



Gavin Newsom, Governor
NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD
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WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

August 28, 2019
10:00 a.m.

Natural Resources Building
First Floor Auditorium
1416 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Meeting Minutes

The Wildlife Conservation Board met on Wednesday, August 28, 2019 in the auditorium of the Natural Resources Building in Sacramento, California. Chairman Chuck Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, called the meeting to order and invited John Donnelly, Executive Director of the Wildlife Conservation Board to perform roll call.

1. Roll Call

Wildlife Conservation Board Members

Charlton H. Bonham, Chair
Director, Department of Fish and Wildlife

Alina Bokde, Public Member

Gayle Miller
Vice, Keely Bosler, Member
Director, Department of Finance

Diane Colborn, Public Member

Mary Creasman, Public Member

Fran Pavley, Public Member

Eric Sklar, Member
President Fish and Game Commission

Joint Legislative Advisory Committee

Katerina Robinson
Vice, Senator Nancy Skinner

Senator Henry Stern

Wildlife Conservation Board Meeting, August 28, 2019

Keith Cialino
Vice, Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia

Executive Director
John P. Donnelly

Wildlife Conservation Board Meeting, August 28, 2019

Wildlife Conservation Board Staff Present:

Mary Ahern
Cara Allen
Adam Ballard
Stephen Bouthillier
Heather Conn
Don Crocker
James Croft
Alexa Dunn
Chad Fien
Rebecca Fris
Chris Garbarini
Justin Gonzales
Judah Grossman
Elizabeth Hubert
Hardeep Kaur
Kurt Malchow

Scott McFarlin
Heather McIntire
Colin Mills
Joe Navari
Alyssa Persau
Sarah Rattanasamay
Celestial Reysner
Jessica Schroeder
Sadie Smith
Eddie Story
Dan Vasquez
John Walsh
Lloyd Warble
Kurt Weber
Heidi West
Jasen Yee

Others Present:

Jack Easton, Rivers & Lands Conserv.
Bridget Fithian, Sierra Foothill Conserv.
Melissa Odell, Sierra Foothill Conserv.
Emily Zakowski, Env. Defense Fund
Jenn Shepard, CARCD
Dan Glusenkamp, CA Native Plant Soc.
Casey Pancaro, DWR
Eric Holst, Env. Defense Fund
Eric Haney, CDFW
Greg Heydeman, CA Waterfowl Assoc.
Sharon Wasserman, TNC
Aiyana Bodi, Pacific Forest Trust
Geary Hund, Mojave Desert Land Trust

Clark Stevens, RCD Santa Monica Mtns.
Lauren Miller, Sierra Foothill Conserv.
Mary Beth Woulfe, USFWS
Liz Bellas, Sac. Co. Regional Parks
Karen Buhr, CARCD
Stewart McMorrow, CAL FIRE
Pablo Garza, Env. Defense Fund
Kjellen Belcher, Env. Defense Fund
Warren Wong, CDFW
Shawn Harrison, Soil Born Farms
Heather White, State Parks
Linus Eukel, John Muir Land Trust

2. Public Forum for Items not on this Agenda

An opportunity for the general public to share comments or concerns on topics that are not included in this agenda. The Board may not discuss or take action on any matter raised during this item, except to decide whether to place the matter on the agenda of a future meeting. (Sections 11125, 11125.7(a), Government Code)

3. Funding Status**Informational**

The following funding status depicts total Capital Outlay and Local Assistance appropriations by fund source and fund number:

August 28, 2019	
FUND STATUS	
Informational	
The following funding status depicts Capital Outlay and Local Assistance appropriations by year of appropriation and by fund source and fund number.	
<u>RECAP OF FUND BALANCES</u>	
WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUND (0447)	\$1,000,000.00
August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
Total Project Development:	0.00
Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$1,000,000.00
HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND (0262)	\$90,017,932.29
August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(4,946,250.00)
Total Project Development:	(54,328,123.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$30,743,559.29
SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS, CLEAN WATER, CLEAN AIR, AND COASTAL PROTECTION BOND FUND (Proposition 12) (0005)	\$2,983,880.00
August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(1,671,500.00)
Total Project Development:	(915,000.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$397,380.00
CALIFORNIA CLEAN WATER, CLEAN AIR, SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND COASTAL PROTECTION BOND FUND (Proposition 40) (6029)	\$6,394,406.43
August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
Total Project Development:	(3,251,000.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$3,143,406.43
WATER SECURITY, CLEAN DRINKING WATER, COASTAL AND BEACH PROTECTION FUND OF 2002 (Proposition 50) (6031)	\$26,081,798.83
August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(2,010,000.00)
Total Project Development:	(19,000,010.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$5,071,788.83
SAFE DRINKING WATER, WATER QUALITY AND SUPPLY, FLOOD CONTROL, RIVER AND COASTAL PROTECTION FUND OF 2006 (Proposition 84) (6051)	\$31,384,428.33
August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(1,285,500.00)
Total Project Development:	(11,896,306.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$18,202,622.33

Wildlife Conservation Board Meeting, August 28, 2019

WATER QUALITY, SUPPLY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT FUND (Proposition 1) (6083)		\$63,367,539.60
	August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
	Total Project Development:	0.00
	Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$63,367,539.60
THE CALIFORNIA DROUGHT, WATER, PARKS, CLIMATE, COASTAL PROTECTION, AND OUTDOOR ACCESS FOR ALL ACT OF 2018 (Proposition 68)-(6088)		\$203,049,000.00
	August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(889,000.00)
	Total Project Development:	(12,342,210.00)
	Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$189,817,790.00
GENERAL FUND (0001)		\$13,475,000.00
	August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(1,255,000.00)
	Total Project Development:	(10,000,000.00)
	Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$2,220,000.00
GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION FUND (3228)		\$15,730,345.00
	August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(248,020.00)
	Total Project Development:	(13,476,040.00)
	Projected Unallocated Balance:	\$2,006,285.00
TOTAL – ALL FUNDS		\$453,484,330.48
	Grand Total - August 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(12,305,270.00)
	Grand Total -Project Development	(125,208,689.00)
		315,970,371.48
RECAP OF NATURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT ACT OF 2000		
Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000		
Chapter 113, Statutes of 2000 and Chapter 715, Statutes of 2004 (through 6/30/08)		\$48,598,734.00
Chapter 220, Statutes of 2009 (effective 1/1/10)		\$8,662,500.00

Executive Director John Donnelly noted that related to WCB funding is the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF); a \$30 million allocation funding appropriation that the legislature does every year. HCF is important to WCB because it receives \$21 million of that annual appropriation every year. It is used for a number of different purposes that are spelled out in the original initiative. HCF was created out of Proposition 117 which is the Mountain Lion initiative that passed in 1990 and is scheduled to sunset in June of 2020. He then introduced Senator Henry Stern, who had just entered the board meeting. He further noted that Senator Stern, as one of the legislative members of WCB, took leadership on HCF funding for WCB and was able to get the funding extended for another ten years. Mr. Donnelly expressed his appreciation on behalf of WCB and also the administration's support and extending the HCF as well.

Senator Stern stated it is a testament to WCB that it wasn't that hard of a lift, to be honest, once you just walk members and the administration through the history of this Board doing diligent work, delivering results, being professional, working with stakeholders. It's never easy, but the professionalism of this operation made it a very easy sell and praise goes to Governor Newsom for stepping up and looking after wildness all over this State and our leadership too. He ended by thanking John Donnelly and the Board for being so dependable for this State and he felt it was only the beginning. There is a lot of trust among the membership of the legislature for the work that WCB does.

