

# El Capitán, Refugio, and Gaviota (ECRG) General Plan Update

*Draft Concepts Public Meeting*  
*February 12, 2026*



# Introductions

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# Welcome!



# Public Meeting Agenda



- **Meeting Presentation: 6-6:45 pm**
  - Project Overview
    - General Plan Purpose
    - Planning Process
  - Project Progress
    - Community Engagement
    - Existing Conditions, Vulnerability Assessment, Challenges and Opportunities
    - Draft Declaration of Purpose and Vision Statement
    - Draft Concepts and Management Zones
- **Meeting Activities: 6:45-7:30 pm**
- **Meeting Adjourns: 7:30**

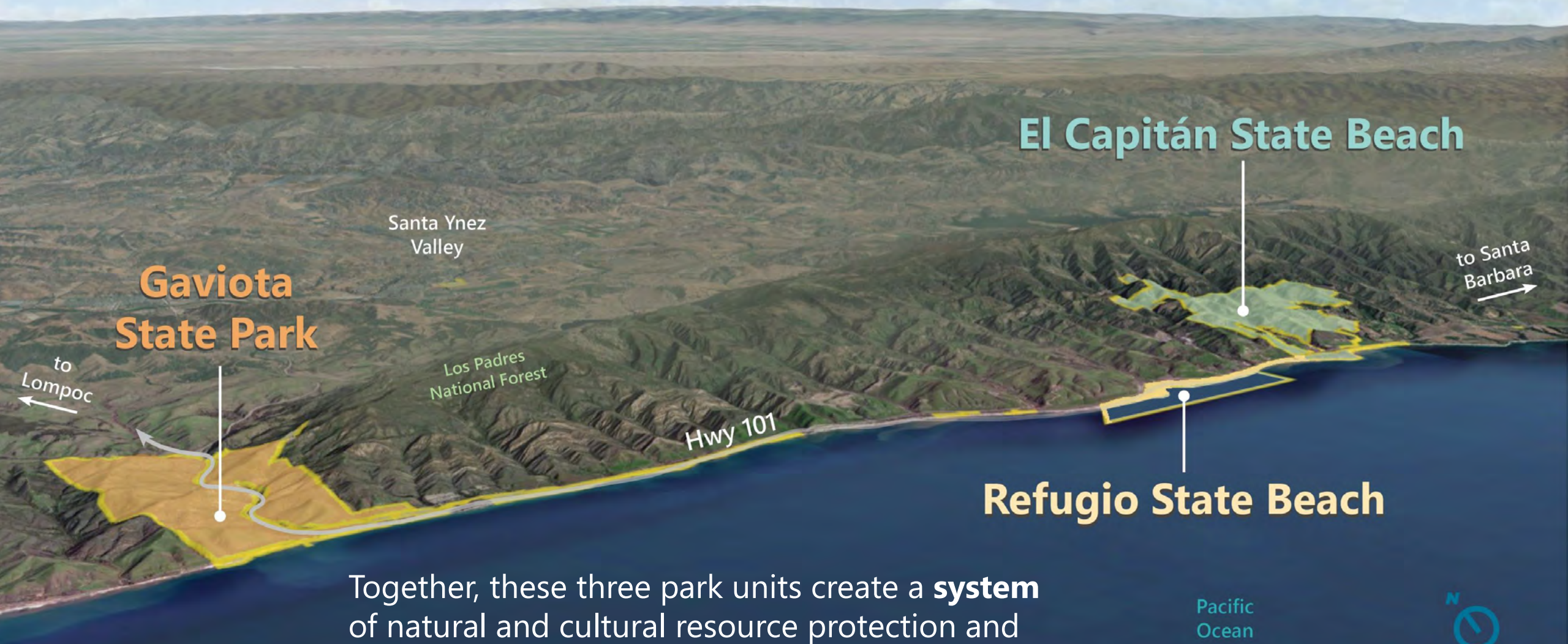


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# Project Overview

- General Plan Purpose
- Planning Process

# Project Location



**Gaviota State Park**

**El Capitán State Beach**

**Refugio State Beach**

Together, these three park units create a **system** of natural and cultural resource protection and recreation opportunities covering more than 5,000 acres along the Gaviota Coast

