

# Morro Coast Audubon Society

## Strategic Plan 2007-2012

### MCAS MISSION

To promote the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on the biological diversity of birds and other wildlife, and their habitats, particularly in San Luis Obispo County.

**History and Background:** The Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) is part of a national and statewide non-profit network, the National Audubon Society (NAS), which was founded in 1905. Today NAS encompasses over 500,000 members, more than 500 local chapters, plus centers and sanctuaries, professional staff, and supporters. This network is united in its efforts as a conservation organization that promotes protection for birds, endangered species, critical habitats, important ecosystems, and the scientific management and protection of wildlife.

MCAS was granted its charter in 1967 with 70 charter members (Addendum 1). The original project and catalyst for the creation of MCAS was to protect Peregrine Falcons nesting on Morro Rock, a goal the organization has since accomplished. In 1967, the pair of peregrines nesting at Morro Rock was one of only two pair of nesting peregrines in the state. Two nesting pair of peregrines are currently found at the Rock and the Central Coast of California now boasts one of the highest concentrations of breeding Peregrine Falcons in North America. MCAS has now grown to over 900 members, serving the entire San Luis Obispo County. Current projects include the study of loons wintering in Morro Bay estuary (Addendum 2), protection and monitoring of western snowy plovers and their habitat (Addendum 3), continuing environmental research and monitoring at Hi Mountain Lookout (Addendum 4), and land preservation, restoration and conservation management at the MCAS-owned properties at Sweet Springs (Addendum 5) and the Audubon Overlook (Addendum 6).

From the beginning and continuing throughout the years, MCAS has offered public programs. This tradition continues today with added components of the Christmas Bird Counts (Addendum 7) in December and the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival (Addendum 8), which attracts participants from throughout the U.S., in January. Along with our community programs, MCAS field trips continue to be a major focus of our organization, with several trips offered each month free to the public and led by MCAS volunteers.

The MCAS newsletter "Pacific Flyway" was first published in March, 1966, and continues today with electronic subscriptions available to members. Newsletter archives are available on the MCAS website ([www.morrocoastaudubon.org](http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org)), which began in August 2004 and is continually upgraded, updated and improved.

Education is an integral component of MCAS. In addition to programs, field trips, and newsletter articles, MCAS offers bird study groups, school programs, and informational booths at local events. MCAS has made Audubon Adventures (an NAS curriculum program) available to local teachers and students for over twenty years. Scholarships to Audubon camps were given in years past. Currently, MCAS offers the Nancy Vaughan Scholarship to a local college student pursuing a conservation career (Addendum 9).

Conservation has always been a focus in MCAS history, informing the public about local, national, and world-wide conservation issues and efforts and how to find more information and get involved.

MCAS currently owns and manages Sweet Springs Nature Preserve and Audubon Overlook properties. Both sites offer birdwatching, nature study and community outreach efforts and events.

In 2006, MCAS began renting an office space in Morro Bay, which we share with the National Estuary Program. The office and outreach center is currently the site of board meetings, conferences, committee meetings, presentations, and community events and functions as a hub for our members and volunteers.

Even more impressive than its accomplishments is the fact that MCAS is a volunteer-based organization. Thousands of individuals have contributed their time, effort, and expertise, as well as money, to support MCAS over the past 40 years. In 1998, the organization began honoring some of the most influential and prominent volunteers in an annual recognition ceremony (Addendum 10).

## **The Challenges**

While MCAS is well known among conservation organizations in the county, "Audubon" is not yet a household name. In order accomplish this, MCAS needs to attract more people, more publicity and more funds; and to make conservation more relevant to the lives of the people in this county. Additionally, MCAS need to ensure that conservation is relevant to the next generation, focusing on youth outreach and educational opportunities. MCAS must also build and strengthen partnerships with private landowners, public agencies at all levels, local businesses, scientists committed to conservation, and other environmental and conservation organizations. Finally, MCAS must project a clear and consistent message of exactly what the organization does, complete with a consistently-used logo, brand image and spoken / written message which synthesizes our mission and goals.

## **Strategic Vision**

MCAS's objective is to become one of the leading conservation and environmental organizations in the county. This strategic plan commits MCAS to a five-year agenda focusing on connecting people with conservation efforts. The plan can best be described using the acronym CREED (Conservation, Research, Education, Expansion, and Diversity) which will be the written / spoken message used to synthesize the MCAS mission and goals. These areas will comprise the five key strategic elements.

While these elements will be addressed simultaneously, there is overlap as specific plans, projects, and efforts in each element are implemented. The efforts will reinforce one another.

Specific objectives and action plans may need to be changed or amended to reach the strategic plan goals. A summary of the strategic goals along with the objectives to be implemented to reach each goal follows the overall goal description. Action plans for each objective will be developed by committees, distributed to interested individuals, and kept on file at the MCAS Office and Outreach Center.

## **Conservation**

MCAS conservation efforts will consist of three parts:

- A. Direct conservation of current properties owned by MCAS (and any subsequently acquired holdings). By using these properties to showcase effective conservation and land management techniques and habitat restoration projects, MCAS will lead by example to develop techniques that will benefit other landowners and land managers.
- B. Being a voice for conservation issues at local, state, national, and international levels.
- C. Setting an example of ways MCAS members and the community can cooperate to preserve and protect our limited resources.

