EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Monterey County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) is a bold vision of future conservation in Monterey County, in which widespread conservation actions will sustain and enhance ecological resources, biodiversity, and ecological processes and functions, and will promote resilience for the benefit of biological communities, watersheds, geographically unique areas, and other special-status or non-special-status species. The RCIS is voluntary, non-binding, non-regulatory regional plan for species and habitat conservation that:

- guides regional conservation of focal species and sensitive habitats through strategic, scientifically grounded actions and investments;
- establishes conservation priorities, goals, objectives, and actions; and
- describes and promotes conservation investment that will contribute to species and habitat conservation including:
  - land acquisition and habitat protection,
  - habitat enhancement, restoration, and establishment,
  - creek and river restoration, and
  - habitat connectivity and linkage enhancement.

The RCIS area extends to the jurisdictional boundaries of Monterey County, in Central California on the Pacific County. The RCIS area is composed of important natural features, including the Pacific Ocean, Monterey Bay, Santa Lucia range, Gabilan range, Coast range, and the Carmel and Salinas valleys. Chapter 2 includes descriptions of the regional natural setting and built environment in the RCIS area.

With the passage of Senate Bill 1 and Measure X, Monterey County's self-help transportation sales tax measure, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County has habitat mitigation needs for numerous regional transportation improvements in corridors that are highly constrained by environmental factors, with some projects lying within the coastal zone. These habitat protection needs present an opportunity to develop the Monterey County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy to identify conservation strategies for critical species and

habitat and then implement those strategies as advance mitigation for the transportation improvements.

A primary strength of the Monterey County RCIS is the significant co-benefits of adaptation work that will be provided, including to public health and safety, agricultural lands, natural ecosystems, air quality, and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Monterey County RCIS will seek to accomplish the following specific objectives:

- Identify locations for habitat and agricultural mitigation for transportation projects, to create more meaningful land preservation and improve the resource agency approval process;
- Identify adaptation strategies to remedy identified climate related vulnerabilities;
- Advance the planning of specific climate adaptation projects; and
- Provide benefits to disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

Focal species for the RCIS includes plant and wildlife species that are identified as having high priority for conservation, based on a necessity for habitat enhancement opportunities in the RCIS area. Other conservation elements for the RCIS are those that need conservation, including unique natural communities, ecosystem functions, and habitat connectivity. Non-focal species and non-focal other conservation elements are associated with focal species and focal other conservation elements that will benefit from the same conservation actions. Focal species were selected with the intention of maximizing conservation value, which can sustain and enhance biodiversity and ecological functions for the benefit of biological communities, watersheds, geographically unique areas, and other special-status species. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and process of focal species selection.

Table ES-1 and Table ES-2 list the focal and non-focal species, and focal and non-focal other conservation elements included in the RCIS.

Table ES-1 Focal Species and Focal Other Conservation Elements in the Monterey County RCIS

Common Name	Scientific Name
Focal Wildlife Species	
burrowing owl	Athene cunicularia
California brackish water snail	Tryonia imitator

Common Name	Scientific Name
California condor	Gymnogyps californianus
California newt	Taricha torosa
California red-legged frog	Rana draytonii
California tiger salamander	Ambystoma californiense
coast horned lizard	Phrynosoma blainvillii
foothill yellow-legged frog (Southwest/South Coast clade)	Rana boylii
monarch butterfly	Danaus plexippus pop. 1
mountain lion (Southern California/Central Coast ESU)	Puma concolor
pallid bat	Antrozous pallidus
San Joaquin kit fox	Vulpes macrotis mutica
Santa Cruz long-toed salamander	Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum
Smith's blue butterfly	Euphilotes enoptes smithi
southern sea otter	Enhydra lutris neries
steelhead (South-Central California Coast Steelhead DPS)	Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus
tidewater goby	Eucyclogobius newberryi
tricolored blackbird	Agelaius tricolor
vernal pool fairy shrimp	Branchinecta lynchi
western snowy plover	Charadrius nivosus nivosus
Focal Plant Species	
Carmel Valley bush mallow	Malacothamnus palmeri var. involucratus
Lemmon's jewelflower	Caulanthus lemmonii
Hickman's onion	Allium hickmanii
Monterey gilia	Gilia tenuiflora ssp. arenaria
Monterey spineflower	Chorizanthe pungens var. pungens
Pajaro manzanita	Arctostaphylos pajaroensis
seaside bird's-beak	Cordylanthus rigidus ssp. littoralis
Yadon's rein orchid	Piperia yadonii

