



Carrizo Plain National Monument (Photo: Denise Knapp)

Community
Vision and Policy Platform in
Support of Biodiversity on
California's Central Coast
est. 2024

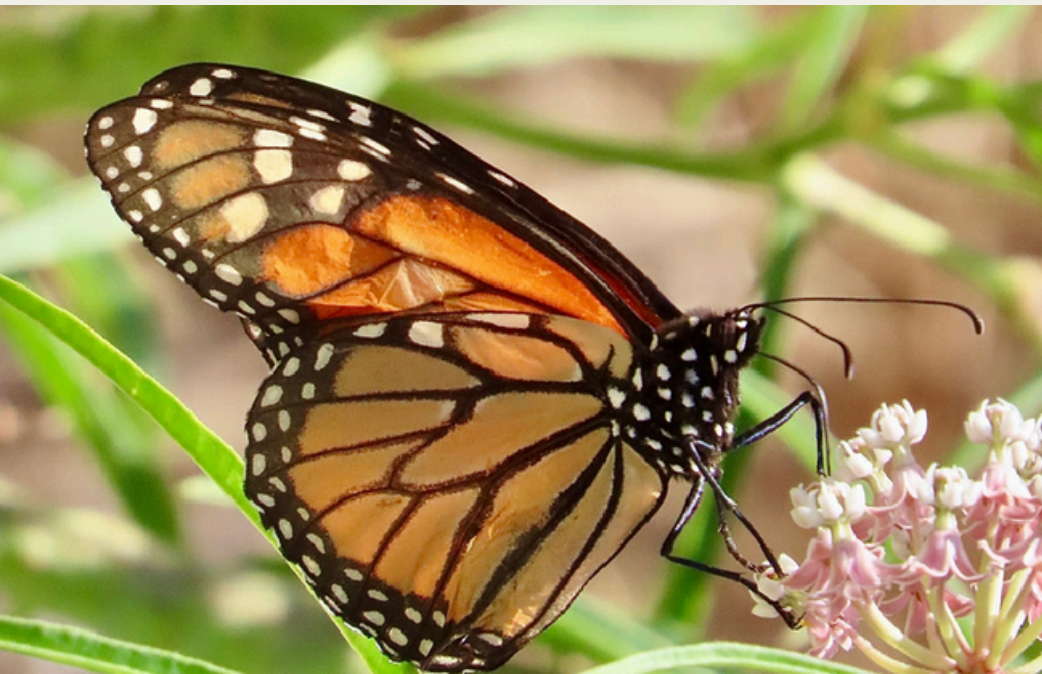
Biodiversity Vision & Policy Platform

We face both a drastically changing climate and a mass extinction of species, the likes of which have not occurred for nearly 66 million years. It is imperative that we begin to address both crises in tandem to ensure a future for all species — human and non-human alike. Without considering both concerns simultaneously, the diversity upon which life depends could be lost or severely impacted before climate solutions begin to reverse the damage. Decisions about how we protect and manage land, natural resources, and native species have never been more critical to our well-being. Collaboration and community empowerment driven by a bold vision and policy goals will unite us and make us more effective in achieving our shared goals.

Vision

People and nature are interconnected, and all species thrive.

The central coast's vibrant landscapes of diverse habitats and ecosystems rich in biodiversity are protected, celebrated, and valued for the essential, life-giving gifts (air, water, food) they provide to all living species. With the significance of biodiversity woven into our thinking, planning, and way of life, we have thriving, equitable communities and dynamic, sustainable economies.



Purpose

Stop the loss of biodiversity and reverse habitat decline on California's central coast and model how to live in partnership with nature through collaborative actions and whole-of-society engagement.

To do this we must...

Galvanize the whole community around a biodiversity vision to catalyze a movement that increases investment, leverages resources, and drives policy action to stop further species loss and extinction, restore and protect ecosystems, combat climate change, and empower people to create thriving, equitable communities.

Values & Assumptions

- Native species and well-functioning ecosystems are essential for human well-being and have the inalienable right to exist and flourish.
- Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems provide economic and social benefits, including improvement of water quality, reduction in water demand, improvement to soil health supportive of agriculture, and resilience against wildfires.
- Equitable policies and practices that consider the needs of humans and nature support biodiversity and economic needs and also ensure a livable place for all species.
- Indigenous and community knowledge and stewardship of lands, waters, and biodiversity provide guidance, leadership, and opportunities for meaningful partnerships and learning.
- Connections to nature and the land through recreation, education, spiritual practices, and other activities inspire joy, promote social and physical well-being, and increase appreciation for the interdependence of humans and the natural world.
- A regional biodiversity vision and action plan is strengthened by aligning with and laddering up to related visions, frameworks, and plans at the local, state, Tribal, and federal levels.