**ECRG**

Pacific Ocean





# What is a General Plan?

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- State Parks General Plans define a **purpose, vision, goals, and guidelines** for a park's future
- The General Plan **informs day-to-day decisions and paves the way for more focused management actions**
- The General Plan will **guide the management of the parks for the next 20 to 30 years**

*General Plans for the Gaviota Coast units were last updated in 1979.*



# General Plan

*Purpose, vision, goals, and guidelines inform day-to-day decisions and pave the way for focused management actions*

## Feasibility and Management Plans

- Resource Management Plan
- Roads and Trails Management Plan
- Interpretation Master Plan

## Project Plans

- Museum or Visitor Center Exhibit Plan
- Site Design Concept and Plan
- Campground Development Plan

## Management Actions

- Field surveys (natural resources)
- Site evaluation and investigation (cultural resources)
- Facility enhancement, visitor observation (recreational resources)



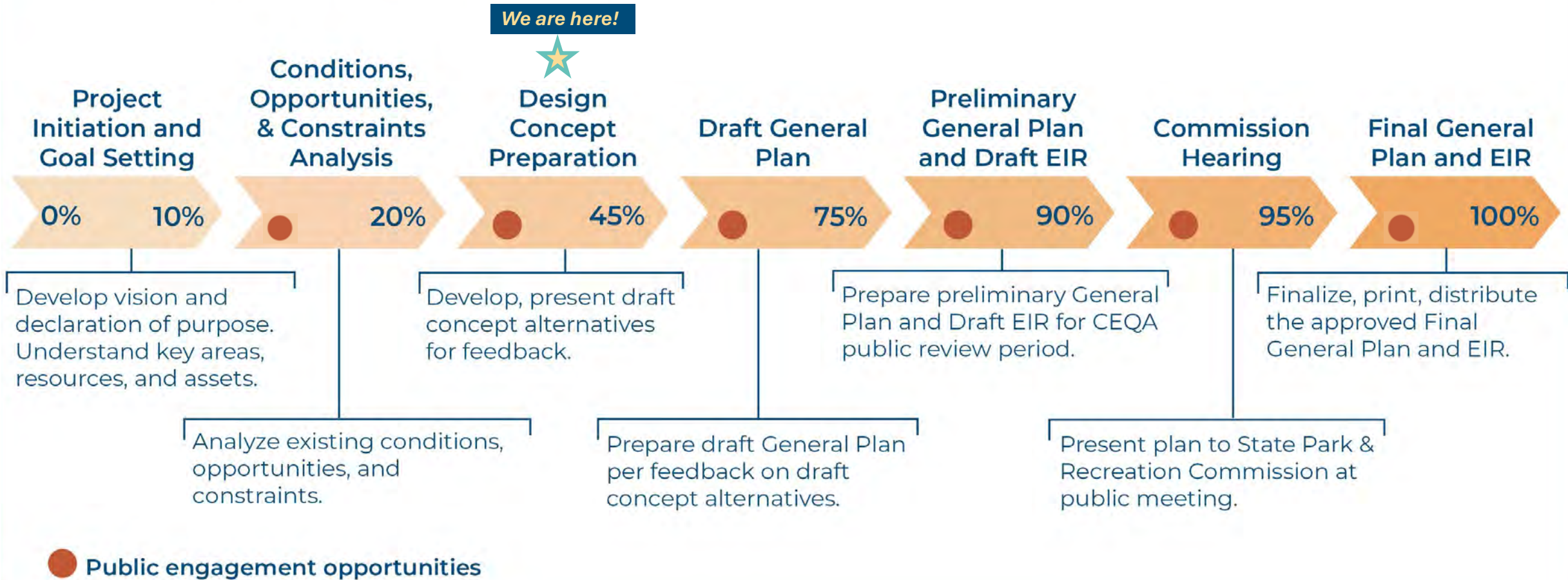
# Programmatic Environmental Impact Report

- As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a State Parks General Plan is accompanied by an EIR.
- **ECRG Update will have a Programmatic EIR**, which is appropriate when a “project” consists of a series of actions related to the issuance of rules, regulations, and other planning criteria.

