April 24, 2025

Measure Q Literature Review Synthesis

Synthesis of Relevant Local, Regional, and State Planning Documents

The following AI-assisted synthesis was prepared to condense several hundred topic-based citations from 19 local, regional, and state planning documents into a brief memo that can provide the Santa Cruz County Measure Q Citizens Oversight Advisory Board (COAB) with a digestible overview of the existing planning landscape that may be relevant to Measure Q. This document will also help inform the Measure Q Vision Document.

The plans included in this synthesis are:

- Capitola Climate Action Plan
- City of Santa Cruz Climate Action Plan
- Watsonville Climate Action Plan
- Regional Project Prioritization
- Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan
- 2021 Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan
- 2014 Santa Cruz County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
- 2019 Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
- 2021 Santa Cruz County San Mateo County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- 2022 Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy
- 2018 Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan
- 2023 Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan Update
- 2021 Santa Cruz County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 2020 California Adaptation Planning Guide
- 2023 California Water Plan Update
- 2021 California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan
- 2023 California Outdoors for All Strategy
- 2022 Pathways to 30x30 California
- 2021 Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy

The following synthesis distills the major themes, strategies, and points of divergence across **twelve topical lenses**:

1. Water Resource Protection
2. Wildfire Risk Reduction & Forest Health
3. Wildlife & Habitat Protection
4. Parks, Recreation & Public Access
5. Working Lands & Agricultural Stewardship
6. Coastal Protection

7. Climate Resilience & Adaptation
8. Match Funding
9. Multi-Benefit Approaches
10. Disadvantaged Communities
11. Geographic Scope
12. Community Engagement

Each section summarizes how the 19 source documents converge—or differ—on objectives, priority actions, and implementation mechanisms, highlighting innovative practices, equity considerations, and opportunities for stronger cross-jurisdictional alignment. Taken together, the syntheses offer a concise reference for integrating policies, coordinating investments, tracking progress, and considering project type priorities for Measure Q funding.

Water Resource Protection

Across all reviewed plans, water resource protection consistently emerges as a high priority, with common themes emphasizing groundwater recharge, conservation, water quality enhancement, and integrated watershed management. Strategies typically align around increasing efficiency, promoting nature-based solutions, and enhancing resilience against climate-related stressors like drought and flooding.

Local Climate Action Plans—including **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville**—focus significantly on water conservation measures and green infrastructure. **Capitola** emphasizes municipal and residential water conservation through ordinances mandating water-efficient fixtures and landscaping, encouraging rainwater harvesting, greywater systems, and drought-tolerant landscaping. Similarly, **Santa Cruz** prioritizes water efficiency programs targeting frontline communities and infrastructure enhancements such as urban forestry initiatives and green stormwater management practices. The plan also seeks innovative approaches like methane capture from wastewater treatment. **Watsonville** highlights watershed health improvements, stormwater management, and green infrastructure plans, alongside specific actions addressing groundwater overdraft and saltwater intrusion through climate-smart agricultural practices.

Regional water management plans, notably the **2014 Santa Cruz County IRWM Plan** and **2019 Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Plan**, adopt comprehensive strategies encompassing conservation, supply diversification, and pollution prevention. Both plans underscore the importance of protecting and enhancing riparian zones, groundwater recharge areas, and addressing seawater intrusion. The Pajaro River Plan uniquely emphasizes conjunctive groundwater management and coordinated watershed strategies, stressing interconnectedness for flood management, drought resilience, and water quality.

Wildfire-focused documents like the **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** and **Santa Cruz County San Mateo County CWPP** integrate water protection from wildfire risks, advocating protective measures around critical water infrastructure and acknowledging post-wildfire erosion

and sedimentation impacts on water quality. These plans specifically recommend maintaining mature vegetation near waterways and careful vegetation management to safeguard aquatic habitats.

County-level strategies, including the **Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan**, **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)**, and the **Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)**, emphasize groundwater recharge projects, stormwater infiltration, recycled water usage, and regional collaboration. Notably, the LHMP explicitly supports infrastructure projects such as the Pure Water Soquel Project and encourages regulations that sustain groundwater recharge rates.