Policy Goals

Working at all levels of government and across a broad range of sectors, organizations, and networks, we will individually and collectively seek opportunities to align public policy and actions with the biodiversity vision framework. These policy goals and actions fall under three key strategies.

1 Shape land-use policies

- **Seek** opportunities in existing and new land-use policies, community plans, and other civic actions to increase native plant coverage and restore habitats throughout our urban and rural communities. This will reduce the impacts of climate change, support economic well-being, improve habitat and ecosystem function, and increase biodiversity in areas most impacted by society and development.
- **Push** for land-use decisions and restoration and conservation activities to be informed by science, research, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and local wisdom. This will secure better outcomes in the protection of biodiversity, habitats, native plants, soil, and water resources.
- **Ensure** that landscape-scale planning considers contiguous wildlands and connected habitats across all landscapes to provide native species with refugia and safe movement corridors to food, water, and essential habitats.

2 Engage community and galvanize support

- **Advocate** for the protection of existing healthy, abundant, and biodiverse wild areas to prevent further biodiversity loss and habitat degradation.
- **Engage** with business leaders, policy- and decision-makers, and other sectors of society to educate on how biodiversity and high-functioning ecosystems support a vibrant economy and social well-being.
- **Promote** and celebrate the abundance and beauty of native wild species and natural habitats in our region to build broad support for policies that halt human-caused extinction of species (at all scales).

3 Inspire government leaders, land managers, & residents to act

- **Support** expansion, conservation, and restoration of all habitat types and ecosystems across the landscape to increase the abundance of native wild species to vibrant and resilient levels.
- **Expand** opportunities that empower residents to create and advocate for biodiverse habitats in their community parks, creeks, streets, and yards for thriving, equitable communities.

Theory of Change

We will prevent further loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems by strengthening policies that protect and conserve natural resources and areas rich in biodiversity, working to restore ecosystem health in wild and working landscapes, increasing native species in urban environments, and expanding education. These objectives also will meet our societal needs, particularly as communities grow and build their economies. Additionally, by promoting the story of biodiversity and its social and economic value, we will foster more sustainable practices, inspire regional pride, increase support for conservation and protection efforts, lift up new leadership, and promote volunteerism in service of protecting biodiversity across all landscapes.



Background: Creation of the Biodiversity Vision Framework

In July 2023, over 40 environmental leaders met at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden to explore the creation of a shared vision of biodiversity to energize a movement on par with climate change and invoke greater urgency into action. With all partners bringing their own lenses and areas of focus to the conversation, we explored how best to support and unify the many players working in conservation, resource protection, restoration, and climate action to create a biodiversity vision that reflects community priorities and values.

In addition to input from workshop participants, common themes for biodiversity and conservation were gleaned from over 35 community plans, reports, policy documents, and collaborative visioning processes (21 local sources; 14 state government, national government, and biodiversity-aligned nongovernmental sources). From this review and the outputs from the workshop, common themes emerged and were aggregated into a draft biodiversity framework. This framework was then shared with survey participants in fall 2023, who reviewed it and provided feedback.

A second workshop facilitated by the Garden and held at the Community Environmental Council's Environmental Hub in December 2023 had over 50 participants. The goal of this workshop was to begin galvanizing the community around a biodiversity vision and elevate ways of working collectively. Workshop attendees were presented with the draft biodiversity framework and survey results, and through facilitated discussions and panel presentations, we gathered additional input and suggestions that were incorporated into the current version of the framework.

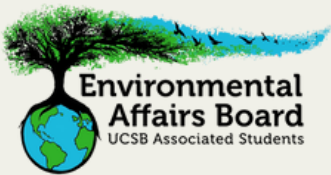
This vision and policy framework are starting points for elevating biodiversity priorities and generating collaboration and cooperation for supporting and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems in our region. Next steps will be to secure commitments/pledges to the biodiversity vision and policy framework from a range of conservation organizations, form a working group to help identify strategies for advancing policy goals, and promote a biodiversity resolution for cities and county government to adopt.



Together, We're Stronger. Are You Ready?



California Native Plant Society
Channel Islands Chapter



Friends of State Street
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The solution to
biodiversity loss
is in our hands –
and our gardens.

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