



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

California
2023: Annual Manager's Report

California Coastal

National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

All five BLM field offices within three Bureau of Land Management (BLM) California Districts, along with over 50 collaborative partners, have been actively working on a variety of conservation, recreation, and interpretation projects along the coast of California. Their efforts to protect and enhance the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) are truly commendable.

The collaborative efforts of the Arcata, Bakersfield, Central Coast, Palm Springs, and Ukiah Field Offices to develop interpretative information, provide education programs, monitor wildlife populations, restore habitats, and respond to environmental threats, such as oil spills, demonstrate a strong commitment to conservation and protecting coastal resources.



Ongoing projects such as the Garcia River Estuary project, Point Arena fuels reduction project, Trinidad Head native plant restoration project, and recovery efforts for the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and Behren's silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria zerene behrensii*) exemplify successful partnerships between various organizations and stakeholders. Partners including The Nature Conservancy, Trinidad Rancheria, Friends of Point Arena, Trinidad Coastal Land Trust, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sequoia Park Zoo, California State Parks, the Fort Ross Conservancy, Caltrans, and independent contracting biologists are working together to restore and enhance critical habitats along the California coast.



By pooling resources, expertise, and local knowledge, these partnerships implemented restoration and conservation projects that have had tangible positive impacts on the environment. From restoring coastal prairies by reducing fuel loads to reintroducing native plant species and recovering endangered wildlife populations, these projects contributed to the overall health and resilience of coastal ecosystems.

Participation in statewide coastal programs has been instrumental in raising awareness of the CCNM among local, state, and tribal governments. By engaging in coastal programs such as the West Coast Ocean Alliance, Marine Life Protection Act State Leadership Team, Pacific Ocean Renewable Energy Working Group for Federal Partners, Pacific Seabird Protection Network, California Central Coast Joint Venture, and the California Ocean Protection Council, the CCNM has fostered collaboration and promoted its significance on a broader scale.

Challenges

The California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) continues to face several distinctive challenges stemming from its vast geographical expanse, intricate cross-jurisdictional projects, and the involvement of numerous federal, Tribal, state, and non-governmental entities.

One of the challenges facing the CCNM is the lack of a comprehensive plan that manages all aspects of the Monument, including all of the onshore units. The CCNM Resource Management Plan (RMP) primarily focuses on the offshore rocks and islands. The evaluation of current plans is ongoing to determine the best approach to address this challenge.



Visitors

The California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) is comprised of over 10,000 rocks, islands, and reefs, which are mostly inaccessible due to their small size and rugged locations. While visitation to these offshore features is challenging to quantify, the coastal visitation in California is in the millions annually. Despite their limited accessibility, these offshore areas are vital for wildlife conservation and play a significant role in the ecological health of the coastal region.

The onshore portions of the CCNM, which are more accessible to visitors, are popular destinations for both locals and tourists alike. Visitors can enjoy activities such as day hiking, nature walks, birdwatching, and using these areas as outdoor classrooms for local schools. The diversity of recreational uses on the land portions of the CCNM reflects the importance of these areas as natural and cultural resources that offer opportunities for contemplation, relaxation, and environmental education.



Access to the on-land portions of the CCNM varies, from coastal trails along bluffs that are open for hiking from sunrise to sunset, to guided tours led by docents that provide visitors with a deeper understanding of the natural and cultural significance of these areas. These opportunities for engagement and exploration contribute to raising awareness about the importance of conservation and stewardship of the California Coastal National Monument and its surrounding coastal environment.

Partnerships

Fiscal Year 2023 partnership highlights include collaborations with various entities aimed at enhancing conservation, education, and outreach efforts along the California coast. Partnership highlights include:

Local Communities: Collaborated with coastal communities to involve them in conservation efforts, such as beach cleanups, habitat restoration projects, or educational programs for local schools.



Government Agencies: Partnered with federal, state, and local government agencies involved in coastal management, environmental protection, and natural resource conservation. This involved joint research projects, sharing of resources, and coordination of management plans.

Nonprofit Organizations: Worked with nonprofit organizations dedicated to environmental conservation, such as coastal advocacy groups, wildlife organizations, or marine research institutions. This involved joint fundraising events, volunteer programs, or educational workshops.



Tribal Governments: Tribal leaders from the Aquinnah Wampanoag, Mashpee, Wampanoag, Narragansett, Yupik, and Native Hawaiian representative with Kua, Kua‘āina Ulu 'Auamo visited Point Arena in a Tribal exchange program. The program is designed to build trust and facilitate Tribal communication. Such programs help to build positive relationships between government agencies and Tribal governments.

Academic Institutions: Collaborated with universities and research institutions to conduct scientific studies, monitor ecosystem health, or develop educational materials. This partnership involved sharing data, providing fieldwork opportunities for students, or hosting joint conferences.

Public Engagement: Engaged with the public through outreach events, interpretive programs, and citizen science initiatives. Partnering with community groups, museums, or educational centers rose awareness about coastal conservation issues and promoted stewardship of natural resources.

Science

The California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) is deeply committed to fostering scientific research collaborations to better understand and protect its resources. Here are some key highlights of the research efforts and partnerships from FY23:

Participation in Working Groups: The CCNM was actively involved in various working groups focused on monitoring and managing specific species and habitats, such as Ashy Storm Petrel Monitoring Management, the USFWS Pacific Seabird Program Group, the USGS acoustical bat monitoring project, and the California Black Oystercatcher Monitoring Project. These collaborations involved sharing data, coordinating community science monitoring efforts, and implementing conservation measures.