## **Research**

MCAS will continue to support current field research efforts (Winter Loon Survey, Western Snowy Plover Habitat Conservation and Recovery program, and the Hi Mountain Lookout Project) as well as applying sound science to any new projects arising during the next five years.

## **Education**

MCAS recognizes that community programs and field trips are the main components of our educational and outreach efforts. However, MCAS plans to add several other components to this vitally important element of the strategy.

Components include utilization of MCAS office space for educational outreach, expanding field trips to diverse target audiences, increasing participation of local classrooms in “Audubon Adventures,” specific youth outreach and increased attendance at community programs.

## **Expansion**

In order to meet our strategic plan goals, MCAS will develop and use a consistent brand image / logo that is easily identified by local community members, and focus on increasing fund development; membership; leadership; volunteer participation in events, projects, and committees; communication; and publicity.

## **Diversity**

MCAS will strive to increase the diversity of its members and other interested citizens by providing opportunities and outreach to all demographics, local businesses, and other local organizations.

## Summary of Strategic Goals

GOAL	OBJECTIVES
<p><b>Conservations Goals:</b></p> <p>1. Manage and better utilize MCAS properties for educational and research purposes.</p> <p>2. Identify current conservation issues.</p> <p>3. Set an example of ways to preserve and protect natural resources.</p>	<p>1.1 Complete a master resource management plan, including an operations manual; a comprehensive management plan monitoring the health of MCAS properties and including data on nesting habitat and special status plant species; and a protocol for future land acquisitions / transfer of properties / management of conservation easements. (Summer 2008)</p> <p>1.2 Use the master resource management plan to incorporate effective conservation practices and promote educational outreach. (2008-2012)</p> <p>2.1 Research conservation, land use, and legislative issues. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.2 Inform, educate, and recommend actions to be taken by members of the local community using programs, announcements and electronic and traditional print communications. (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.1 Promote use of public transportation, bicycling, walking, and carpooling. (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.2 Use 100% recycled paper and take steps to lead operations to a paperless / minimal paper protocol. (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.3 Recycle, reuse, and reduce waste of resources. (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.4 Develop resource use protocols and suggest use of similar protocols for individuals, other organizations, and community partners. (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.5 Offer “sweatshop-free” manufactured and organically produced merchandise from local sources when possible. (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.6 Reuse or use recycled materials when possible in construction projects or when purchasing needed items. (2007-2012)</p>
<p><b>Research Goals:</b></p> <p>1. Continue to support the Winter Loon Survey. Results will be shared with other agencies in an effort to (1) learn more about the wintering loon population in the Morro Bay Estuary, and (2) use the data to help determine the general health of the Morro Bay Estuary.</p>	<p>1.1 Provide opportunities for interested persons to volunteer. (2007-2012)</p> <p>1.2 Provide public outreach to inform and educate residents and visitors, including Power Point programs, educational displays, and field trips. (2007-2012)</p>

<p>2. Monitor and manage Western Snowy Plover habitat. Ultimately, the goal is to protect and restore Western Snowy Plover habitat in order to increase Western Snowy Plover populations.</p> <p>3. Continue to support the Hi Mountain Lookout Project, which uses the lookout for biological field research, radiotracking of California Condor movements, and an educational visitor center.</p> <p>4. Work collaboratively with other organizations to support future research projects.</p>	<p>2.1 Collect and synthesize data from completed recreational use surveys. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.2 Provide public outreach and educational programs for local residents and visitors. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.3 Expand volunteer training and recruitment. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.4 Continue to administer grant monies. (2007-2008)</p> <p>3.1 Provide monetary support for summer interns (2007-2012).</p> <p>3.2 Promote opportunities for volunteers at the visitor center, work days, fundraising efforts, and events at the Lookout. (2007-2012)</p> <p>4.1 Develop a protocol for MCAS involvement in research projects. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>4.2. Pursue and / or administer grant opportunities. (As needed)</p> <p>4.3 Provide educational opportunities and public awareness. (2007-2012)</p>
<p><b>Education Goals:</b></p> <p>1. Utilize MCAS office space as an educational outreach center to familiarize the community members and visitors with our organization.</p> <p>2. Expand and diversify MCAS field trips.</p> <p>3. Provide and increase participation in the "Audubon</p>	<p>1.1 Provide workshops, seminars and reference material. (2007-2012)</p> <p>1.2 Host special events. (2007-2012)</p> <p>1.3 Share office space with other organizations. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>1.4 Develop and follow a protocol for organizing, filing, and supplying office materials, maintaining equipment, and cleaning the office space. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.1 Offer field trips targeting youth and parents. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.2 Offer field trips for the mobility impaired. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.3 Co-sponsor field trips with other organizations. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.4 Sponsor the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival held each January (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.1 Use new format for teacher invitations to join the program. (2007)</p> <p>3.2 Offer a teacher workshop demonstrating a lesson. (2007-2008)</p> <p>3.3 Host an informal reception for teachers prior to a community</p>