4. Proposed Consent Calendar (Items 5 - 15)

Chair Bonham asked if there were any questions or comments on the consent items; there were none. He then noted he wished to remove Item 9 to be presented along with the other proposals.

Mr. Donnelly noted there were two speaker cards for the consent calendar: Item 10 - Bridget Fithian, Sierra Foothill Conservancy; and Item 13 – Geary Hund, Mojave Desert Land Trust.

Ms. Bridget Fithian stated her support for Item 10, Hornitos Ranch, noting it will be the single largest acquisition for the Sierra Foothill Conservancy in their 23-year history. She also wanted to recognize their other funders; the Department of Conservation, the California Wildlife Foundation and the Oaks Fund as well as CDFW for their financial commitment.

Mr. Geary Hund thanked the Board for its support of Item 13, Palisades Ranch Restoration, and also the Board's previous support for the acquisition of the Palisades Ranch.

It was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve Consent Calendar Items 5-15, excluding Item 9, as proposed in the individual agenda explanations.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar - Yes

***5. Approval of Minutes – April 4, 2019
May 22, 2019**

***6. Recovery of Funds**

The following projects previously authorized by the Board are now completed, and some have balances of funds that can be recovered and returned to their respective funds. It is recommended that the following totals be recovered and that the projects be closed.

RECOVERIES BY FUND	Amount
Habitat Conservation Fund	\$59,677.00
California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund	\$1,800,150.83
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006	\$59,430.99
Total Recoveries for All Funds	\$1,919,258.82

Habitat Conservation Fund	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Kataoka) Exp 66	\$6,714.00	\$4,589.00	\$2,125.00
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Schaeffer) Exp 68	\$4,000.00	\$1,175.00	\$2,825.00
Palisades Ranch, Mojave River	\$1,270,000.00	\$1,247,829.00	\$22,171.00
Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve, Expansion 3	\$25,000.00	\$19,261.00	\$5,739.00
San Vicente Highlands, Expansion 1 (Pitman)	\$130,00.00	\$113,800.00	\$16,200.00
Wheeler Ridge, Expansion 8 (Dodson)	\$295,000.00	\$284,383.00	\$10,617.00
Total Recoveries to Habitat Conservation Fund			\$59,677.00

California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Carmel River Riparian Restoration	\$2,500,00.00	\$718,142.92	\$1,781,857.08
DFG Land Management Plans, Inland Deserts Region, Phase II	\$221,000.00	\$221,000.00	\$0.00
DFG Land Management Plans, Inland Deserts Region, Phase II, Augmentation	\$260,000.00	\$260,000.00	\$0.00
DFG Land Management Plans, Inland Deserts Region, Phase II, Augmentation II	\$323,100.00	\$323,099.34	\$0.66
Luffenholtz Transfer	\$20,000.00	\$5,337.00	\$14,663.00
San Joaquin River Parkway, Lewis S. Eaton Trail River West CEQA Augmentation	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$0.00
San Joaquin River Parkway, Lewis S. Eaton Trail River West CEQA, Augmentation III	\$147,000.00	\$143,369.91	\$3,630.09
San Joaquin River Parkway, Lewis S. Eaton Trail River West CEQA, EIR Augmentation	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$0.00
San Joaquin River Parkway, Lewis S. Eaton Trail, River West CEQA	\$160,000.00	\$160,000.00	\$0.00
Total Recoveries to California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund			\$1,800,150.83

Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006	Allocated	Expended	Balance
CDFW Vegetation Classification and Mapping, Phase II	\$1,560,000.00	\$1,541,095.01	\$18,904.99
Humboldt State University/Arcata Jacoby Creek Forest - Expansion	\$1,755,000.00	\$1,727,698.00	\$27,302.00
Los Angeles River - Taylor Yard G2 Expansion 1	\$5,015,000.00	\$5,001,776.00	\$13,224.00
San Joaquin River Parkway, San Joaquin Hatchery Public Access and Trail	\$2,230,000.00	\$2,230,000.00	\$0.00
<i>Total Recoveries to Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006</i>			<i>\$59,430.99</i>

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve the Recovery of Funds. Recovery totals include: \$59,677.00 to the Habitat Conservation Fund; \$1,800,150.83 to the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund; and \$59,430.99 to the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes

***7. Contract Authorization for Accounting Services**

WCB requested the Board approve execution of a three-year interagency agreement with CDFW to provide WCB professional accounting and fiscal support services.

This proposal was to request approval for the Executive Director of the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to execute a three-year interagency agreement not to exceed \$1,371,396 (\$457,132 annually) with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Accounting Services Branch (ASB) to provide WCB with professional accounting and fiscal support services. The agreement does not fall into the amount of delegation authority to the Executive Director of WCB from the February 24, 2016 Board meeting of no more than \$150,000 in value per year and seeks Board approval.

The services provided by ASB are integral to WCB's day-to-day administrative operations and support all of its land acquisition and habitat conservation programs. Examples of such services include but are not limited to the following: processing and facilitating payments for all incoming invoices for project development and land acquisition projects and activities; establishing and maintaining general ledger accounts; reviewing expenditures and reconciling FI\$Cal reports with State Controller's Office accounts; and preparing and reviewing financial statements, expenditure, and encumbrance reports for all WCB funds. WCB does not directly employ staff that possess the diverse and extensive technical knowledge required to provide all of the independent professional accounting service functions required to support its daily operations. Historically, past interagency agreements have provided funding for approximately 1-3 ASB accounting positions. The number of positions funded is based largely on WCB's program needs, total available funding, and the number of planned and ongoing development and acquisition projects. The proposed agreement will provide funding for three Associate Accounting Analyst positions. Staff believes that funding three positions is reasonable to support WCB's current operations, as well as to manage the expected increase in accounting-related work as a result of WCB's recent allocation from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and outdoor Access (Proposition 68).

Staff recommended that the Board approves the Executive Director of WCB to execute a three-year interagency agreement not to exceed \$1,371,396 (\$457,132 annually) with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Accounting Services Branch to provide WCB with professional accounting and fiscal support services.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve the Executive Director of WCB to execute a three-year interagency agreement not to exceed \$1,371,396 (\$457,132 annually) with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Accounting Services Branch to provide WCB with professional accounting and fiscal support services.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes

***8. Ash Creek Wildlife Area Land Exchange
Lassen County
\$0**

This proposal was to consider the exchange of 139± acres owned by CDFW for 100± acres owned by Peter and Lynn Gerig (Gerig) at CDFW's Ash Creek Wildlife Area (ACWA).