Monitoring Programs: The Black Oystercatcher Monitoring Project, a partnership between the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, Audubon California, California State Parks and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, studied the health and reproductive success of mated pairs to better understand the health of the habitat. Volunteers monitored sites along the coast, taking note of behaviors, eggs laid, chicks hatched, and fledglings making it to adulthood. These programs provided essential data on species demographics, migration patterns, and population trends, which are crucial for conservation planning and management.

Future Research Directions: Engaged with academic institutions and experts to identify research needs and priorities for addressing emerging conservation challenges, such as declines in Common Murre populations attributed to factors like predator abundance and climate change. This collaborative approach ensures that research efforts are targeted towards addressing critical management issues.



Overall, these partnerships and research initiatives underscore the CCNM's dedication to evidence-based conservation and management practices, ensuring the long-term sustainability of coastal resources and ecosystems.

Climate Impacts

The threat posed by sea-level rise to the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) is multifaceted, with various impacts already being observed and expected to worsen in the future due to climate change. Here's a breakdown of the key points and potential strategies for addressing these challenges:

Loss of Habitats and Wildlife Impact: Sea level rise has led to some loss and isolation of rocky shoreline habitats, which are crucial for various wildlife species. Coastal erosion and submergence of low-lying areas threaten nesting and resting habitats for birds and marine mammals.



Coastal Erosion and Infrastructure Vulnerability: Rising sea levels contributed to accelerated coastal erosion, posing threats to valuable habitats, coastal properties, and infrastructure. Erosion has resulted in land loss, increased vulnerability to storms, and changes in coastal geomorphology.

Proactive Planning and Collaboration: Addressing the impacts of sea-level rise on the CCNM requires proactive planning, adaptation measures, and collaboration among various stakeholders, including local communities, tribal governments, government agencies, and conservation organizations.

Social and Environmental Justice

Prioritizing social and environmental justice, striving for fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in research and programs is a priority for the CCNM. Here are some key initiatives and partnerships that highlight these efforts:

Educational Outreach: CCNM staff actively engaged with K-12 schools, particularly targeting lower-income schools to ensure access to educational opportunities. Programs are designed to reach underserved youth and first-generation Americans, many of whom may have never visited the coast despite living nearby. Efforts like providing funding for transportation to free school outreach programs helped alleviate financial barriers to participation.



Accessibility Enhancements: In Trinidad, partners and field office staff collaborated on plans to enhance an ADA accessible CCNM vista location, including interpretive signage. This seeks to ensure that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in and benefit from experiencing the Monument's natural and cultural resources.

Cultural Connections: Projects like the Garcia River Estuary Enhancement on the Point Arena-Stornetta Unit of CCNM have the potential to benefit local Tribal communities, such as the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians, by bolstering salmonid species, which are culturally significant and provide a vital subsistence food source. Efforts to improve the health of fisheries and salmonid stocks has enhanced access to nutritious food sources for local Tribal communities.

Events

The California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) hosted a diverse array of events throughout the year, engaging volunteers, partners, and community members in various activities aimed at conservation, education, and appreciation of coastal resources. Here are some highlights of these events:

Celebrate the Coast at Point Arena: Point Arena, in conjunction with the BLM Ukiah Field Office, hosted a Celebrate the Coast event. Activities included themed hikes and booths. Ukiah staff hosted the cultural booth where visitors learned of the Indigenous Pomo use of the Point Arena Stornetta lands, as well as its history from the early logging and dairying industries.



Dig Day Events at Cotoni Coast Dairies: Hosted by the Santa Cruz Mountain Stewards hundreds of volunteers came together at five different events to build new trails. Through careful planning and implementation, the Santa Cruz Mountain Stewards are actively promoting responsible outdoor recreation and fostering a sense of stewardship among volunteers.

Trinidad Head Lighthouse Docent-led Tours: On the first Saturday of every month the Trinidad Rancheria opened the gates to the Trinidad Head Lighthouse and docents from the Trinidad Museum volunteered to share this coastal treasure with visitors. Visitors leave with a deeper understanding of the lighthouse's significance and its place within the coastal landscape.

Words from the staff

It's evident that the success of the CCNM is dependent on the dedication and collaboration of its numerous partners. Their tireless efforts in education, interpretation, science, and stewardship contribute significantly to the conservation and appreciation of this cherished 1,100-mile coastline. While a comprehensive report could easily fill over 100 pages with the work completed in 2023 alone, here are some highlights of the collective achievements:

Education and Interpretation: Partners play a vital role in educating the public about the ecological significance and cultural heritage of the CCNM. Through interpretive programs, guided tours, educational events, and outreach initiatives, they inspire appreciation and stewardship of this special landscape among visitors of all ages.

Conservation and Protection: Collaborative efforts with partner organizations, government agencies, and local communities are instrumental in safeguarding the biodiversity and natural resources of the CCNM. From habitat restoration projects to wildlife monitoring programs, partners work tirelessly to preserve the ecological integrity of this coastal treasure.

Stewardship and Volunteerism: Partners engage volunteers in various stewardship activities, such as beach cleanups, habitat restoration, trail maintenance, and invasive species removal. Their commitment to volunteerism strengthens community connections and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for the CCNM's conservation.

Advocacy and Support: Partners serve as advocates for the CCNM, advocating for policies and initiatives that promote its protection and sustainable management. Their advocacy efforts help raise awareness, mobilize resources, and build partnerships to address conservation challenges and opportunities.

In recognition of their invaluable contributions, we extend a heartfelt thanks to all partners who care deeply for these special landscapes. Their dedication, passion, and collective efforts are essential for ensuring the continued preservation and enjoyment of the CCNM for generations to come.



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

California Coastal National Monument

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