation of these measures through the creation of a science and policy working group to determine the long-term durability and extent to which biodiversity benefits are provided by each area. The working group will provide technical guidance in translating the Pathways definition of conservation into an objective standard/set of evaluation criteria for inclusion, with a focus on critical elements needed for spatial management measures to meet the definition of a 30x30 Conserved Area. The final inventory and map will be shared publicly to solicit feedback and ensure it represents an accurate and comprehensive catalog.

OPC will also seek public input on the final evaluation criteria developed by the science and policy working group. The working group will also review and prioritize a list of OPC-identified projects to address science needs and data gaps based on a) recommendations from the working group process, b) data gaps identified from OPC's spatial inventory, and c) priorities identified in Appendix E of the Pathways document: [Science Needs For Advancing 30x30 in Coastal Waters](#). Staff anticipates returning to the Council in the Spring 2024 with recommendations for prioritized investments.

Enhancing Engagement with Tribes by Supporting Tribally Led Conservation

Strategy: OPC has developed a consultation timeline for tribal priorities on 30x30 and tribally led creation of Indigenous Marine Stewardship Areas (IMSAs). Tribal communities have been stewards of California’s coastal resources since time immemorial, and the State has much to learn from their experience and traditional knowledge. OPC is committed to actively engaging with tribes to ensure that our work benefits all Californians as outlined in our Tribal Engagement Strategy.

Strengthening engagement with tribes means supporting coastal and ocean access for tribes to enhance connections to their ancestral lands and waters. It also means ensuring tribal priorities, knowledges, and perspectives are respectfully considered and included in coastal and ocean policies. The creation and implementation of IMSAs is a key component of California’s 30x30 initiative in coastal waters.

Developing and implementing this concept will start with conducting meaningful consultation and receiving feedback to create a robust, shared partnership that advances 30x30 and advances tribal priorities and perspectives on coastal/marine resources for IMSA.

Next Steps: OPC will share early and main consultation timelines with tribes in the upcoming months. Early consultation with tribes will inform the conceptualization of IMSAs and highlight tribal priorities and perspectives. As part of early consultation, OPC is preparing topic items to guide discussion and outreach materials (messaging, flyers, social media posts) for meaningful, wide-reaching engagement.

Supporting Ongoing 30x30 Coastal Community Engagement

Strategy: OPC believes community-led conservation is a powerful driver of the 30x30 movement and is committed to building and centralizing clear points of entry so interested communities can easily access 30x30 information and determine how they can contribute their perspectives and connect with others. This will forge ongoing partnerships for robust dialogue and collaboration. To advance community engagement in 30x30, OPC has developed a comprehensive 30x30 engagement plan with outreach and support strategies.

Next Steps: As part of outreach and engagement, OPC is finalizing social media campaign strategies that will highlight and uplift the diverse voices contributing to 30x30 around the state. Through these efforts, community groups will share what 30x30 means to them, celebrate successes and milestones, and highlight conservation needs and concerns. Efforts are underway to create a more accessible and easily navigable website portal with information on relevant topics, upcoming meetings, and ways to get involved. OPC will continue to collaborate with local, regional partners and organizations on educational workshops, events, and development of useful outreach materials. Interested community members and partners are encouraged to engage with OPC’s social media accounts, subscribe to our [newsletter](#), and visit our [website](#) to follow OPC’s progress on 30x30.