At the state level, the **California Adaptation Planning Guide** and the **California Water Plan Update 2023** advocate for integrated watershed management approaches, highlighting managed aquifer recharge, low-impact development, and enhanced groundwater monitoring. These documents strongly promote nature-based solutions and ecological restoration to enhance water quality and ecosystem resilience. The **Pathways to 30x30** and **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy** further complement these efforts, with an explicit focus on restoring mountain meadows, riparian habitats, and ecological forestry to sustain and improve water storage, groundwater-surface interactions, and carbon sequestration.

While the emergency-focused **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan** provides fewer detailed strategies regarding proactive water resource management, it emphasizes water as a critical utility, highlighting coordination among agencies during emergencies and utility restoration.

Overall, the synthesis highlights a convergence around sustainable water management, enhanced collaboration across jurisdictions, and proactive strategies integrating ecological and infrastructural solutions. Further alignment among these documents could streamline implementation, leverage combined funding opportunities, and strengthen regional resilience.

Wildfire Risk Reduction and Forest Health

Across all reviewed plans, there is broad alignment on the urgent need to address wildfire risk, though the level of detail and the strategies proposed vary based on the plan's scope and jurisdiction. The collective focus spans both ecological stewardship and emergency preparedness, with growing attention to climate change as a key driver of wildfire threats in Santa Cruz County and the broader region.

Several local climate action plans — including those from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** — integrate wildfire into broader environmental resilience goals. Capitola emphasizes urban forest enhancement as a carbon sequestration and cooling strategy, acknowledging the link between drought and increased fire risk but stopping short of detailing wildfire-specific actions. In contrast, Santa Cruz identifies wildfire reduction as a co-benefit of forest management and reforestation, proposing the development of an Urban Forest Master Plan. Watsonville's CAAP directly addresses

wildfire risk through emergency preparedness strategies and public education, reflecting a people-centered approach that complements landscape-focused actions.

The **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** is the most technically detailed source. It outlines strategies such as shaded fuel breaks, defensible space, forest thinning, and prescribed burning. It also prioritizes interagency coordination and maps high-risk zones to guide fuel treatment and community outreach. These operational tools are echoed in the **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan**, which reinforces defensible space standards, early warning systems, and hazard mapping.

The **Santa Cruz County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)** and **General Plan Public Safety Element** provide a complementary governance lens. The EOP emphasizes the logistical and communication infrastructure needed for wildfire response, while the General Plan supports pre-fire planning through zoning, building codes, and land use regulations that discourage new development in high fire hazard zones.

Regional and state-level strategies — such as the **County Climate Action Strategy**, **Natural & Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy**, and the **CA Forest Carbon Plan** — place wildfire within a broader context of land stewardship and carbon resilience. These plans prioritize forest health through sustainable management, restoration, and the reduction of accumulated fuels. The **CA State Hazard Mitigation Plan** adds another layer, emphasizing statewide coordination and funding streams for local projects, and identifying wildfire as one of California's most significant and recurring hazards.

Plans like the **Regional Project Prioritization**, **Every Body's Ocean**, and the **LCP Climate Adaptation Strategy** touch only lightly on wildfire. However, they sometimes acknowledge its impact on related systems, such as watersheds, biodiversity, or coastal erosion following burns.

A unifying thread across most plans is the shift toward integrated, cross-jurisdictional approaches that combine forest restoration, emergency planning, and community engagement. There is growing recognition that urban, peri-urban, and wildland areas must be managed as interconnected systems. Plans increasingly call for aligning land use, conservation, and infrastructure strategies to reduce risk while preserving ecological function.

In sum, wildfire is treated as both a climate change symptom and a land management challenge. The County and its partners are moving toward holistic solutions that pair ecological resilience with public safety — though the degree of specificity and actionable commitments varies. Greater cross-referencing between planning documents and coordinated implementation could further enhance regional readiness and ecological health.

April 24, 2025

Wildlife and Habitat Protection

Across the reviewed plans, wildlife and habitat protection emerge as integral elements, with common themes including conservation of intact ecosystems, habitat restoration, biodiversity enhancement, and connectivity improvements to mitigate climate change impacts. Strategies frequently combine ecological restoration, invasive species management, sustainable land use, and collaboration with local communities and Indigenous groups.

Local climate plans such as those from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** emphasize enhancing biodiversity through urban green spaces, tree planting, and habitat restoration. **Capitola** particularly stresses the role of urban forests, community gardens, and green infrastructure in providing urban wildlife habitats. **Santa Cruz** highlights urban forestry through its Urban Forest Master Plan, and ecological enhancement via regenerative agricultural practices and strengthened open space policies. **Watsonville** integrates specific habitat preservation and restoration measures, such as expanding greenspace buffers around sloughs and enhancing watershed habitats, along with collaborations with Indigenous communities for restoration best practices.