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The subject exchange properties are located at the Ash Creek Wildlife Area in Big Valley of southern Lassen County about 35 miles northeast of Redding and 50 miles southwest of Alturas on State Route 299. The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) initially acquired 11,525± acres in the heart of Big Valley in 1985 to protect a variety of habitats, including riparian forest, wet meadows, sage steppe, upland native grasslands, and a 3,000± acre marsh known as Big Swamp. Over the years, through various Board actions, the ACWA has grown to nearly 15,000± acres. In 1988, WCB funded a small project to improve levees and add water control structures to allow CDFW to better manage the site. In 2005, WCB funded a wetland enhancement project to develop open water habitats in the Big Swamp portion of ACWA. The northeastern portion of ACWA is a relatively undisturbed area, containing a series of seasonal swales that drain the hills to the north into Ash Creek. For many decades prior to WCB's acquisition of the property, the areas between the swales were farmed or heavily grazed, but never leveled. ACWA is one of the most remote, least improved, and most pristine of all of CDFW's Wildlife Areas. ACWA consists of freshwater wetlands created by the seasonal flow of six streams, including Ash Creek. In addition to 3,000 acres of natural wetlands, other natural communities include vernal pools and upland sagebrush. Among the mammals seen here are pronghorn antelope, beaver, and bobcat. Bird species include numerous waterfowl species, the threatened sandhill crane, falcons, sage grouse, short-eared owls, and bald eagles.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The exchange is necessitated by the successful Ash Creek Wetlands Enhancement Project initially approved at the 2005 Board meeting. The purpose of that project was to repair the degraded meadow and aquatic conditions along the lower portion of ACWA. That project was a cooperative effort between the Pit Resource Conservation District and CDFW. Approximately 2,415 acres were restored. In addition to improved aquatic conditions, the project increased water retention on the ACWA, thereby improving groundwater storage and providing a sediment buffer. The projects in the winter of 2006-2007 and the winter of 2008-2009 created channels in Big Swamp to provide open water for waterfowl, improve wetland habitat conditions, and fire breaks in the event of natural and controlled fires. While these habitat improvement projects have greatly improved waterfowl habitat on the ACWA, they have created an issue with the neighboring Gerig property. The overwhelming success of the restoration project resulted in increased surface water flowing through the Gerig property. The inundation of water for extended periods of time resulted in a reduction of hay production and grazing opportunities because of a dense stand of tules. CDFW and Gerig desire a permanent solution to the problem. Discussions with Gerig revealed they would be amenable to a property exchange wherein CDFW would take title to a 100+ acre portion of the parcel affected by the inundation (Acquisition Property) and Gerig would take title to a nearby 139+ parcel that is part of the ACWA (Exchange Property) and out of the Wetlands Enhancement Project area. Disposing of the Exchange Property is beneficial for CDFW because it eliminates a non-contiguous parcel that is located across Bieber-Lookout Road and resolves the conflict with the Gerigs. The Acquisition Property will allow CDFW to more effectively manage the ACWA because it is contiguous.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed exchange is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Code Section 1300, et seq.), which authorizes WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with the acquisition of properties. Under Fish and Game Code section 1348(c)(2), WCB may authorize the exchange of real property or rights in real property held under the jurisdiction of CDFW. These activities were carried out in conjunction with CDFW, which prepared a Land Conversion Evaluation (LCE) concluding that the biological values of the Acquisition Property are equal to, or exceed, those of the CDFW held Exchange Property proposed for exchange. The LCE must be approved by subdivisions within CDFW, that includes the land acquisition coordinators in the Regional Office, Lands Program, Regional Manager, and Deputy Director for the Wildlife and Fisheries Division. The LCE is then submitted to the Director for final approval and transmitted to WCB to pursue the requested exchange of properties.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB 's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.2 – Fund projects and landscape areas that conserve, protect, or enhance water resources for fish and wildlife:

- The Acquisition Property provides a high level of wetland habitat integrity that supports migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW:

- CDFW submitted a Land Conversion Evaluation to WCB detailing the reasons and justifications for entering into and completing the proposed exchange of properties.

Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities in conjunction with other uses and without degrading environmental resources:

- The Acquisition Property will be managed by CDFW staff to provide the public access for recreation in the form of hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

CDFW will manage the Acquisition Property in conjunction with the existing ACWA. Public access will be available consistent with the existing public access at ACWA.

TERMS

The Acquisition Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$200,000. The Exchange Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$200,000, creating no difference in value between the Acquisition Property and the Exchange Property. The appraisals covering both properties were reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. WCB must review and approve all title documents, appraisals, preliminary title reports, exchange documents, escrow instructions, and instruments of conveyance prior to the exchange.

FUNDING SOURCE

Real estate transaction due diligence costs will be paid from the below-referenced funding source. The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source that allows for the acquisition of habitat to protect rare,

endangered, threatened or fully protected species to protect or enhance a flood protection corridor or bypass. [Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c) (Proposition 1E)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for fish and wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

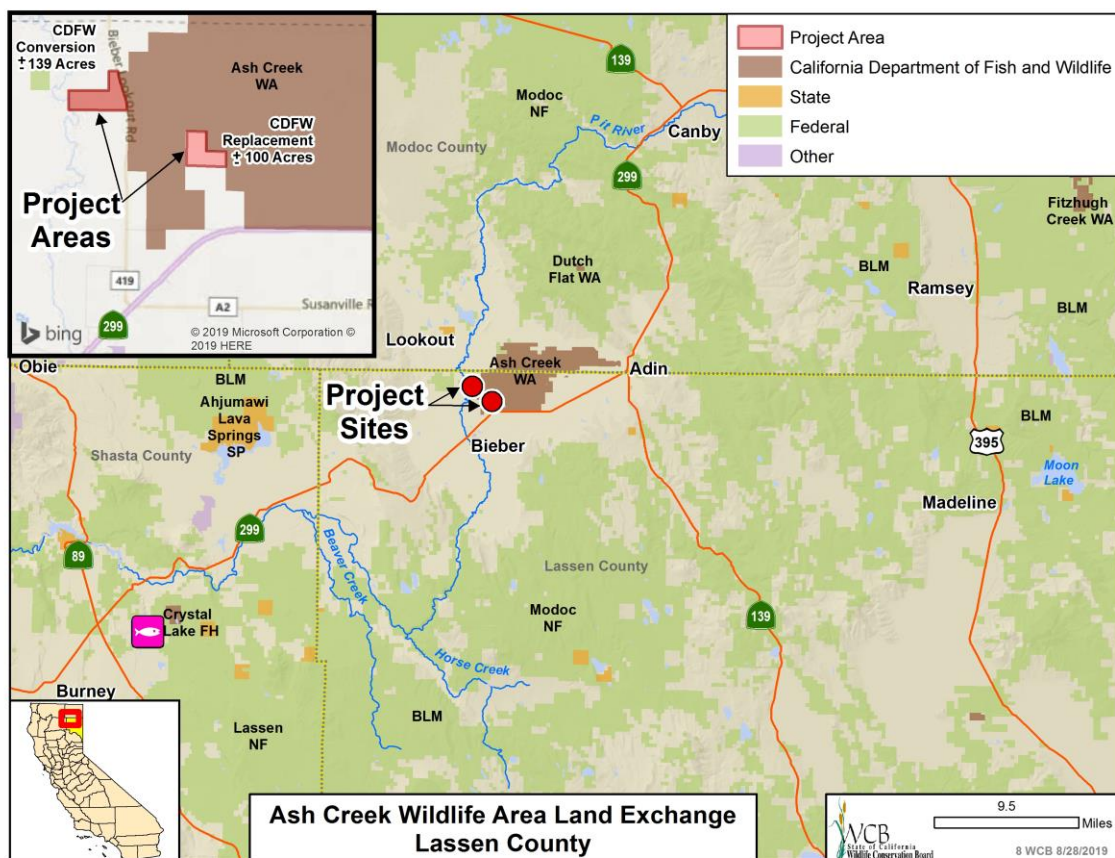
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**9. Orchards Alive Monarch Butterfly Habitat
Yolo/Colusa County
\$505,000**

Mr. Donnelly wished to note the Environmental Defense Fund was supportive in taking a leadership role and getting the program created last year under passage of AB 2421.

Chair Bonham stated he asked this item be moved off of consent for one reason only; it's a first investment into the monarch butterfly program and he thought it should be brought forward instead of kept on consent. CDFW has been toying with how to better talk about what CDFW does and one of the tag lines being pondered is whether we should be telling people, "our job is a butterfly in every back yard."

