



Elkhorn Slough Foundation

Strategic Initiative

2019-2025



Conserve, protect and restore Elkhorn Slough

A History of Conservation

Elkhorn Slough Foundation (ESF) was formed in 1982 to support the work of the newly created Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Within a decade ESF took on a new role, when it began managing 800 acres of land owned by The Nature Conservancy. By the late 1990s ESF made the strategic decision to become a land trust with the explicit goal to acquire, protect, and manage land in the watershed of Elkhorn Slough.

In 1999 ESF adopted the Watershed Conservation Plan, developed with key partners, that articulates principles for conservation of Slough resources. This plan calls for the balanced conservation of land and embraced the notion of a "working landscape". Since adoption of the Watershed Conservation Plan, ESF has raised more than \$60 million for land acquisition, restoration and stewardship.

The most recent Strategic Plan was created in 2010, and in the intervening years ESF has added 1,021 acres to our ownership portfolio, becoming the largest single landowner in the watershed. This newest Strategic Plan seeks to build on the past successes and chart a stable course through a rapidly changing world.



Mission and Strategic Goals

The mission of the Elkhorn Slough Foundation is to conserve and restore Elkhorn Slough and its watershed.

Strategic Goals

- Identify, conserve and protect key lands in the Elkhorn Slough Watershed that support our vision.
- Manage these protected lands including working farms and ranches to conserve their natural resource value and demonstrate successful conservation and community use.
- Support programs and activities at the Elkhorn Slough Reserve that are complementary with our mission and pursue new partnerships that expand our ability to serve a larger constituency.
- Invest in engaging the broadest possible community to engender understanding and support for the conservation and sustainable stewardship of Elkhorn Slough, including students of all ages.
- Build and value our human resources to create the culture and capability for long term stability and success.
- Assure the fiscal strength and stability of the Elkhorn Slough Foundation.

Identify, conserve and protect

key lands in the Elkhorn Slough Watershed that support our vision



Our 5 year plan

Protect 5 key properties from the Conceptual Area Protection Plan encompassing several hundred acres with estimated cost of \$5 million

Challenges:

- Responding to changing climate at the slough scale
- Protecting privately held wetlands and floodplains near the Slough
- Reducing Pollution of wetlands and waterways
- Reducing Groundwater overdraft
- Accommodating wetland migration as sea level rises in both tidal and fresh water
- Eliminating upland habitat fragmentation from residential development and farm expansion

Strategies:

The CDFW draft Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) for Elkhorn Slough includes:

- Lands draining into the Reserve, including the Ridgeline to Tideline Initiative properties
- Northern Crescent properties at risk of habitat fragmentation and loss
- Connecting protected areas along ridgelines and drainages
- Protecting the North bank of the lower Carneros Creek floodplain
- Restoring Lower Moro Cojo Slough
- Engaging in conservation of the Springfield Terrace
- Acquiring Inholdings in current conservation holdings

Manage these protected lands

to conserve their natural resource value and demonstrate successful conservation and community use



Challenges:

- Protecting Sensitive/endangered species
- Weakness in small farm economy impacting our ag leases
- Reducing Wildfire risk
- Responding to impacts of changing climate
- Accommodating Sea level rise
- Water availability
- Community support for conservation
- Insuring adequate Staffing levels

Strategies:

- Restore degraded natural areas beginning on ESF lands
- Protect habitat for rare & endangered species using the latest science
- Manage a sound conservation easement (CE) program
- Engage volunteers where possible to support land management activities
- Manage working lands to support healthy food production while maintaining organic certification and appropriate land stewardship ethic
- Control spread of target invasive non-native plant and animal species
- Expand public access possibilities and educational opportunities
- Plan for future climate change impacts such as wildfire and drought
- Promote the concept of land conservation in a working landscape
- Build stewardship endowment

Our 5 year plan

- Certify Sand Hill Farm organic and lease to a responsible grower
- Plant 1,000 oak trees through adopt-an-oak
- Construct 5 new freshwater wetlands on ESF property
- Develop plan for eucalyptus removal from all properties
- Be prepared to manage all new land acquisitions
- Create trail linking Porter Ranch and Outdoor Classroom
- Expand volunteer opportunities

Support programs and activities at the Elkhorn Slough Reserve

that are complimentary with our mission & pursue new partnerships that expand our ability to serve a larger constituency.