## ***Programmatic EIR (PEIR)***

- **Does not** evaluate impacts of future construction-level projects that are consistent with the General Plan
- **Does** allow the subsequent project-level environmental review for future development to tier off the Program EIR
- Streamlines future environmental review procedures.

# State Parks General Plan Process



# Expected Outcomes



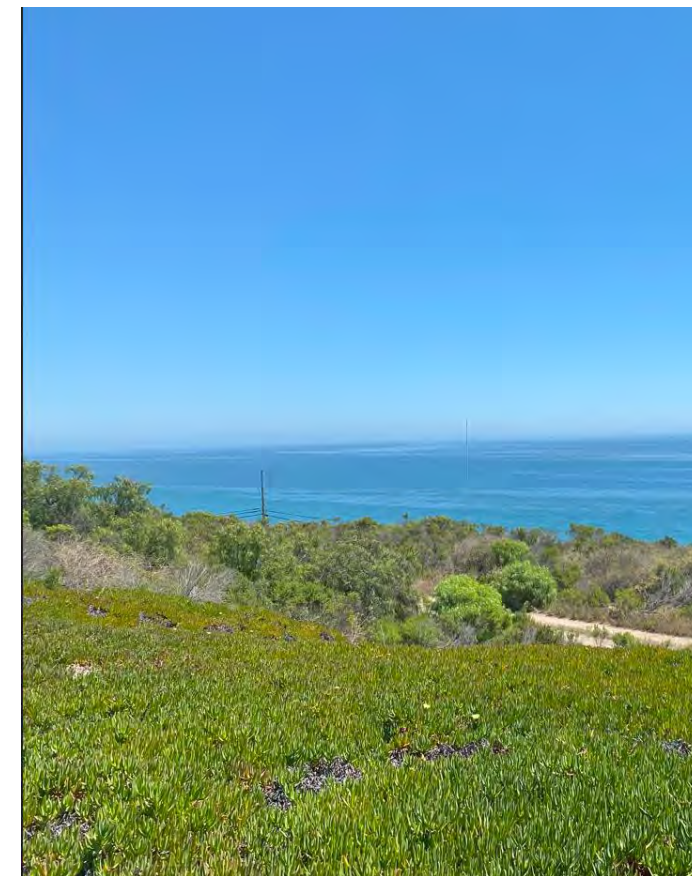
- Up to date **inventory of existing park assets and resources**
  - Cultural and natural resources, utilities, amenities
- Visitor-informed **understanding of facility use and recreation needs**



# Expected Outcomes



- **Vision for the sustainable future** of each park that addresses climate-related challenges
  - Coastal erosion, flooding, sea level rise, wildfire
- Identification and **prioritization of projects that will increase sustainability in the parks**
- Establishment of **management guidelines emphasizing climate adaptation strategies, including ecosystem restoration**