<p>Adventures” National program to interested local school classrooms.</p> <p>4. Encourage members to participate in the youth outreach program.</p> <p>5. MCAS will increase attendance at all community programs.</p>	<p>program. (2007-2008)</p> <p>4.1 Encourage mentoring of young people through articles, website, and word of mouth. (2007)</p> <p>4.2 Provide sponsorships of necessary equipment (binoculars, guide books). (2007)</p> <p>4.3 Facilitate family participation in MCAS events by including events of interest to youth. (2007-2012)\</p> <p>4.4 Provide sponsorship of Audubon Adventures to a specific classroom. (2008)</p> <p>5.1 Hold programs at a consistent venue, 7 per year. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>5.2 Continue to offer programs at North County venue, 3 per year. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>5.3 Send special invitations to local educators. (2007-2012)</p> <p>5.4 Diversify program topics. (2007-2012)</p> <p>5.5 Improve publicity using press releases, ads, e-mail, Flyway, posted flyers, and word of mouth. (2007-2012)</p> <p>5.6 Develop and follow a protocol for contacting and thanking speakers, programs setup and cleanup, equipment use and materials and merchandise displays. (2007-2012)</p>
<p><b>Expansion Goals:</b></p> <p>1. Develop and select an appropriate logo to be used as a brand image on all MCAS merchandise, literature, correspondence, and physical environments (i.e. MCAS office, properties, event booths).</p> <p>2. Plan, initiate, and implement fundraising and fund handling strategies.</p>	<p>1.1 Assist Cal Poly graphic arts students in designing an MCAS logo. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>1.2 Develop brand image using the logo in a variety of applications. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>2.1 Implement annual fund / membership drive using a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebratory letter, incentives to increase gift-giving, and efforts to increase membership. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>2.2 Form a Fund Development committee to launch an endowment effort as part of a major capital campaign. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>2.3 Pursue available grant monies. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.4 Initiate and implement a formal planned giving / bequest program. (2007-2012)</p> <p>2.5 Use special events to generate funds for general revenue and / or dedicated purposes. (2007-2012)</p>

3. Increase MCAS membership.	<p>2.6 Sell merchandise incorporating new logo. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>2.7 Provide opportunities for corporate giving and sponsorships. (2008-2012)</p> <p>2.8 Develop a protocol for handling gifts and memorials. (2007)</p> <p>2.9 Develop a protocol for handling investments. (2007-2008)</p> <p>2.10 Develop a protocol for thanking donors. (2007)</p> <p>3.1 Distribute membership brochures with new logo at all events, programs, MCAS office, properties, and include application with Flyway. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>3.2 Provide membership information for all interested program attendees via a sign-in sheet or information cards. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>3.3 Use written and spoken communications to inform the public of our mission (conservation, not JUST birds). (2007-2012)</p> <p>3.4 Work with Audubon California to utilize techniques found effective in increasing membership. (Fall 2007)</p>
4. Encourage and convince MCAS members to take an active role in the organization.	<p>4.1 Offer volunteer opportunities via the Flyway, the website, membership applications, and word of mouth. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>4.2 Develop a protocol for engaging potential volunteers in projects, committees and as board members via follow-up communications. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>4.3 Develop a protocol for thanking volunteers. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>4.4 Use and understand the MCAS "CREED" as a substantive spoken message to potential volunteers and leaders. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>4.5 Provide opportunities for members to use involvement with MCAS as a parallel career: intertwining of paid and volunteer jobs to strengthen work skills and personal contacts for the benefit of individuals, organizations, and the community. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>4.6 Facilitate e-mail correspondence, web-based communications, phone and / or video conferencing for board and committee members. (2007-2012)</p>
5. Increase public awareness of MCAS, its mission, and its activities.	<p>5.1 Update and reformat website. (Summer 2007)</p> <p>5.2 Update and reformat newsletter. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>5.3 Expand MCAS Alert!, an e-mail service to announce events or provide reminders. (2007-2012)</p> <p>5.4 Use printed, spoken, and electronic publicity to promote MCAS. (2007-2012)</p>
<b>Diversity Goals:</b>	
1. Participate in more local community events which attract a diverse audience.	<p>1.1 Evaluate MCAS involvement in past community events to determine which events proved effective in helping MCAS reach a diverse audience. (Fall 2007)</p> <p>1.2 Participate in events in which MCAS can reach a receptive yet diverse audience. (2007-2012)</p> <p>1.3 Use information gained from Bren School MB Visitor Use Survey to target new demographics. (2008-2012)</p>
2. Pursue local business	2.1 Offer businesses opportunities to sponsor MCAS projects. (2007-

<p>involvement and support.</p>	<p>2012) 2.2 Offer businesses partnership opportunities. (2007-2012)</p>
<p>3. Work collaboratively with other local groups to promote conservation issues and awareness.</p>	<p>3.1 Offer collaborative programs with other organizations concerned with conservation issues. (2007-2012) 3.2 Partner with other organizations to accomplish conservation goals, strengthen voice in the community, and introduce conservation-minded individuals to MCAS. (2007-2012)</p>