Regional strategies offer more specialized approaches. The **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** and the **Santa Cruz County San Mateo County CWPP** advocate habitat protection concurrent with wildfire risk mitigation. These plans outline detailed recommendations for sensitive species and habitats, emphasizing minimal disturbance, native vegetation retention, invasive species control, and careful timing of activities to protect wildlife during vulnerable periods. They further advocate for maintaining ecological integrity through vegetation buffers along riparian areas and the careful management of chaparral, sandhill habitats, and oak woodlands.

The **2014 Santa Cruz County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan** and **2019 Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan** adopt aquatic ecosystem-focused strategies, emphasizing streamflow restoration, sediment control, riparian management, fish passage improvements, and wetland restoration. Both plans recognize the importance of enhancing aquatic habitats and biodiversity through specific restoration practices, such as removing invasive species, restoring natural hydrological functions, and improving fish passage infrastructure.

The **Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)** provides a comprehensive framework that includes land acquisition, habitat restoration, and wildlife-friendly infrastructure. Key actions include restoring riparian corridors, wetlands, and instream habitats; implementing wildlife crossings to address fragmentation; and focusing on adaptive management to enhance ecosystem resilience against climate threats.

State-level plans, including the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, the **California Water Plan Update 2023**, the **California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan**, **Pathways to 30x30**, and **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy**, expand on these approaches, advocating

for integrated ecosystem restoration, habitat connectivity, and biodiversity conservation through statewide policy alignment and large-scale restoration projects. Notably, these strategies underline the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, emphasizing collaboration with Tribal communities in ecosystem management.

Parks-focused strategies from **Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plans** identify resource protection through partnerships, interpretive programming, and volunteer engagement but are less detailed in specific ecological restoration activities compared to other plans.

In summary, plans universally recognize habitat and biodiversity as critical resources that necessitate holistic, integrated management strategies combining restoration, conservation, and community collaboration. Continued cross-jurisdictional alignment and coordinated implementation will be essential to effectively protecting regional biodiversity and enhancing ecological resilience.

Parks, Recreation, and Public Access

Across reviewed plans, parks, recreation, and public access emerge as significant priorities, with common strategies including enhancing urban green spaces, promoting accessible and safe park facilities, integrating ecological considerations with recreational infrastructure, and emphasizing community engagement and equitable access.

Local climate action plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** highlight improving parks and recreational amenities alongside sustainability goals. **Capitola** focuses on increasing open spaces and promoting safe pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, alongside community garden initiatives. **Santa Cruz** emphasizes enhancing urban forests, prioritizing tree planting in frontline communities, and expanding environmental education through watershed stewardship programs. **Watsonville** aligns recreation goals with active transportation infrastructure, trail improvements, expanded green spaces, and educational eco-literacy programs.

Wildfire and emergency management documents like the **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** and **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan** indirectly support park protection through wildfire risk mitigation strategies and emergency use coordination, respectively, though they offer limited specific recreational infrastructure guidance.

County strategic plans provide detailed management frameworks. The **Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan** and its **2023 update** detail specific operational improvements including maintenance standards, accessibility enhancements, safety improvements, diverse recreational programming (e.g., bilingual and age-specific programs), and community engagement through volunteer opportunities and environmental stewardship. Both documents underscore community input, addressing concerns such as safety, cleanliness, and increased interpretive and educational programs.

The **2022 Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy** focuses on recreation management within sensitive ecological areas, recommending infrastructure improvements such as wildlife-friendly signage and trails, as well as public education efforts to minimize ecological disturbances.

At the regional watershed management level, the **2019 Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan** advocates for incorporating recreational elements into water management projects, emphasizing public education and environmental stewardship.

State-level documents like the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **Outdoors for All Strategy**, **Pathways to 30x30**, and **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy** broadly reinforce equitable access to recreation spaces, particularly in underserved communities. These strategies emphasize expanding parks, green infrastructure, and accessible outdoor experiences. They also highlight infrastructure adaptation to climate impacts, educational outreach, and integrating recreational use with conservation and biodiversity goals.