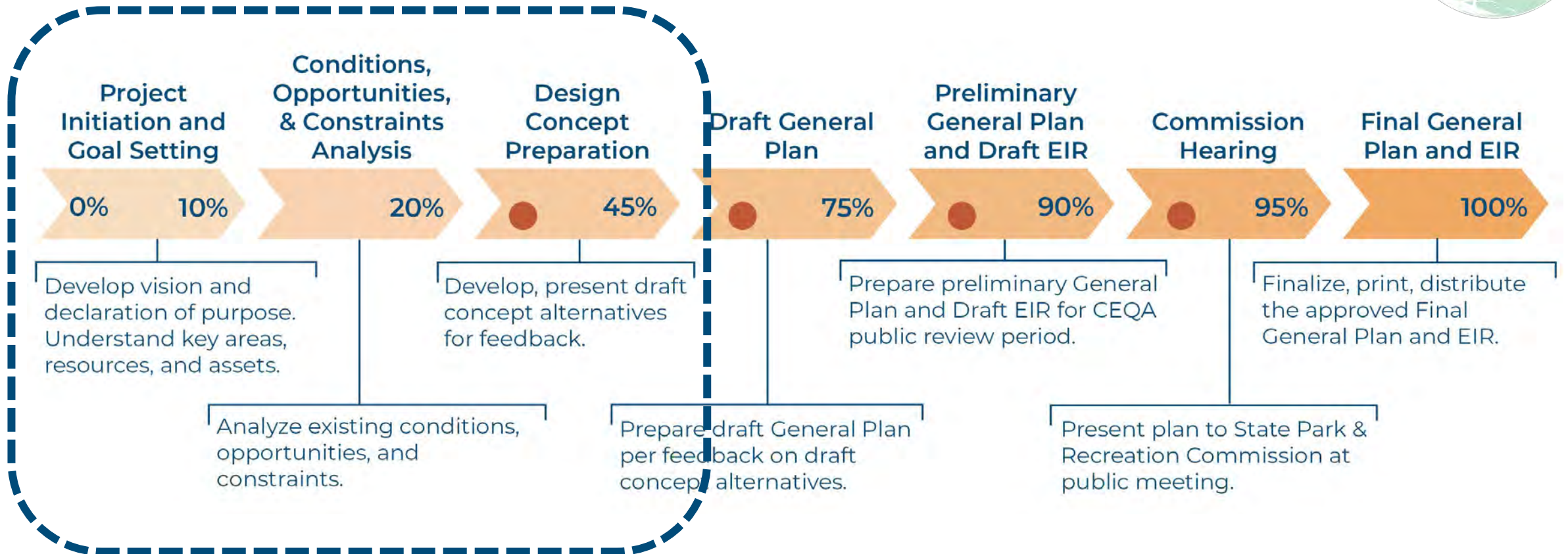


# Project Progress

- Community Engagement
- Existing Conditions, Vulnerability Assessment, Opportunities and Challenges
- Draft Declarations of Purpose and Vision Statements
- Draft Concepts and Management Zones



# Design Concept Preparation



***District Input***

- Identified Key Issues
- Opportunities and Constraints

***Technical Analysis***

- Existing Conditions
- Climate Vulnerability Assessment

***Community Engagement***

- Visitor Experience Survey
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Emailed Comments

***Draft Declarations of Purpose and Draft Vision Statements***

Three Park System + Individual Parks  
Draft Guiding Principles

***Draft Design Concept***

Draft Management Zone Map	Draft Management Zone Matrix
Create zones based on physical characteristics, requiring similar management strategies	Define intensity of use, resource character, allowable visitor uses, appropriate facilities and adaptive management issues