Mr. Chad Fien presented this project.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) for a cooperative project with two private landowners to plant up to 325 acres of multi-benefit breeding and migratory habitat for monarch butterflies in two maturing pecan orchards in Colusa and Yolo counties.

LOCATION

The project will be implemented in two maturing pecan orchards; a seven-year old orchard located 1.5 miles north of Colusa, Colusa County, and a one-year old orchard located 5.1 miles southeast of Knights Landing, Yolo County.

California's Central Valley is particularly important to the health of the western monarch butterfly population. Monarch butterflies travel through the Central Valley as they migrate to and from their overwintering grounds on the California coast, and historically monarch butterfly caterpillars developed on milkweed that grew throughout the Central Valley. Much of the high-quality habitat of milkweed and other wildflowers that was historically found in the Central Valley has been lost as grasslands and rangelands have been developed or converted to agriculture. Because the Central Valley is so important to the western monarch population, producers in the region have a unique opportunity to help monarchs and other pollinators by planting milkweed and wildflowers on their farms.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

According to the Xerces Society's 2018 Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count, the western monarch population has declined by 86 percent since 2017 and is now at approximately 0.5 percent of its historic size. Habitat conservation for the western monarch is urgently needed.

The Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program was created for the purpose of recovering and sustaining populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Monarch butterflies face a variety of threats including loss of overwintering and breeding habitat, effects of climate change, pesticides, parasites, predation, and disease. Efforts to protect and restore overwintering and breeding habitat are the best strategies to employ for the recovery of the monarch butterfly population. Private landowners are some of the strongest advocates for protecting and restoring overwintering and breeding habitat for the monarch butterfly.

This project will demonstrate how the bare ground typically found on pecan orchard floors can be transformed into a multi-benefit, scalable model for monarch conservation and sustainable orchard management. The objectives of this project are: 1) to develop a custom cover crop species mix and management regime to benefit monarchs and native

pollinators in maturing pecan orchards while improving soil health and incorporating an ecological pest management approach; 2) work with landowners to implement this new management regime; 3) measure habitat outcomes and project success with EDF's Habitat Quantification Tool; and 4) share results with other orchard managers, agricultural groups, and policymakers to create opportunities to scale.

The habitat sites will be planted with a multi-benefit species mix that optimizes benefits for monarchs, native pollinators, ecological pest control, soil health, and potential carbon sequestration. The species mix will include:

- Native, regionally appropriate milkweed to support monarch breeding.
- Diverse, native nectar plants to support monarchs and other native pollinators.
- Native plants to encourage beneficial insects to promote ecological pest control.
- Plants selected for their ability to increase soil health and to potentially sequester carbon.

This project is an innovative approach, grounded in science and vetted for compatibility with pecan orchard operations by licensed pest control advisors and pecan orchard managers. This approach will pave the way for the integration of multi-benefit monarch habitat into pecan orchards at a large scale.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program and meets the program's goal of recovering and sustaining populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:

- Restore pollinator habitat within working lands to increase habitat for pollinators (hedgerows, pollinator meadows, orchard understory plantings, riparian and rangeland revegetation, and flowering cover crops).
- Enhance habitats on working lands by restoring habitat on agricultural lands.

In addition, this project contributes to the goals and objectives outlined in the California State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), the Mid Sacramento Valley Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS), and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (WAFWA) Western Monarch Butterfly Conservation Plan (WAFWA Plan).

This project addresses the priorities in SWAP by promoting the multiple benefits of agricultural lands and gives support to landowners who are willing to create important habitat on their orchards. It pioneers a new approach to orchard management, which will allow pecan orchards to provide important habitat for wildlife species.

The RCIS plan is currently in draft stage and is being reviewed by CDFW. The RCIS highlights pollinators as a focal species and this project will work towards the RCIS' objective to restore pollinator habitat in the agricultural landscape through plantings in

orchard understories. It also supports the objective of minimizing pesticide use, which this project will accomplish via its ecological pest management plan.

This WAFWA Plan establishes a goal of providing an additional 50,000 acres of monarch-friendly breeding and migratory habitat in California's Central Valley by 2029. This project contributes to that goal directly by creating 325 acres of multi-benefit monarch habitat in the Central Valley. Additionally, the innovative approach developed for this project may be adapted for additional pecan projects, providing a scalable method by which pecan orchards across the state can contribute to meeting WAFWA's habitat restoration goal.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), certified Pest Control Advisors (PCAs), the landowners, and EDF will provide management and monitoring responsibilities. NCAT and EDF will additionally provide outreach and encourage wide adoption of project practices by other pecan orchards. Outreach includes: regularly communicating with landowners and landowner groups (including the California Pecan Growers Association) about the challenges and benefits of managing permanent habitat in a young pecan orchard, developing written information to share on partners' websites as well as outreach materials in other formats such as podcasts and short videos, and host field and media days at the site so that interested producers and media audiences can view the habitat and learn about challenges and successes.

If at any time during the five-year life of the project, the project improvements are not maintained, the Grant Agreement requires that EDF refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	LANDOWNERS	TOTAL COST
Planning and Project Administration	\$59,749	---	\$59,749
Planting Materials (seeds and seedlings)	\$351,580	---	\$351,580
Plant Establishment, Site Maintenance and Use	\$2,000	\$96,212	\$98,212
Ecological Pest Management	\$10,000	\$36,000	\$46,000
Monitoring and Reporting	\$47,348	---	\$47,348
Outreach	\$34,323	---	\$34,323
TOTAL	\$505,000	\$132,212	\$637,212

Project costs are for developing a custom cover crop species mix and management regime to benefit monarchs and native pollinators while improving soil health and incorporating an ecological pest management approach, site preparation and planting, and maintenance and monitoring.

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source that allows for one or more of the following objectives: restore or enhance

California prairie and other appropriate breeding habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators, restore or enhance overwintering monarch butterfly habitat, provide technical assistance to grant recipients, provide grants for seasonal or temporary habitat improvements, or provide block grants in which sub-allocations are made by the grant recipient. [Fish and Game Code section 1374; General Fund, Budget Act of 2018, Chapter 29]

CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3) Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration to land which does not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Subject to approval of this proposal by WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

The project was evaluated and scored by technical reviews from CDFW and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, both of which recommend this project for funding by WCB.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$505,000 from the General Fund, Budget Act of 2018, Chapter 29; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Fien gave a general overview of the life history and population status of the monarch butterfly and then asked if there were any questions before he continued with this specific project.

Mr. Fien noted that Pablo Garza, Emily Zakowski, and Kjellen Belcher with the Environmental Defense Fund were in the audience.

Chair Bonham noted his appreciation for preparing the presentation overnight and offered the following challenge “that all of the agriculture in California that’s well positioned for similar projects – let’s do them and up the monarch population numbers primarily through this kind of collaborative work”

Mr. Fien also noted WCB received a letter of support from Mark Hendrixson, President, California Pecan Growers Association. These will be model orchards that they hope to expand throughout California. If this is successful, we hope to push it to the southeast part of the United States where most of the pecan production exists.

Board member Diane Colborn asked about the monitoring that will be done. What methodologies will be used that can share the results and information so we can provide for broader application, assuming it is successful?

Mr. Fien stated that as part of this process the landowners work with certified pest control advisors (PCAs) and those PCAs are on board to go out weekly and monitor these cover crops for abundance and insect diversity. We will be able to see results immediately whether these things are providing the benefits or to what extent. There is also a larger effort with the milkweed mapper which is a website that is a collaborative effort with the Xerces Society, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a few other partners where professionals and citizen scientists can go and put in their information: where they saw

milkweed plants, where they saw monarchs, that is one avenue. They also work closely with the California Association of RCDs and they will plan field days and probably some media days.