The **California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan** further aligns recreational access improvements with wildfire resilience and equitable accessibility, while the **California Outdoors for All Strategy** specifically addresses deferred maintenance, improved accessibility, and multi-benefit approaches connecting trails with natural habitats.

Overall, reviewed plans consistently promote enhanced accessibility, safety, ecological integration, and educational programming as key components of robust parks and recreation systems. Greater cross-jurisdictional coordination, particularly regarding equitable access and ecological resilience, could optimize the collective impact of these diverse recreational and environmental strategies.

Working Lands and Agricultural Stewardship

Across reviewed documents, working lands and agricultural stewardship strategies consistently emphasize soil health, sustainable farming practices, water conservation, ecosystem function enhancement, and technical assistance for private landowners, with varying specificity and scope.

Local climate action plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** highlight distinct, community-focused agricultural strategies. **Capitola** promotes local food production through community gardens, urban agriculture, and support for locally sourced foods, reflecting a localized urban agriculture approach. **Santa Cruz** targets compost application and regenerative agricultural practices, collaborating with community and educational institutions like UCSC and the Homeless Garden Project. **Watsonville** strongly advocates climate-smart agriculture through regional agricultural planning, local farmer technical assistance, and pilot regenerative agriculture projects on city-owned land.

April 24, 2025

Regional watershed management plans (**2014 Santa Cruz County IRWM Plan** and **2019 Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Plan**) detail broader stewardship practices, emphasizing sustainable agriculture through improved irrigation, nutrient management, erosion control, and groundwater recharge. The Pajaro River Plan specifically promotes land conservation practices, conservation tillage, and stormwater capture infrastructure, underscoring technical assistance to private agricultural landowners.

County-level documents such as the **2021 Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan** and the **2022 Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)** further develop these themes. The Climate Action Plan highlights carbon sequestration through sustainable agriculture, organic waste utilization, and partnerships with agricultural organizations. The RCIS prioritizes preserving working lands from development, enhancing management practices for biodiversity, and improving water conservation measures on farms, notably through collaboration, technical assistance, and financial incentives.

Wildfire-focused strategies, such as the **Community Wildfire Protection Plan** and the **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan**, predominantly address agricultural lands indirectly, through wildfire risk mitigation and emergency preparedness. Although these documents recognize agricultural lands as valuable assets, they provide less detail on specific agricultural stewardship practices.

At the state level, comprehensive guidance emerges from documents like the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **California Water Plan Update 2023**, **California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan**, **Pathways to 30x30**, and **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy**. These sources emphasize climate-smart agriculture practices, improved soil management, land-use planning, incentives for sustainable management, and robust outreach and technical support programs. The Natural and Working Lands Strategy is notably specific in advocating practices like cover cropping, composting, integrated pest management, managed aquifer recharge, and farmland protection via conservation easements.

The **California Outdoors for All Strategy** uniquely highlights converting former agricultural landscapes for broader environmental and recreational use, promoting multi-benefit approaches that blend conservation, cultural values, and public access.

In summary, reviewed documents collectively advocate for holistic agricultural stewardship encompassing sustainable land-use practices, ecosystem function, soil health, water conservation, and robust technical assistance programs. Increased integration of these strategies across jurisdictional levels and sustained support for farmer outreach and education are essential for optimizing agricultural resilience and environmental health regionally.

April 24, 2025

Coastal Protection

Across the reviewed documents, coastal protection strategies consistently emphasize adapting to sea-level rise, protecting marine biodiversity, reducing pollution, and enhancing coastal resilience through both engineered and nature-based solutions.

Local climate action plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** highlight distinct coastal management approaches. **Capitola** underscores conservation and sustainable resource use through water conservation and green building strategies to indirectly protect coastal water quality. **Santa Cruz** actively addresses vulnerability to sea-level rise through ongoing coastal monitoring and climate adaptation plans. The city also leverages legal actions against fossil fuel companies to address climate impacts on coastal areas. **Watsonville** primarily addresses coastal agricultural vulnerabilities and pollution reduction through regional planning and plastic reduction initiatives.

Regional strategies such as the **2019 Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan** advocate for shoreline realignment, marsh and mudflat monitoring, and demonstration projects employing "living shorelines" to enhance coastal resilience and marine habitat protection. The plan emphasizes integrating regional ecological responses into adaptation efforts.