 ***Public Workshop***

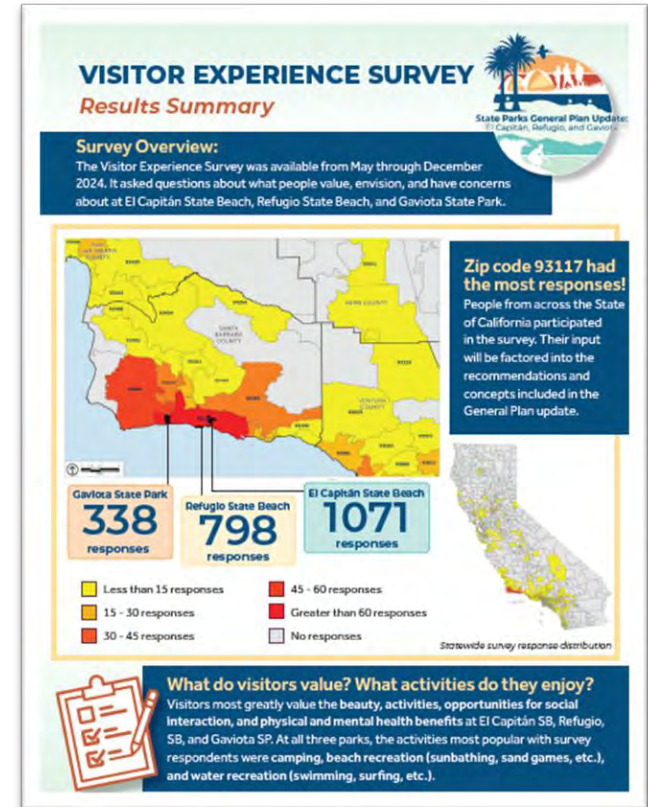
- Draft Declaration of Purpose and Draft Vision Statements
- Draft Design Concepts



# Community Engagement

## *What We've Heard from Visitors*

- Visitors value the beauty, activities, social interaction, and physical and mental health benefits at these parks
- Camping, beach recreation, and water recreation are the most popular activities
- Concerns include:
  - Condition of park facilities, infrastructure, and utilities
  - Beach erosion, flooding, sea level rise
  - Overcrowding and park overuse.





# Community Engagement

## *What We've Heard from Stakeholders*

- Stakeholder organizations value public access to nature, management of natural resources, educational programming
- Recognize opportunities for regional connectivity, education, resource protection, partnerships
- Concerns include:
  - Infrastructure, climate change, human impacts on resources, operational challenges

## **Stakeholders Represented**

- Environmental Groups
- Local Agencies and Municipalities
- Regulatory Agencies
- Recreation and Public Access Groups
- Business Groups

# Community Engagement

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## *Tribal Consultation*

- Government-to-government consultation with participating California Native American Tribes is underway and will continue for the duration of the General Plan Update process

# Existing Conditions

## *Existing Conditions Data Collection*

- Land Management and Operations
- Circulation
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Cultural Resources
- Natural Resources



# Natural Resources: Challenges and Opportunities



## Challenges at all parks include:

- Fragmentation of habitats, loss of connectivity and reduction of ecosystem extent and complexity
- Physical and regulatory barriers
- Suppression of natural disturbance regimes
- Competition from non-native species



# Natural Resources: Challenges and Opportunities



## Opportunities at all parks include:

- Re-establishing physical and ecological processes
- Relocating or redesigning barriers to movement and natural processes
- Developing non-native species management programs

**Learn more about natural resource challenges and opportunities, and share your feedback, at Station #2**



# Facilities and Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities

## Challenges at all parks include:

- Legacy infrastructure (utility systems, camping amenities, etc.)
- Erosion and flooding
- Access
- Trail connectivity
- Protection and interpretation of cultural resources

## El Capitán State Beach

El Capitán SB is a perfect setting for camping, swimming, fishing, surfing, hiking, and picnicking!

To ensure a sustainable future, the General Plan update will identify and address land management and operational challenges.



Access throughout the park is vulnerable to damage, does not meet accessibility standards and is unsafe in some areas

Existing trails lack connectivity to regional trails



More than 2,500 acres of backcountry are not included in park plans and are vulnerable to wildfire



Utility systems (water, sewage, electricity) are at capacity and vulnerable to damage and outages



Beach erosion and flooding

Camping infrastructure is not up to date and cannot adequately support RV hookups




Current site conditions and challenges (Spring 2024)

# Facilities and Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities

## Challenges at all parks include:



- Legacy infrastructure (utility systems, camping amenities, etc.)
- Erosion and flooding
- Access
- Trail connectivity
- Protection and interpretation of cultural resources




## Refugio State Beach

Refugio SB offers excellent camping, coastal fishing, trails, and picnic sites. It's also home to an underwater park popular with divers, anglers, and educational groups.


