



Fact Sheet: California State Public Conservancies

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California has ten conservancies established by legislation to supplement its traditional state natural resource and public recreation agencies and help to protect regional resources of statewide significance. California conservancies are intended to act as creative problem-solving, cross-agency, collaborative, and environmentally integrative agencies to both facilitate the implementation and increase the extent of natural resource protection. The conservancies balance and integrate the often-conflicting goals of resource protection and public use. All are independent agencies within the California Natural Resources Agency, and are governed separately by independent bodies. All of the conservancies are non-regulatory, collaborative, state-local partnerships.

Each conservancy is charged with acquiring, restoring and protecting natural resource land in specified geographical regions of the state in order to advance certain statewide resource and conservation goals. Importantly, each conservancy emphasizes efforts to protect a particular “place,” such as the California Coast, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Lake Tahoe, the San Joaquin River and Delta, the Coachella Mountains, the Santa Monica Mountains, the Baldwin Hills, the San Gabriel/Los Angeles River, and the San Diego River.

Each conservancy is authorized to work with cooperating local and regional agencies, as well as other state agencies, to complete overall conservation and public access plans and help coordinate implementation for the jurisdictional areas the conservancy covers, including urban river conservation, enhancement, and restoration. Each conservancy has specific statutory powers and responsibilities, and all the conservancies are authorized to acquire and manage lands and to make grants to other agencies or nonprofit organizations. Most of the conservancies have goals that include public access and recreation.

While there is a state conservancy model in California, there is not simply one type of state conservancy. The structure of governance, each conservancy’s statutory authorities, and sources of financial and funding support are specific to each conservancy. Within the concept and model of the state conservancy in California, each is individual and particular, if not unique.

The conservancies do not have land use authority and cannot supersede any local jurisdictional authority. The conservancies share many common goals, objectives, and practices and several of the conservancies cooperate and coordinate in cross-jurisdictional projects. The important common features include the following:

1. Shared and transparent governance;
2. Multiple objectives;
3. Common collaborative practices;
4. Shared common characteristics; and
5. Integrated resource and ecosystem-based management (EMB) planning.