The **2022 Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy** explicitly targets the protection and management of coastal habitats, advocating for increased acreage protection and adaptive management strategies to address sea-level rise. Meanwhile, the **Santa Cruz County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** proposes a range of structural and non-structural coastal protection methods, including seawalls, managed retreat, stringent development regulations, and coastal restoration initiatives.

Emergency-focused documents like the **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan** recognize coastal vulnerabilities from sea-level rise and tsunamis, outlining emergency response mechanisms for pollution events and infrastructure security, although specific proactive coastal enhancement strategies are less detailed.

At the state level, the **2020 California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **2023 California Water Plan Update**, and **2022 Pathways to 30x30 California** provide comprehensive frameworks for coastal resilience. These documents emphasize long-term vulnerability assessments, nature-based adaptation methods like wetlands restoration and living shorelines, and protection of critical ecosystems such as kelp forests and seagrass beds. They also advocate for innovative land-use planning tools, including transfer of development rights, to manage coastal risks effectively.

The **2023 California Outdoors for All Strategy** uniquely highlights equitable coastal access through initiatives to increase affordable accommodation and reduce barriers to recreational opportunities. Conversely, the **2021 Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy** underscores ecological restoration, focusing on seagrass and kelp ecosystems, sustainable aquaculture, and effective management of marine protected areas.

Overall, reviewed plans collectively emphasize the importance of comprehensive coastal management strategies, integrating ecological restoration, adaptive infrastructure, pollution mitigation, and equitable public access. Enhancing coordination among local, regional, and state-level initiatives will be crucial for effective coastal resilience and marine biodiversity protection.

Climate Resilience and Adaption

Across the reviewed documents, climate resilience and adaptation strategies consistently focus on addressing vulnerabilities to extreme weather, sea-level rise, wildfire, drought, and other climate-driven impacts. Strategies emphasize infrastructure resilience, ecosystem-based solutions, community preparedness, proactive hazard mitigation, and equitable adaptation.

Local climate action plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** each integrate resilience strategies tailored to local needs. **Capitola** emphasizes open space enhancement, urban forestry, and water conservation to mitigate climate impacts, while highlighting regional collaboration. **Santa Cruz** details extensive adaptation planning efforts, such as coastal monitoring, green infrastructure projects, and legal actions against fossil fuel companies to finance resilience initiatives. **Watsonville** focuses on community energy resilience, urban agriculture for food security, and leveraging its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) to enhance preparedness.

Regional strategies, notably the **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)**, explicitly link wildfire mitigation to climate resilience, emphasizing fuels reduction projects and protection of water resources. Similarly, the **Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Plan** underscores water use efficiency, groundwater optimization, and climate-responsive water management practices as essential components of resilience.

The **2021 Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan** provides a broad framework, addressing climate risks to infrastructure, vulnerable communities, and natural resources. It emphasizes community shelters, infrastructure rehabilitation, and comprehensive monitoring. Similarly, the **Santa Cruz County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** advocates proactive mitigation strategies, infrastructure resilience, managed retreat, and multi-hazard planning integration to effectively reduce climate vulnerabilities.

The **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan** explicitly integrates climate adaptation into emergency management, highlighting the role of the Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3), equity guardrails, critical infrastructure improvements, and aligning hazard mitigation with broader climate resilience efforts.

At the state level, comprehensive guidance emerges from documents such as the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **California Water Plan Update**, **Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan**, **Pathways to 30x30 California**, and the **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy**. These plans collectively emphasize integrating climate considerations into planning frameworks, leveraging nature-based solutions, and employing adaptive management strategies.

Specific actions include climate-smart forestry, prescribed fire, ecosystem restoration, infrastructure hardening, and climate-smart agriculture practices to bolster resilience across natural and built landscapes.

The **Outdoors for All Strategy** uniquely integrates climate resilience into recreational space management, emphasizing restoration and repurposing lands as natural buffers and promoting post-fire recovery recreational opportunities.

Overall, the documents consistently stress proactive, collaborative, and integrated strategies, leveraging both built and natural infrastructure to manage climate risks. Enhanced alignment and coordination across local, regional, and state-level efforts will be crucial for achieving comprehensive and equitable climate resilience throughout the region.

Match

Across the reviewed documents, leveraging additional funding emerges as a pivotal strategy for successfully implementing climate action, resilience, conservation, and infrastructure projects. Plans consistently highlight the importance of accessing diverse funding sources including federal, state, regional grants, local measures, public-private partnerships, and dedicated funding mechanisms.