To ensure a sustainable future, the General Plan update will identify and address land management and operational challenges.




Access throughout the park is vulnerable to damage, does not meet accessibility standards and is unsafe in some areas




Aniso Trail, which connects Refugio SB and El Capitán SB is vulnerable to erosion and frequently closed




Drainage systems are inefficient and contribute to flooding, especially during storms




Recreation demand often exceeds park capacity



Wildfire threatens infrastructure, averaging 1,000 acres burned in the vicinity every two years



Beach erosion and flooding



Utility systems (water, sewage, electricity) are at capacity and vulnerable to damage and outages

# Facilities and Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities

## Challenges at all parks include:

- Legacy infrastructure (utility systems, camping amenities, etc.)
- Erosion and flooding
- Access
- Trail connectivity
- Protection and interpretation of cultural resources



## Gaviota State Park

Gaviota SP's recreational opportunities include camping, trails, picnicking, fishing, snorkeling, surfing, and more. It is ecologically diverse, with habitats ranging from grasslands to marshes.

To ensure a sustainable future, the General Plan update will identify and address land management and operational challenges.



Access throughout the park is vulnerable to damage, does not meet accessibility standards and is unsafe in some areas

Erosion along Gaviota Creek destabilizes banks, impacting natural and recreational resources

Existing trails lack connectivity to regional trails



Utility systems (water, sewage, electricity) are at capacity & vulnerable to damage & outages



Beach erosion and flooding

# Facilities and Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities



## Opportunities at all parks include:

- Increasing adaptive capacity
- Modernizing utility infrastructure
- Formalizing tribal access

**Learn more about specific challenges and opportunities at each park, and share your feedback, at Station #2**



# Vulnerability Assessment

- Analysis of how a changing climate may affect State Park infrastructure, visitor-serving facilities, visitors, and recreation activities and drive changes to natural and cultural resources
- Identifies resources that are most vulnerable to climate stressors and hazards
- Informs development of potential future actions to increase adaptive capacity







# Vulnerability Assessment


- Identified thirteen climate stressors and hazards
- Identified vulnerable resources at each park, including utility systems, beach access, recreation activities

**Learn more about the Vulnerability Assessment at Station #2**

**Primary Climate Stressors**  
A condition or trend related to climate variability, temperature change, and precipitation shifts that can exacerbate hazards.

<b>Air Temperature</b>	<b>Sea Level Rise</b>
	
<b>Precipitation</b>	<b>Ocean Acidification</b>
	

**Secondary Climate Hazards**  
Events or physical conditions caused by primary climate stressors that can harm people, property, and natural systems.

 Coastal Erosion	 Human Health Hazards
 Drought	 Landslides & Debris Flows
 Ecosystem Pests & Diseases	 Severe Weather
 Extreme Heat	 Wildfire & Smoke
 Flooding	

# What is a Declaration of Purpose?

- Broad statement of direction that is unique to a specific property. It is determined by the property's resources and recreation opportunities within the larger context of the State Parks system.
- Provides a strong foundation for future planning and management, focusing future efforts on what is most important about a property's resources and values.

**Visit Station #1 to review and provide feedback on the draft Declaration of Purpose for the three park system and Station #3 for the draft Declaration of Purpose for each individual park.**





# What is a Vision Statement?

- A view of the desired future conditions at a property. It expresses what the property should ultimately be and look like, as well as what kinds of visitor experiences should be available in the future. The Vision Statement guides the planning effort around a shared view of the property's future.

