

## Orange County Coastkeeper - Strategic Plan 2023-2026

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<p><b>Our Mission</b></p>	<p><b>NEW: The mission of Orange County Coastkeeper is to protect swimmable, drinkable, fishable water and promote watershed resilience throughout our region.</b></p> <p>OLD: The mission of Orange County Coastkeeper is to protect the region's water resources so they are swimmable, drinkable and fishable for present and future generations.</p>
<p><b>Our Vision</b></p>	<p>Orange County Coastkeeper is a nonprofit clean water organization that serves as a proactive steward of our fresh- and saltwater ecosystems. We work collaboratively with diverse groups in the public and private sectors to achieve healthy, accessible, and sustainable water resources for the region. We implement innovative, effective programs in education, advocacy, restoration, research, enforcement, and conservation.</p>
<p><b>Our Goals: 2023 - 2026</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actively engage with our community and communicate meaningfully with our members and partners to remain vigilant, provide professional environmental advocacy, protect water quality, advance environmental health, and promote watershed resilience.</li> <li>2. Directly engage in pollution prevention through conducting and engaging in monitoring, research, and enforcement of clean water laws. Provide resources and open communication to our members, municipalities, and the public with regard to pollution issues and our efforts to remediate them.</li> <li>3. Educate and inspire students and community members to champion water solutions that are respectful, equitable, responsible, and just to ensure the resiliency of our water resources.</li> <li>4. Ensure Coastkeeper remains a stable, viable, and visible organization that provides an effective and influential voice for clean water in our communities guided by our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion principles.</li> <li>5. Expand our programs and prioritize resources to better support the entirety of our organization's service area, which includes Orange County, the Inland Empire, and the Coachella Valley, with special attention to areas affected by environmental injustice.</li> </ol>

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**Goal 1: Actively engage with our community and communicate meaningfully with our members and partners in order to remain vigilant, provide professional environmental advocacy, protect water quality, and advance environmental health.**

Our region continues to suffer from polluted urban and industrial runoff, impaired waterways, and degraded ecosystems. Orange County Coastkeeper must advance relevant regulations, practices, and policies in order to successfully advocate for water quality improvement, ecosystem restoration, and the protection of human health. Coastkeeper will leverage its power and influence to take leadership roles in addressing a variety of current and emerging threats to water quality because of the depth of knowledge its staff has in technical, regulatory, scientific, and historical matters while centering principles in Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI). In many settings where regulators and/or other agencies make key decisions, organizations like ours are often purposefully excluded from the conversations. Orange County Coastkeeper will continue to push to be in more of these spaces and make room for other community organizations by leveraging our reputation as professional environmental advocates.

***Strategies:***

- a) Seek guidance from our members on what water issues should be prioritized by our team, starting with soliciting input from the Membership Advisory Committee.
  - b) Engage with regulators and responsible parties in the permit-crafting process to ensure the inclusion of adequate and enforceable water quality protection, monitoring, and measurable outcomes. Engage in open communication with our community to increase the transparency of this process, make space for marginalized communities, and urge regulators to invest resources to do the same.
  - c) Analyze, and develop positions on high-impact regional projects and activities that impact inland and coastal water quality and aquatic ecosystem health.
  - d) Promote policies and decisions protective of water quality and access by providing testimony, comments, and data during hearings and comment periods for decision-making processes. Create relationships with elected and appointed officials to guide them toward decisions that result in positive actions.
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**Goal 2: Ensure Coastkeeper remains a stable, viable, and visible organization that provides an effective and influential voice for clean water in our communities guided by our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion principles.**

Coastkeeper must work to maintain financial stability and organizational transparency and better represent the diversity of our community. Coastkeeper needs to maintain a business model that is sustainable while expanding its visibility in the region to serve its mission, maintain its influence, and support its programs. Expanding Coastkeeper's visibility and meaningful engagement in its communities will require a more robust and effective communications capability within the organization and an emphasis on articulating the benefits of its programs to the communities it serves. Coastkeeper must strive to implement its JEDI program to better reflect the diversity of communities it serves.

**Strategies:**

- a) Increase the number and diversity of board members.
    - i) Increase the diversity of staff, interns, volunteers, and people served
  - b) Create opportunities for direct community engagement, i.e., listening sessions, community advisory boards, town hall and issue-oriented informational meetings, website surveys, etc.
  - c) Aggressively pursue funding sources that will support all Coastkeeper's programs.
    - i) Focus on climate resilience, pollution prevention, and restoration programs.
    - ii) Strive to secure more resources for paid internships and professional development.
    - iii) Explore opportunities for diversifying Coastkeeper funding sources with more emphasis on individual giving. This could include contributions from membership dues, events, institutional donations, bequests, and more.
  - d) Significantly expand and document the support/ membership base, including a more formalized program for engaging and providing meaningful benefits to members. Commit considerable resources and time to create a culture of donor, member, and volunteer acknowledgment, retention, and development.
  - e) Prioritize efforts to increase marketing and external communications, with a greater emphasis on support for inter-collaboration within our programs and the organization as a whole; at the same time, consider the "return on investment" from the resources devoted to increased visibility.
  - f) Prioritize marketing strategies that boost our role as an informational resource for our community members.
  - g) Monitor current communications trends and optimize our strategies to achieve the greatest impact and benefit from our communications efforts.
  - h) Maintain transparency by continuing to publish 990 forms on our website, continue to publish annual financial audits, and maintain the highest level of achievement with Charity Navigator and Guidestar.
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**Goal 3: Directly engage in pollution prevention through conducting and engaging in monitoring, research, and enforcement of clean water laws. Provide resources and open communication to our members, municipalities, and the general public with regard to pollution issues and our efforts to remediate them.**