Local climate action plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** all prioritize strategic pursuit of external funding. **Capitola** emphasizes aligning its Climate Action Plan with state goals to qualify for transportation and land use grants, seeking rebates and incentives for water conservation and energy efficiency projects, and leveraging partnerships to access grant opportunities. **Santa Cruz** actively seeks multi-source grant funding to advance electrification, forest management, and building decarbonization initiatives, emphasizing regional collaborations and developing a funding pathways matrix. **Watsonville** highlights its reliance on state and federal grants for key projects like electric vehicle infrastructure, building retrofits, and community resilience hubs, prioritizing grant identification and collaborative funding mechanisms.

Regional plans such as the **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** explicitly link planning efforts with priority access to state and federal funding, particularly emphasizing community-driven wildfire mitigation projects. The CWPP underlines the importance of establishing clear community Wildland-Urban Interface boundaries to enhance funding eligibility.

Emergency and hazard-focused plans, including the **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan** and **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)**, stress the role of comprehensive documentation and strategic alignment in maximizing funding opportunities. They highlight utilizing clearly defined hazard mitigation and resilience projects to leverage federal disaster recovery grants, alongside streamlined county processes to enhance cost recovery and funding efficiency.

Water management plans (**2014 Santa Cruz County IRWM Plan** and **2019 Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Plan**) focus on diversifying funding sources to ensure sustainability. Both plans advocate for collaboration among agencies and stakeholders to secure funding from state grants, federal programs, user rates, and philanthropic contributions, emphasizing robust financial planning and resource sharing.

The **2022 Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)** suggests using its strategic framework to attract diverse investments, recommending the pursuit of public and private grants, dedicated local funding programs, and matching funds from various governmental levels and foundations.

State-level strategies in documents such as the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan**, **California Outdoors for All Strategy**, and **Pathways to 30x30 California** advocate securing federal and state grant funds, promoting public-private partnerships, standardizing easement processes, and enhancing financial incentives. These documents emphasize coordinated approaches to align and attract multi-sector investments.

In summary, reviewed documents collectively underscore the necessity and strategic advantage of leveraging diversified and coordinated funding sources. Enhanced cross-sector collaboration, strategic planning, and clear project prioritization emerge as critical components for effectively accessing and maximizing additional funding opportunities.

Multi Benefit

Across the reviewed plans, multi-benefit strategies are a recurring theme, with a strong emphasis on maximizing ecological, social, and economic outcomes through integrated project design and implementation. Plans consistently highlight how projects can simultaneously address climate goals, community well-being, public health, habitat conservation, economic development, and environmental justice.

Local climate action plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** robustly promote co-beneficial approaches. **Capitola** emphasizes strategies that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions while improving air quality, public health, and urban livability, such as energy efficiency upgrades, green infrastructure, and sustainable transportation. **Santa Cruz** aligns its climate measures with its Health in All Policies initiative, linking climate action with health, equity, and job creation, particularly in frontline communities. **Watsonville** provides explicit co-benefit listings for each measure, highlighting gains such as improved habitat, cost savings, enhanced recreation, and green job creation through solar deployment and green infrastructure.

The **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** reinforces the value of multi-benefit wildfire risk reduction strategies like prescribed burns, herbivory, and shaded fuel breaks, which also restore habitats and enhance firefighter access. The **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan** integrates

resilience, emergency response, and climate action through initiatives like Community Resilience Centers and collaborative planning via the Readiness Working Group.

County-level climate and water planning documents—such as the **Santa Cruz County CAAP**, **LHMP**, **2014 and 2019 IRWM Plans**, and the **RCIS**—promote multi-benefit projects that advance flood risk reduction, habitat restoration, water quality improvements, and recreation. These plans advocate for floodplain reconnection, riparian restoration, and smart site selection for habitat projects that enhance ecological function while protecting communities. The **RCIS** also underscores the importance of spatial planning to optimize project siting for cost-effectiveness and impact.

The **Parks Strategic Plans** highlight how park improvements can simultaneously increase accessibility, climate resilience, community engagement, and environmental stewardship. Enhanced interpretive programs, inclusivity upgrades, and stewardship initiatives illustrate this integrated approach.