Board member Fran Pavley wondered if there were any other applications and multi-benefits when we are restoring all this land after the fires and things like that.

Mr. Fien noted that part of WCB's normal process throughout all WCB programs is asking the question if there are other benefits, ecological benefits, species benefits beyond the program that we can also score projects on. Highlighting monarchs specifically in our other programs is worth considering.

Board member Mary Creasman asked how much money there was and where we were at in spending that. She also asked about the quality of proposals received.

Mr. Fien stated this program, for now, received a one-time allocation of \$3 million. That money needs to be spent promptly, it sunsets in June of 2022. Currently we have received over \$7 million in requests – far exceeding the allocation. We do have other programs we can look at to tie in some of our more general habitat restoration projects tying in both the monarch aspects and the requirements of the other fund source or the other programs that we have and maybe marry those together and come up with some additional projects or find applications that have both aspects that we might be able to use additional funds to get more monarch projects on the ground. Both this project and the next were vetted through CDFW and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and both projects were ranked in the 90s.

Ms. Creasman asked if WCB felt it would need to go through more rounds.

Mr. Fien stated WCB would most likely not go through more solicitations unless they receive more funds. Presently the applications are going through the scoring and ranking process and we do have some nice quality ones. We will want to move on those as quickly as possible because we want to give the plants enough time to establish and give our grantees enough time to irrigate and get those plants going so we can have actual viable habitat in the end.

Ms. Creasman restated her stance about the multiple benefits. With new programs comes the great opportunity to talk about the impacts of an investment like this and hopefully we can get more money.

Chair Bonham made the additional point of 'who is anti-butterfly and what kid doesn't love them, and a butterfly in every backyard.' It's a built-in public relations platform for all of us.

Board member Alina Bokde noted it would be great to see a map of where we received the applications from. Moving forward on future projects, she requested we see maps indicating where the applications came from.

Mr. Fien wished to note that this program differed a little bit from other competitive grant programs since there was no deadline, we do not have all applications at once. Because it is a moving target we never know how many more applications we can add to the map as this goes on, whereas our other competitive grant programs we have a deadline we can see all of them at once and see where they came from. Because the targeted areas are pretty narrow, even if we received applications from all over the state, there are certain areas that are going to be geographically more suitable to the program because the

program is so narrowly focused.

Ms. Bokde noted she felt it would still be a kind of snapshot of where we are to date in applications received.

It was moved by Board Member Alina Bokde that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$505,000 from the General Fund, Budget Act of 2018, Chapter 29; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

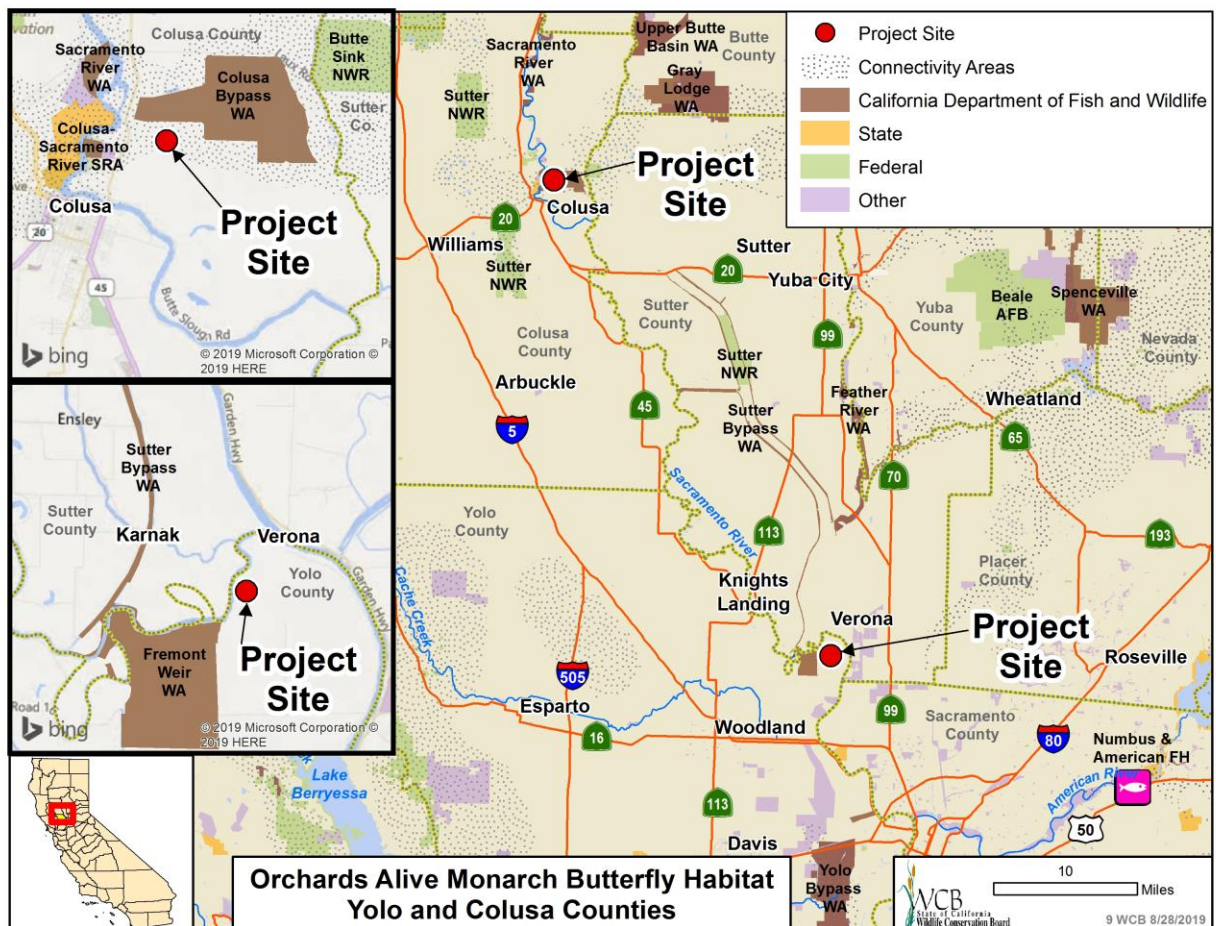
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



***10. Hornitos Ranch Conservation Easement
Mariposa County
\$98,944**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC), for a cooperative project with CDFW, the California Department of Conservation (DOC), and the California Wildlife Foundation (CWF) to acquire a conservation easement (Easement) over 7,100± acres of land to protect and preserve oak woodlands, grasslands, and potential habitat for the California tiger salamander, vernal pool fairy shrimp (VFS), conservancy fairy shrimp (CFS), and various vernal pool plants.

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property) is situated in Western Mariposa County, in the scenic Sierra Nevada Foothills just west of the community of Hornitos, adjacent to Lake McSwain, Lake McClure, and the Merced River. Presently, this region supports large scale ranching activities, but recently is experiencing expansion of rural residential and rural ranchette development, as well as encroaching orchards intensifying agricultural uses on lands historically used solely for grazing.

The general terrain of the vicinity and the Property is rolling hills, supporting oak woodlands, grasslands, and oak savanna habitat types. The Property is interspersed with several streams that are ephemeral tributaries to the Merced River. The surrounding area is characterized by a significant amount of widely dispersed developed rural homesteads along with large agricultural landscapes.