Orange County Coastkeeper takes an active approach when addressing water pollution. Through partnerships, grants, donations, membership, and litigation settlements, we are able to fund, co-fund, or provide technical resources for activities in our community's watersheds that directly reduce pollution sources and promote healthy ecosystems through restoration efforts. At the same time, we must maintain our role as a prominent and recognizable nonprofit organization in the region for identifying pollution sources, holding polluters and regulators accountable for their actions, and initiating enforcement actions when necessary.

***Strategies:***

- a) Increase our cleanup activities inland and on the coast, emphasizing the significance of surface water pollution on ecosystems and the economy. Advocate decision-makers to enact preventative measures addressing marine debris at the source.
    - i) Increase our capacity to collect data to use as a tool for education and advocacy efforts that will decrease the presence of debris in our waterways.
  - b) Facilitate independent water quality testing where needed to identify, assess, and address pollutant levels.
  - c) Participate in research aimed at determining the sources and quantities of pollutants and the impacts of those pollutants on beneficial uses.
  - d) Provide opportunities for community members to participate in research, monitoring, and outreach.
  - e) Identify unmonitored or unregulated water pollution sources in our communities, promoting voluntary compliance when viable and effectuating enforcement action when needed.
  - f) Promote and implement research-based programs that improve and enhance our marine habitats and generate data that furthers the understanding of water quality and climate resiliency issues.
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**Goal 4: Educate and inspire students and community members to champion water solutions that are respectful, equitable, responsible, and just to ensure the resiliency of our water resources.**

The success of Orange County Coastkeeper's efforts to protect and restore water quality relies on the strength of the organization's relationship with its surrounding communities and its ability to mobilize individuals and groups around important water quality issues. Coastkeeper will empower and engage diverse communities, groups, and individuals to be effective clean water advocates and stewards.

***Strategies:***

- a) Increase educational partnerships with public agencies, foundations, corporations, school districts, other non-profits, and government agencies.
  - b) Add or expand educational components in our beach cleanup, restoration, and research departments.
  - c) Expand the diversity and accessibility of digital and physical educational materials to reflect the communities Coastkeeper serves, including language translation of its core outreach materials and the development of more easily understood descriptions of its programs and services.
  - d) Continue using consistent beach cleanups to educate, inspire, and raise awareness. Expand our inland waterway cleanup program and develop educational materials that teach to a greater depth the impacts of microplastics.
  - e) Encourage communities to conserve water and eliminate runoff by providing workshops, technical support, and other educational resources for landscaping programs and community engagement.
  - f) Gain clarity with regard to the Coastkeeper Garden by engaging Santiago College administrators in negotiations for re-opening or permanent closure. Adjust strategy as necessary once updates occur.
  - g) Aggressively support actions and projects that lead to increased capture and reuse of water resources, especially the advanced treatment of recycled water for potable use.
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**Goal 5. Expand our programs and prioritize resources to better support the entirety of our organization's service area, which include Orange County, the Inland Empire, and the Coachella Valley, with special attention to areas affected by environmental injustice.**

Coastkeeper's core strength is in our watershed approach. Allocation of our resources must be prioritized to support this approach. While we engage heavily in certain coastal communities in Orange County, we will strive to implement our programs to cover more of our service areas. The recent restructuring and rebuilding of Inland Empire Waterkeeper programs provide a promising future for the organization. Coastkeeper must continue to invest resources to further strengthen Inland Empire Waterkeeper by increasing the collaboration between programs. These activities expand Coastkeeper's voice as an advocate for clean water throughout Southern California.

***Strategies:***

- a) Utilize the expanding membership to identify new opportunities for addressing water quality and pollution prevention needs.
  - b) Provide sufficient seed funding, management, and staff support to the new Inland Empire Waterkeeper to ensure its long-term viability.
  - c) Expand Coastkeeper's programs to include protecting groundwater and promoting drinking water sustainability solutions for the region's future.
  - d) For the Inland Empire Waterkeeper, expand the budget to increase the staff to include full-time education and policy directors; expand programs in the Inland Empire to reach communities throughout Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.
  - e) Maintain a partnership with Los Angeles Waterkeeper in the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.
  - f) Develop and implement long-term goals and strategy for Coachella Valley Waterkeeper to enact in the next three-year strategic plan.
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