At the state level, documents such as the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **Water Plan Update**, **30x30 Pathways**, **Natural and Working Lands Strategy**, and the **Outdoors for All Strategy** elevate multi-benefit principles as foundational. They champion nature-based solutions, landscape-scale restoration, equitable access to open space, and multi-sectoral collaboration. These strategies seek to deliver combined benefits including carbon sequestration, biodiversity support, heat mitigation, water supply reliability, and social equity.

In sum, the reviewed documents demonstrate a widespread commitment to multi-benefit strategies, recognizing their role in fostering resilient ecosystems, healthy communities, and efficient resource use. Future implementation will benefit from sustained cross-sector coordination, strategic site prioritization, and inclusive community engagement to ensure the broadest and most equitable distribution of these benefits.

Disadvantaged Communities

Across all reviewed plans, equity and the prioritization of disadvantaged communities emerge as critical components of climate action, emergency planning, and conservation efforts. Most documents define disadvantaged communities (DACs) as those experiencing systemic inequities, including lower income, limited access to resources, and heightened vulnerability to environmental hazards.

At the local level, plans from **Capitola**, **Santa Cruz**, and **Watsonville** incorporate robust equity-focused strategies. **Capitola** emphasizes improving access to weatherization programs and aligning affordable housing with transit, recognizing the additional burdens faced by low-income households. **Santa Cruz** integrates equity throughout its Climate Action Plan, using an equity screening tool, compensating frontline groups for participation, and targeting investments such as EV chargers and electrification strategies in frontline neighborhoods. Similarly, **Watsonville**

prioritizes energy and food justice, advocates for equitable investment from Central Coast Community Energy, and supports EV infrastructure and local food access in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Emergency preparedness and resilience planning, as seen in the **Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan**, **County CAAP**, and **LHMP**, also foreground equity. These documents highlight the need for culturally competent services, targeted outreach, and structural reforms to overcome barriers that limit access to preparedness and recovery resources. The establishment of Community Resilience Centers and DAFN (Disability, Access, and Functional Needs) working groups reflect efforts to center social vulnerability in emergency response.

Water and hazard mitigation plans, including the **IRWM Plans** and **CWPP**, prioritize projects in disadvantaged communities and incorporate metrics to identify areas of need. The **2014 and 2019 IRWM Plans** provide technical assistance and community engagement support for DACs, particularly in Watsonville and Davenport, and advocate for equitable flood protection and water quality access. The **CWPP** further prioritizes wildfire risk reduction in high-density, socially vulnerable WUI communities.

The **Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plans**—both 2018 and 2023—address disparities in access to parks and recreational services. These plans recommend strategic resource allocation guided by equity metrics, expanded outreach and bilingual programming, and partnerships with trusted local organizations to improve inclusivity and engagement.

State-level plans deepen these equity commitments. The **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **Water Plan Update**, and **Pathways to 30x30** each emphasize inclusive engagement, targeted investments, and systems-level reforms to ensure vulnerable populations benefit from and participate in climate solutions. The **Outdoors for All Strategy** and **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy** also promote access to parks, jobs, and environmental programming for historically marginalized groups, along with support for Tribes and small-scale farmers.

In summary, the reviewed plans consistently recognize that climate action and resilience cannot be achieved without intentional, equity-driven approaches. Addressing the unique needs of disadvantaged communities—through targeted funding, inclusive planning processes, and integrated service delivery—will be essential to achieving both climate and social justice goals.

Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of the reviewed plans ranges from hyper-local city-level efforts to broader regional, countywide, and statewide frameworks. The **Capitola Climate Action Plan** focuses on community-wide activities within Capitola's boundaries and municipal operations, while coordinating with regional agencies like SCCRTC and AMBAG to address cross-jurisdictional transportation and sustainability goals. Similarly, the **City of Santa Cruz Climate Action Plan** emphasizes city-level action, particularly within frontline neighborhoods, but integrates regional

partnerships with entities like CCCE and SCCRTC and considers watershed-level implications for water conservation and carbon sequestration.

The **Watsonville Climate Action Plan** also focuses primarily on strategies within city limits—especially Downtown Watsonville—while supporting regional efforts on transportation, agriculture, and energy with partners such as AMBAG and 3CE. The **Regional Project Prioritization** effort, through the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), spans both Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties and is organized into localized planning areas to reflect varied ecological and community contexts.