**Visit Station #1 to review and provide feedback on the draft vision statement for the three park system and Station #3 for the draft vision statement for each individual park.**





# Draft Concept Development

- Developed with information from vulnerability assessment, opportunities and challenges analysis, and community input
- Supported by Draft Declarations of Purpose and Draft Vision Statements

## Draft Concept Key Considerations

- Maintain existing level of recreational capacity
- Create sustainable access to coastal recreation
- Increase adaptive capacity of each unit
- Use most up-to-date available data and policies to guide decisions about protecting natural and cultural resources and increasing adaptive capacity



# Draft Design Concepts

- Concepts consist of **Management Zones** based on physical properties of each park and a **matrix of characteristics** describing each management zone at each park
- Management zones provide **land use and management strategies** for distinct areas of a property

## El Capitán Management Zones

- Beach and Bluff
- Coastal Plain
- Foothills

## Refugio Management Zones

- Beach and Bluff
- Refugio Cove
- Upland
- Marine

## Gaviota Management Zones

- Beach and Blufftops
- Estuary and Floodplain
- Backcountry



# Draft Design Concepts

- Provide management flexibility to achieve three park vision, as well as each park's individual vision, in a dynamic environment
- Consistent with Declarations of Purpose and Vision Statements
- Will be supported by detailed Goals and Guidelines in the Draft General Plan

**Visit Station #3 to review each park unit's draft design concept, consisting of a management zone map and matrix**





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# Meeting Activities

- Station #1
- Station #2
- Station #3



# Meeting Stations

*At each station, you're invited to:*

- Review detailed materials
- Ask questions of staff
- Share your feedback

**CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT**

**What is a Climate Vulnerability Assessment?**  
A Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) analyzes how a changing climate may harm natural and cultural resources, state Park infrastructure, visitor-serving facilities, visitors, and recreation activities, and which elements are most vulnerable to its effects. The CCVA follows a **four-step process**, as outlined in the California Adaptation Planning Guide:

- STEP 1** Identify
- STEP 2** Evaluate
- STEP 3** Evaluate adaptive capacity to take
- STEP 4** Assess and prioritize vulnerabilities

**STATE PARKS GENERAL PLAN UPDATE: EL CAPITAN, REFUGIO, AND GAVIOTA**

**DRAFT GAVIOTA STATE PARK DECLARATION OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of Gaviota State Park is to sustainably manage and interpret the diverse natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources of the greater Gaviota Coast. The park includes significant natural features, including the Gaviota Creek and estuary, offering impressive views of the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez Mountains from its inland areas and trails. Hosting a variety of wildlife and plant species, Gaviota SP contributes to regional biodiversity.

Gaviota SP provides opportunities for hiking, camping, picnicking, swimming, boat access to the entire Gaviota Coast and more. It also hosts cultural resources with significant interpretive value. The high-quality outdoor experiences that the park provides support recreation and encourage stewardship and appreciation of the natural environment and cultural resources.

*Do you agree with the following statement?*  
"The draft Gaviota DOP statement reflects my values and interests for the park's future."

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
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# Meeting Stations

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## **Station #1 – What We’ve Heard, Three Park System Vision**

- Do you agree with the three park system vision statement?
- Is there anything you’d like to add about the parks overview?

## **Station #2 – Challenges and Opportunities, Vulnerability Assessment**

- Are there other challenges or opportunities to consider?

## **Station #3 – Draft Design Concept, Declaration of Purpose, and Vision for each park**

- Do you agree with the Declaration of Purpose for each park?
- Do you agree with the Vision Statement for each park?
- Are the uses included in the draft concept sufficient or are any missing/more suitable to a different zone?

# Next Steps

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- Feedback from these meetings will inform General Plan and PEIR development
- Draft General Plan will be shared for public review and comments

# Next Steps

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**Virtual Meeting** (will cover same material)

Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026 from 6-7:30 pm

Scan QR code to register:



Or visit <https://ecrgplanupdate.com/participate/>



# Next Steps

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- Meeting **materials will be posted on the project website** after the Virtual Meeting on March 4, 2026
- **Online survey** will be available after March 4, 2026
- Share additional comments to [info@ECRGplanupdate.com](mailto:info@ECRGplanupdate.com)
- Continue to visit [www.ECRGplanupdate.com](http://www.ECRGplanupdate.com) for project updates

# Thank you!