The Property is of ecological significance for vernal pool wetlands and associated plant and animal populations found on and near the Property. Furthermore, a portion of the property sits within the USFWS's Critical Habitat Designation for VFS, CFS, Green's tuctoria, Colusa grass, succulent owl's clover, and San Joaquin Valley orcutt grass. While no biological studies have been conducted on the Property, these species are found nearby and are thought to occur on the Property.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property is an undeveloped, irregularly-shaped tract of land that includes 42 assessor parcel numbers, retaining 106 developable rights suitable for rural residential development. The Property has been managed as rangeland for many years with a well-developed network of interior access roads, stock ponds and improved springs. The topography of the Property varies from 470 to 1270 feet above sea level with rolling to steeply sloping terrain and is predominantly grasslands or lightly forested with blue oaks and mixed chaparral to the north. Burns Creek runs through the Property and provides some riparian habitat as does the larger Merced River and Lake McSwain complex running along the western boundary of the Property.

The purpose of the Easement is to allow for continued ranching practices and animal husbandry in a way that is compatible with protection of the Property's resource values. The Easement will prevent future subdivision and limit development of the Property, which would have a detrimental effect on the watersheds and ecological benefits of the Property. The Easement also protects vernal pool habitat, oak woodlands, and the associated species. Economic stimulus from ranching activities will still be allowed and have positive results for the region and local economies.

The parties to the Easement intend to extinguish most of the development rights and restrict the use of the ranch to rangelands. The terms of the Easement will allow for two building envelopes with no more than three homes on the Property. Species observed on

the Property that will benefit from its protection include the following: western spadefoot, western pond turtle, and a vast array of migratory birds including several raptors like Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, osprey, golden eagle, bald eagle, and prairie falcon. Black bear, deer, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, and rabbit are known to use the Property as well.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant is being considered under the WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, et seq.) authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the Program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.1 – Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The project conserves natural forest, watersheds, and riparian habitat that supports healthy fish, wildlife and plant populations and ecosystem functions in a changing climate. Furthermore, the project protects connectivity areas between critical habitats to allow for the movement of species in response to climate change.

Goal A-4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.

The Hornitos Ranch Conservation Easement project is located within two CDFW approved Conceptual Area Protection Plans (CAPP), the Central Mariposa CAPP and the Merced Vernal Pool Preserve CAPP.

Goal E-1 – Maximize expenditure of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.

The project is being leveraged with funds coming from the DOC Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program, CDFW, CWF and WCB. The total appraised value of the conservation easement is being split between CDFW and SALC, while CWF is contributing \$100,000 towards costs associated with the project. The total purchase price of the Easement is \$5,150,000 million while the total WCB investment is only \$98,944, approximately 2 percent of the total cost.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Under the terms of the Easement, the landowners will be allowed to continue ranching in accordance with a Long-Term Management Plan, and all applicable state and federal laws, practices, guidelines, and regulations.

SFC will hold, manage, and be responsible for the monitoring of the Easement in perpetuity per WCB grant terms. If this project is approved, a baseline report will be

completed by the Grantee and approved by WCB. The conservation easement deed permits access to the Property by both SFC and WCB staff for monitoring purposes.

TERMS

The Easement has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$5,150,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. The terms and conditions of the grant between WCB and the SFC provide that staff of WCB must review and approve all title documents, appraisals, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions, and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, WCB can seek specific performance of the grant or require the grantee to transfer the Easement to WCB or another qualified holder.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

WCB	\$98,944
CDFW Proposition 1	\$2,869,356
California Department of Conservation	\$2,181,700
TOTAL Purchase Price	\$5,150,000

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which allows for the restoration or acquisition of habitat for threatened and endangered species or for the purpose of promoting recovery of those species. [Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Section 5096.350(a)(3)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$98,944 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Section 5096.350(a) (3) for the grant to the SFC and to cover project-related expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$98,944 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Section 5096.350(a) (3) for the grant to the SFC and to cover project-related expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to

accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

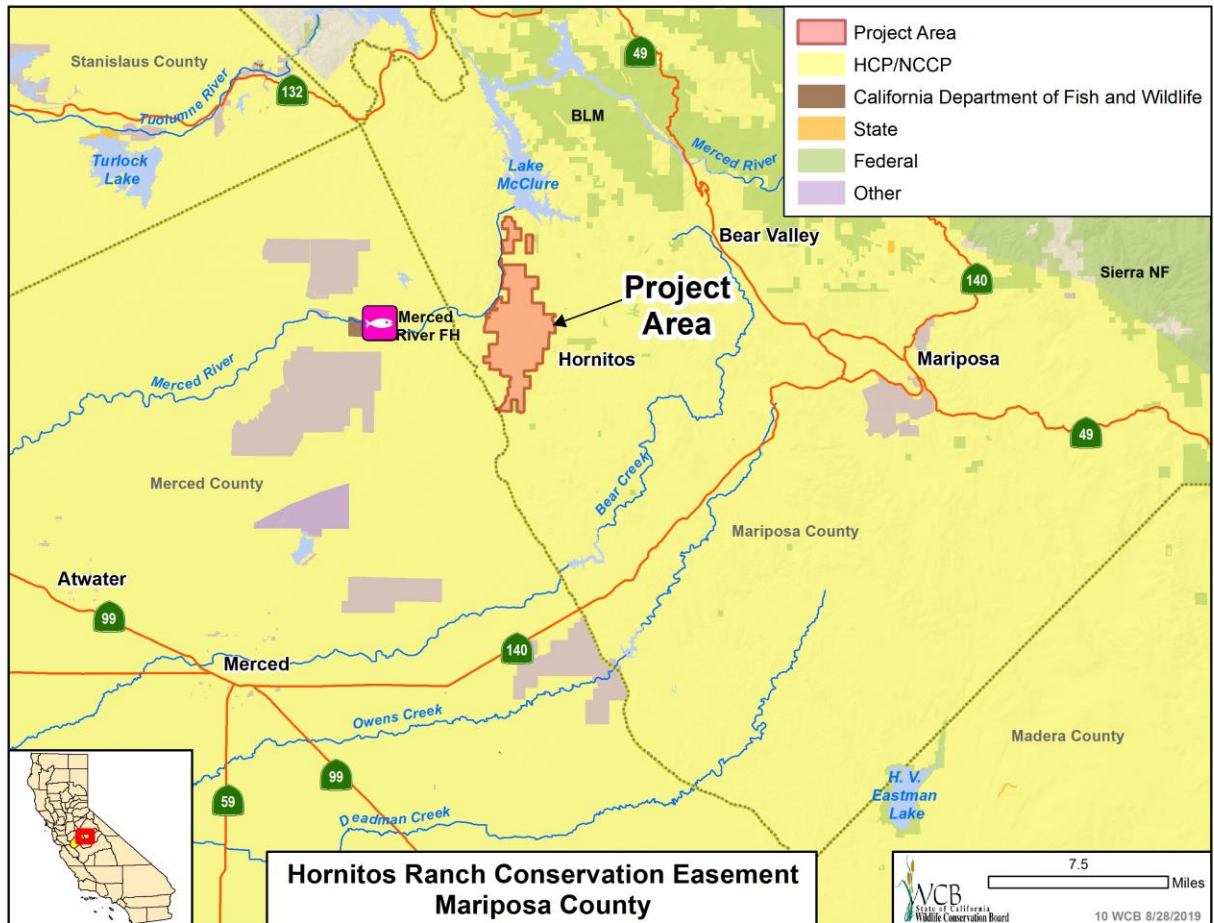
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



***11. Planning for Predicted Sea Level Rise within the Salinas Valley
Monterey County
\$248,020**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Coastal Conservation and Research, Inc. for a cooperative project with the Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS) and Central Coast Wetlands Group in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, local landowners, and the Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program to support creek and floodplain restoration planning and design needed to implement projects that accommodate documented flooding hazards within agricultural areas of the lower Salinas Valley in Monterey County.