Common Name	Scientific Name
Focal Other Conservation Elements	
California sycamore woodlands	Platanus racemosa Alliance
Monterey pine forest	Pinus muricata - Pinus radiata Alliance
valley oak woodland	Quercus lobata Alliance
working lands	None
dune formation	None
habitat connectivity	None

Table ES-2. Non-Focal Species and Other Conservation Elements in the Monterey County RCIS

Common Name	Scientific Name
Non-Focal Wildlife Species	
American badger	Taxidea taxus
least Bell's vireo	Vireo bellii pusillus
little willow flycatcher	Empidonax traillii brewsteri
Northern California legless lizard	Anniella pulchra
Santa Lucia slender salamander	Batrachoseps luciae
Townsend's big-eared bat	Corynorhinus townsendii
two-striped garter snake	Thamnophis hammondii
western mastiff bat	Eumops perotis californicus
western spadefoot	Spea hammondii
yellow-billed magpie	Pica nuttallii
Non-Focal Plant Species	
Carmel Valley cliff aster	Malacothrix saxatilis var. arachnoidea
Clare's pogogyne	Pogogyne clareana
Contra Costa goldfields	Lasthenia conjugens
eelgrass	Zostera marina
Jolon clarkia	Clarkia jolonensis
little Sur manzanita	Arctostaphylos edmundsii

Common Name	Scientific Name
Menzies' wallflower	Erysimum menziesii
Monterey clover	Trifolium trichocalyx
Monterey larkspur	Delphinium hutchinsoniae
sandmat manzanita	Arctostaphylos pumila
Non-Focal Other Conservation Elements	
coast live oak woodland	Quercus agrifolia Alliance
woolly-leaf manzanita shrubland	Arctostaphylos tomentosa Alliance

Climate change already is affecting plants, wildlife, and habitats throughout California (CDFW 2015), and is the primary stressor assessed in this document because of the severity of its projected future stressors. Other pressures and stressors include airborne pollutants, water management, fire, development of housing and urban areas, livestock and agriculture, habitat fragmentation, non-native invasive species, recreation and tourism, and renewable energy. Chapter 4 and Appendix B include descriptions of pressures and stressors and a climate change vulnerability assessment.

The conservation strategies proposed in the RCIS will benefit species and habitat conservation, provide resiliency to stressors and pressures, and promote adaptation to climate change. Chapter 5 includes conservation priorities, goals, objectives, and actions to benefit species and habitat conservation. Conservation strategies for each species and other conservation elements are intended to be “stand-alone” sections, giving the reader essential information needed to identify, plan, and implement habitat enhancement and conservation actions.

Monitoring and adaptive management is intended to ensure that conservation and habitat enhancement actions are implemented in ways that benefit focal/non-focal species and other conservation elements, and that contribute to achievement of the conservation goals and objectives stated in the RCIS. Chapter 6 includes a detailed monitoring strategy and the requirements for development of Mitigation Credit Agreements, which are a tool by which credits may be created to satisfy mitigation, including compensatory mitigation for impacts on resources and species, required under the California Engendered Species Act, Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement, or the California Environmental Quality Act.

The RCIS has a companion web portal that provides a dynamic, searchable interface. This web portal displays geographic information from Chapter 4, and focal species and focal other conservation elements information and conservation strategies and actions from Chapter 5.

Southern Sea Otter
Photo Credit Marianne Rogers