Challenges:

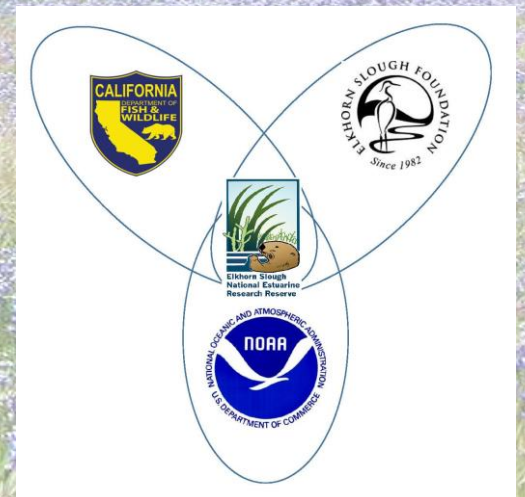
- Capacity and resources to maintain support
- Stability of NOAA funding .
- Changes in state policies on partnerships
- Reductions in indirect cost reimbursement

Strategies:

- Continue working on a strong partnership with the Reserve
- Provide administrative support for grant funded activities at the Reserve
- Transfer key protected lands to the Reserve and facilitate Reserve transactions
- Provide direct funding assistance to support Reserve activities
- Coordinate publicity and communications about Elkhorn Slough with the Reserve
- Continue participation and support of the Tidal Wetland Program
- Actively participate in national, state, and regional conservation organizations
- Encourage scientific research and land management experimentation on our lands and throughout the watershed
- Serve local community needs for education and enjoyment through ecologically sustainable public access of Elkhorn Slough and its watershed

Our 5 year plan

Continue our active partnership with the Elkhorn Slough Reserve by; managing grant funding, supporting Reserve programs, and adding protected land to the Reserve, as appropriate.



Invest in engaging the broadest possible community to engender understanding of our environment & inspire the next generation of scientists and land stewards.

Challenges:

- We are not as well-connected to neighboring communities as we could be, and they don't have deep buy-in at Elkhorn Slough
- Young people, particularly from underserved areas, often don't spend much time outdoors or learning about environment
- Public awareness in Monterey Bay about Elkhorn Slough is not broad
- Cost of maintaining public trails/access



Strategies:

- Recruit bilingual Outreach Coordinator who ideally has existing ties to local communities, and can design an outreach program that builds on existing foundation
- Survey local communities to gauge their needs for green space, and explore ways in which ESF can be a better and more visible partner
- Continue offering scholarships to local youth (and explore opportunities for increasing funding)
- Position ESF/ESNERR as the “go-to” source for journalists and local media outlets for environmental coverage in Monterey Bay; invite local journalists to important events and offer to meet with them in advance
- Engage local students via environmental science education at Outdoor Classroom, and inspire the next generation of stewards to recognize our shared responsibility in caring for the land
- Connect Outdoor Classroom with Porter Ranch, to provide additional public access, and improve educational offerings to local schools
- Create a community hub at the Porter Ranch

Our 5 year plan

- Survey of local communities will result in an at least one project responsive to survey results
- Outdoor Classroom expanded to neighboring schools, and a small cadre of volunteers teach classes
- Renovate Porter Ranch as community hub
- ESF featured in two statewide and one national publication



Build and develop

our staff and Board to create the culture and capability for long term stability and success



Our 5 year plan

Invest in continued development of our human resources through training, evaluation, and positive communication

Complete a succession plan for staff leadership

Recruit 10 new Board members



Challenges:

- Capacity
- Retention, recruitment and training
- Cost of housing
- Succession planning for all staff
- Continue recruiting and training Board members

Strategies:

- Recruit community leaders to Board of Directors
- Create a planning culture to guide our work and position .
- Create and maintain a healthy, flexible, productive, collegial, collaborative and innovative work environment and culture
- Review, update and refine policies and procedures
- Promote development and refinement of leadership capabilities of Board and our team
- Maintain housing stock available to staff

Assure the fiscal strength and stability of the Elkhorn Slough Foundation

Challenges:

- Diversify donor base and broaden donor pyramid
- Legacy Circle development
- Endowment growth
- Modest private revenue streams

Strategies:

- Develop and articulate a clear picture of ESF's short- and long-term revenue and spending needs for mission success
- Build stronger partnerships with our business community, in particular agriculture and visitor-serving businesses that could lead to funding opportunities
- Consider exploring a comprehensive campaign
- Explore and optimize appropriate land donations and revenue
- Increase ESF visibility with a defined ESF brand to enhance contributions and increase donor loyalty
- Increase access to our lands for recruitment and cultivation of members and major donors
- Increase annual Board giving and Board participation in fundraising
- Increase development and communications capacity
- Continue seeking new grant opportunities to diversify and broaden our revenue stream

Our 5 year plan:

- Broaden ESF's donor pyramid in terms of demographics and gift size
- Host at least one annual private event for major donors and Legacy Circle, and continues hosting regular events for all donors, as an avenue for engaging our supporters and communicating to them in person their impact
- ESF will explore the option of a comprehensive campaign raising several million to fund mission
- Recruit additional Board members with fundraising experience, and provide training to others willing to make asks on behalf of ESF.