LOCATION

The project planning area is in north Monterey County bounded by Potrero Road to the north, the Salinas River to the south, Cooper Road to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The project area lies within the Salinas River Watershed, one of the largest in the Central Coast. The riverine and riparian habitats found in the lower watershed provide critical habitat for amphibians, reptiles, birds, and fish.

For 100 years, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) has managed watercourses within the watershed for stormwater conveyance to allow for intensive row crop farming of the low-lying Salinas Valley. The extensive cultivation method of plastic-lined strawberry fields, coupled with the expansion of urban landscapes around the City of Salinas, has led to increased peak flood levels of winter storms through a major reclamation ditch and its tributaries, reducing the effectiveness of the flood management system and increasing runoff during flash floods. Engineered solutions to increase flood protection (i.e. a 13-mile-long concrete channel) have been found too costly and environmentally destructive to implement.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

More than 8,000 acres of agricultural land within the lower Salinas Valley are vulnerable to the combined climate change hazards of sea level rise (SLR), increased fluvial discharges, and coastal wave-induced flooding. Most of the natural wetland and creek habitat of the lower Salinas Valley has been lost over the past 100 years to reclamation for use as productive agriculture lands. Within this area, lands that are predicted to be vulnerable to future flooding have remained in agricultural production through use of pumps and tide gates to discharge flood waters. These same conditions have led to little success in restoring wetland ecosystem function in the area.

SLR and changes in annual rainfall have already stressed agriculture and remaining habitat along existing drainage ways, and climate models predict more frequent flooding as well as more frequent reductions in summer low flows within this watershed. Recent modeling and planning efforts have already concluded that it is cost prohibitive to eliminate the risk of flooding for some of the most vulnerable areas adjacent to these drainage systems.

With the limitations of engineering solutions recognized, farmers and conservation partners are working to develop an adaptation and resiliency program that will transition vulnerable agriculture lands to creek and wetland habitat, while continuing to farm areas safe from flooding. From this project, development of this program will begin by drafting a financially viable agricultural managed retreat program, negotiating landowner agreements to secure a conservation easement on two vulnerable properties, completing 100 percent project design for two pilot projects, and modeling the effects of the proposed restoration projects on water flow in the lower Salinas Valley.

To support this approach, the Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) Climate Risks chapter and the Moss Landing Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Report both document the current and future flooding risks of low-lying farmland of the lower Salinas Valley. In addition, sloughs and wetlands were documented to be vulnerable to increased flooding of coastal waters, leading to loss of habitat for brackish (tidewater goby, steelhead and brackish water snail) and coastal freshwater slough species (red-legged frog, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander). Adaptive strategies proposed in these documents support flood retention and increases in dry weather flows needed to maintain coastal freshwater habitats.

This project will provide rare and needed funding to translate conceptual climate adaptation flood models into designs for future implementation projects that will compete strongly for implementation funding. The intent is to maximize ensuing restoration projects for their potential to provide habitat refugia and resilience for vulnerable species, while maintaining agriculture in areas less prone to repetitive flooding. The project seeks to accomplish this through two main strategies:

- Establish managed retreat policies to support future adaptation:
Managed retreat is an adaptation strategy aimed to facilitate and regulate the gradual move away from areas vulnerable to flooding or erosion. Managed retreat programs can work in tandem with other adaptation strategies to reduce impacts of flooding, maintain local character, improve natural habitat areas and secure coastal access.
- Improve flood attenuation through creek and wetland restoration:
Wetlands can act as a critical buffer from waves, tides, and erosion, and they will transition inland as the sea level rises if they are given the space to do so. Additionally, wetlands provide natural pollution filtration and shoreline stability, sequester carbon, and can attenuate flood waters, along with providing important habitat that supports local fishing and tourism. Once initial flood modeling efforts influence effective restoration designs, implementation projects will become a larger component of this program.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.

- This project will accomplish Goal B.1 by establishing a SLR resiliency and adaptation strategy for low-lying agriculture in the lower Salinas Valley that incorporates creek and wetland habitat goals with flood management obligations of the MCWRA.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Because this is a planning/technical assistance project, there is no specific long-term management plan. However, management and monitoring plans will be developed as part of future implementation projects.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	NRCS	TOTAL COST
Administration and Reporting	\$35,020	---	\$35,020
Managed Retreat Strategy Development	\$40,000	---	\$40,000
Landowner Agreements	\$45,000	\$25,000	\$70,000
Project Design and Permitting	\$112,000	---	\$112,000
Project Evaluation	\$16,000	\$25,000	\$41,000
TOTAL	\$248,020	\$50,000	\$298,020

Project costs will be for conducting project management and reporting, coordinating subcontractors, and conducting invoicing; writing project reports; developing a managed retreat strategy for vulnerable agricultural lands in the lower Salinas Valley; drafting a financially viable agricultural managed retreat program; negotiating landowner agreements to secure a conservation easement on two vulnerable properties; completing 100 percent project design for two example projects; and modeling the effect of the proposed restoration projects on water flow in the lower Salinas Valley.

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which allows for protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or co-benefits. [Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017]

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies). Subject to Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$248,020 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the General Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$248,020 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the General Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017;

authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

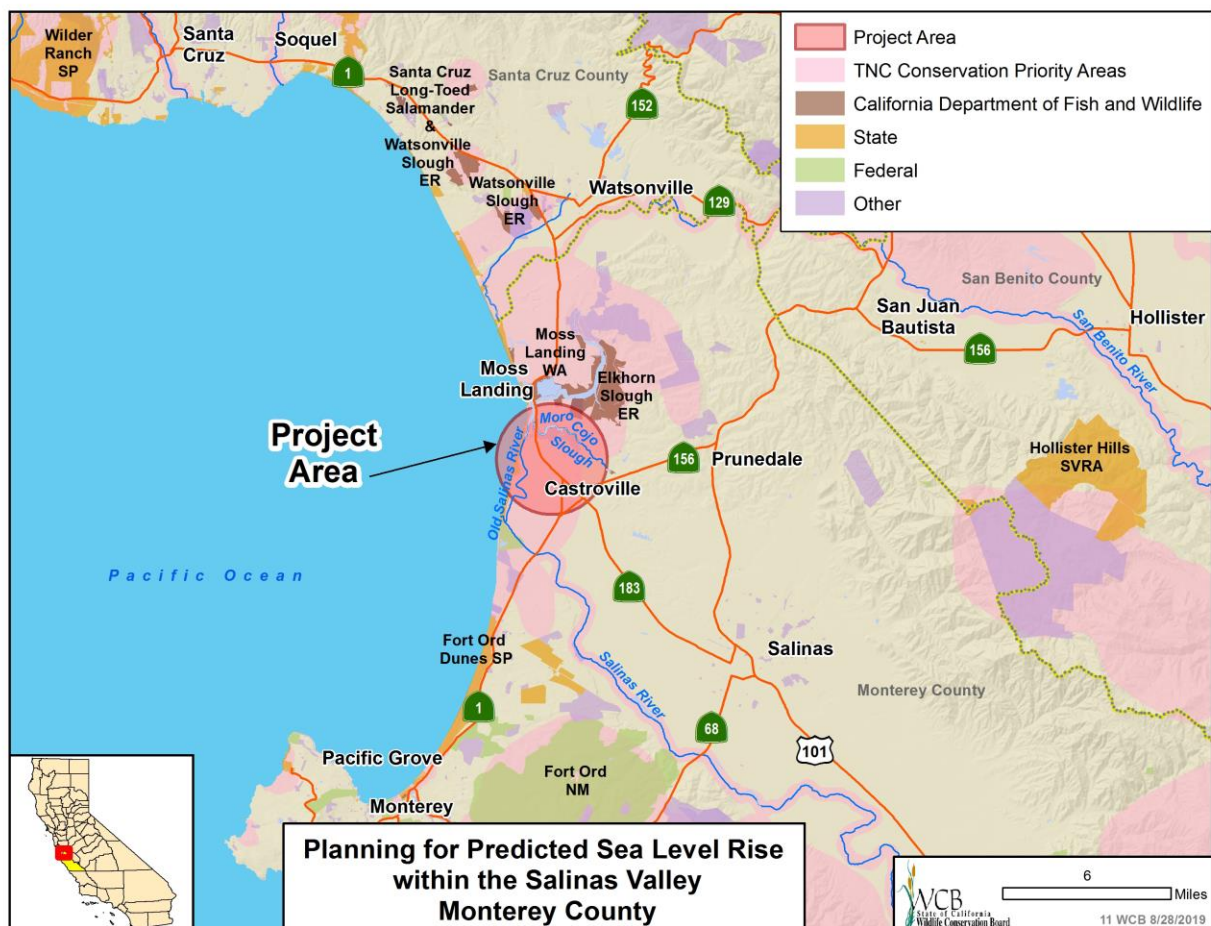
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