At the county level, the **Santa Cruz Emergency Operations Plan**, **Santa Cruz County CAAP**, **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan**, and the **Regional Conservation Investment Strategy** all adopt a countywide approach, with the EOP and CAAP specifically addressing the full operational area including diverse geographies like coastal zones, mountains, and farmland. The **Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan** covers unincorporated areas, while its 2023 update expands to include cities within the county, acknowledging regional disparities—particularly in South County.

Integrated regional water management plans show variation in scope: the **2014 Santa Cruz IRWM Plan** covers most of Santa Cruz County, coordinating with the Pajaro IRWM region in overlapping areas, while the **2019 Pajaro River Watershed IRWM Plan** spans multiple counties, including Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, San Benito, and Monterey. Similarly, the **Santa Cruz-San Mateo CWPP** segments Santa Cruz County into five sub-regions for planning and implementation.

Statewide frameworks, including the **California Adaptation Planning Guide**, **California Water Plan**, **Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan**, **Outdoors for All Strategy**, **Pathways to 30x30**, and the **Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy**, apply a broader geographic lens. These plans emphasize the importance of tailoring strategies to California's diverse ecosystems, watersheds, and socio-political contexts, often featuring regional profiles or guidance adaptable to local needs.

Community Engagement

Every plan reviewed positions robust, inclusive community engagement as the bedrock of effective climate, hazard-mitigation, conservation, and parks planning. Local climate plans set the tone. The **Capitola Climate Action Plan** built on a decade-long General Plan process, convening community workshops and a resident-led General Plan Advisory Committee to vet greenhouse-gas (GHG) measures and retain Capitola's "small-town" identity. The **Santa Cruz CAP 2030** ran a two-year "Resilient Together" campaign: 29 public events, bilingual surveys, pop-ups, focus groups, youth and unsheltered workshops, and equity advisors ensured frontline voices shaped final actions. In **Watsonville**, a 16-member Community Advisory Committee, web app, and two city-wide surveys framed strategy ranking, while a formal Public Engagement Plan locked transparency and ongoing feedback into implementation.

Regional collaborations mirror that intensity. The bi-county **Community Wildfire Protection Plan** (CWPP) opened with stakeholder charrettes, agency roundtables, and geographically split breakout sessions; a blog and 30-day public review refined priorities such as roadside fuel reduction. IRWM programs adopt tiered outreach: the **Santa Cruz IRWM** mixes county-wide workshops, listserv updates, and focused sessions for Tribal governments and disadvantaged communities; the four-county **Pajaro River IRWM** relies on a Stakeholder Steering Committee, project-level meetings, and watershed-wide progress briefings. The **Regional Conservation Investment Strategy** adds a steering committee, technical advisory team, and open houses to weave scientific, agency, and Tribal knowledge into project pipelines.

County-scale frameworks reinforce a "whole-community" ethos. The **Santa Cruz Emergency Operations Plan** creates a Readiness Working Group spanning public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors, plus DAFN and Cultural-Competency teams to embed equity in preparedness. The **County CAAP** mobilizes cross-department staff and a youth Climate Policy Internship, while the **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** formalizes recurring public meetings, social-media campaigns, and future council briefings. Parks planning follows suit: the 2018 **Parks Strategic Plan** and its 2023 update gathered surveys at fairs, held North-, Mid-, and South-County meetings, and formed a stakeholder working group that inserted a new equity goal focused on underserved neighborhoods.

Statewide guides elevate participatory principles into policy. The **California Adaptation Planning Guide** and **Water Plan 2023** call for watershed networks, EJ summits, and community-science programs; both insist Tribes and under-represented groups share decision-making power. The **Wildfire & Forest Resilience Action Plan** funds Regional Fire & Forestry Capacity collaboratives to seed local project pipelines and workforce training. Recreation-focused strategies—**Outdoors for All** and **Pathways to 30×30**—document statewide listening tours, Tribal sessions, and advisory panels, and commit to co-creating and co-managing parks with community-based organizations. The **Natural & Working Lands Climate-Smart Strategy** echoes that stance, pairing funding with community-led, nature-based solutions.

Taken together, these documents treat community development not as a box-checking exercise but as a continuous, co-creative cycle: early visioning shapes goals; diverse advisory bodies refine actions; iterative public review improves equity; and durable partnerships steward implementation. Embedding this engagement infrastructure across scales—and resourcing it adequately—emerges as the common formula for plans that are trusted, equitable, and built to last.