***12. Arrowhead Ridge, CAL FIRE Conservation Easement
San Bernardino County
\$0**

This proposal was to consider the acceptance of a conservation easement (Easement) by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) under the California Forest Legacy Program Act (CFLPA) of 2007 for the protection of 78± acres of land containing significant scenic, recreational, timber, riparian, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and other cultural and environmental values and to increase direct carbon sequestration through increased growth and inventory.

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property) is located one quarter mile north of Old Toll Road on Grass Valley Road in the Town of Twin Peaks, in San Bernardino County.

To the west, the Property is flanked by Grass Valley Road, a county-designated scenic route. On the other side of the road along the south end of the Property are sparsely situated home sites and the Alpine Camp and Conference Center, a youth camp facility that dates back to the 1920s. On the opposite side of the road at the north end of the Property is the 17th fairway of the Lake Arrowhead Country Club. The headwaters of Grass Valley Creek begin in this general area and partly runs alongside the road, hidden in willows, and continues to flow through the trim open spaces of the golf course.

The San Bernardino Mountains are part of the Transverse Range of Southern California, which runs east-west in contrast to the north-south trend of most mountain ranges. Southern slopes are exposed to long periods of full sunlight, while north slopes get less light. This fact combined with the general Mediterranean climate, chaparral foothills, monsoonal lightning storms in summer, a long May-to-November drought season, and fierce autumn winds out of the desert all conspire to make the San Bernardino Mountains highly prone to wildfire.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property is comprised of a single parcel of 78± acres zoned for residential development. By its location inside the San Bernardino National Forest (SBNF), the Property is part of a larger mountain-wide forest ecosystem that is tied together by its overall watershed and natural wildland characteristics that support many species of trees, plants and wildlife, some of which are threatened and endangered. The watershed and ecosystem as a whole contribute to a healthy environment for the local human population as well as the flora and fauna, with qualities like fresh air, clean water, aesthetic enjoyment and outdoor recreational activities. In an effort to better sustain the major features of the public forest and its overall integrated ecosystem, the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust (SBMLT) in partnership with SBNF and other governmental agencies and environmental organizations has been working to protect all critical parts of the forest that are still vulnerable to development.

The Arrowhead Ridge site forms an important link in the Grass Valley Creek Wildlife Corridor, which is the only functional route in this sector of the forest for larger mammals such as deer, bear, and mountain lion, as well as bobcat, foxes and coyotes, to migrate between southern and northern portions of SBNF without undue interference of residences, roads and human activity. Because the habitat throughout the Lake Arrowhead area has become fragmented, every link in the remaining natural environment is critical. During a 2012 forest thinning project on the 78-acre site, a seasonal drainage area was left untouched so as not to disturb the secluded habitation of a black bear. In addition to being a vital link in a critical wildlife corridor identified in the County of San

Bernardino General Plan, the San Bernardino Mountains are part of the Pacific Flyway for a wide range of migrating birds.

The site is located within prime habitat for the rare southern rubber boa, which is a small nocturnal snake found only in the SBNF. It is a state-listed threatened species.

WCB AND CAL FIRE PROGRAMS

The proposed acquisition is being considered under the CFLPA. The CFLPA, adopted in 2000 and amended in 2007 (Public Resources Code section 12200, et seq.), allows CAL FIRE to accept lands and interests in lands to protect environmentally important forestlands that are threatened by present or future conversion to non-forest uses. Priority is to be given to lands that can be effectively protected and managed and that have important scenic, recreational, timber, riparian, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and other cultural and environmental values. Under the CFLPA, WCB may acquire conservation easements on behalf of CAL FIRE (Public Resources Code section 12240).

Proposals under the CFLPA are evaluated and recommended for funding by CAL FIRE staff based on criteria established under the CFLPA of 2007. Eligible properties may be working forests where forestland is managed for the production of forest products and traditional forest uses are maintained. These forest uses include both commodity outputs and non-commodity values. The purpose of these easements is to maintain these forests intact to provide such traditional forest benefits as timber production, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and increased carbon sequestration through increased growth and inventory and long-term management of the timberlands.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.1 - Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The Easement preserves existing habitat and wildlife linkages by expanding a network of protected lands. Habitat connectivity is essential in maintaining the genetic viability of the region's listed/sensitive species. By protecting wildlife corridors and reducing development in the area, species will have the potential to move and adapt in response to climate change impacts.

Goal A.2 – Fund projects and landscape areas that conserve, protect or enhance water resources for fish and wildlife.

This project will protect sources of water from excessive sedimentation coming from numerous springs and tributaries on the Property. Protection of the Property's natural floodplain and riparian vegetation will allow for improved water quality and reduction of downstream flooding.

Goal E.1 - Maximize expenditure of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.

The Easement will be acquired using California Forest Legacy funds.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

CAL FIRE will enter into the Easement with the SBMLT and monitor the Property for compliance with the terms of the Easement. The Easement allows access by CAL FIRE or its agents annually and once every three years by WCB for monitoring purposes.

TERMS

The property owner has agreed to sell the Easement to CAL FIRE for \$1,173,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB and CAL FIRE staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services (DGS).

WCB staff will review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. Once approved by WCB, the transaction will also be subject to review and approval by DGS.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

CAL FIRE	\$1,173,000
Total Purchase Price	\$1,173,000
Total WCB Allocation	\$ 0

FUNDING SOURCE

Real estate transaction due diligence costs will be paid from the below-referenced funding source. Once the project is completed these costs will be reimbursed by CAL FIRE. The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which allows for the acquisition of corridors linking separate habitat areas to prevent habitat fragmentation, and to protect significant natural landscapes and ecosystems and other significant habitat areas. Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006. [Proposition 84, Public Resources Code Section 75055 (b)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The acquisition has been reviewed for compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CAL FIRE has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

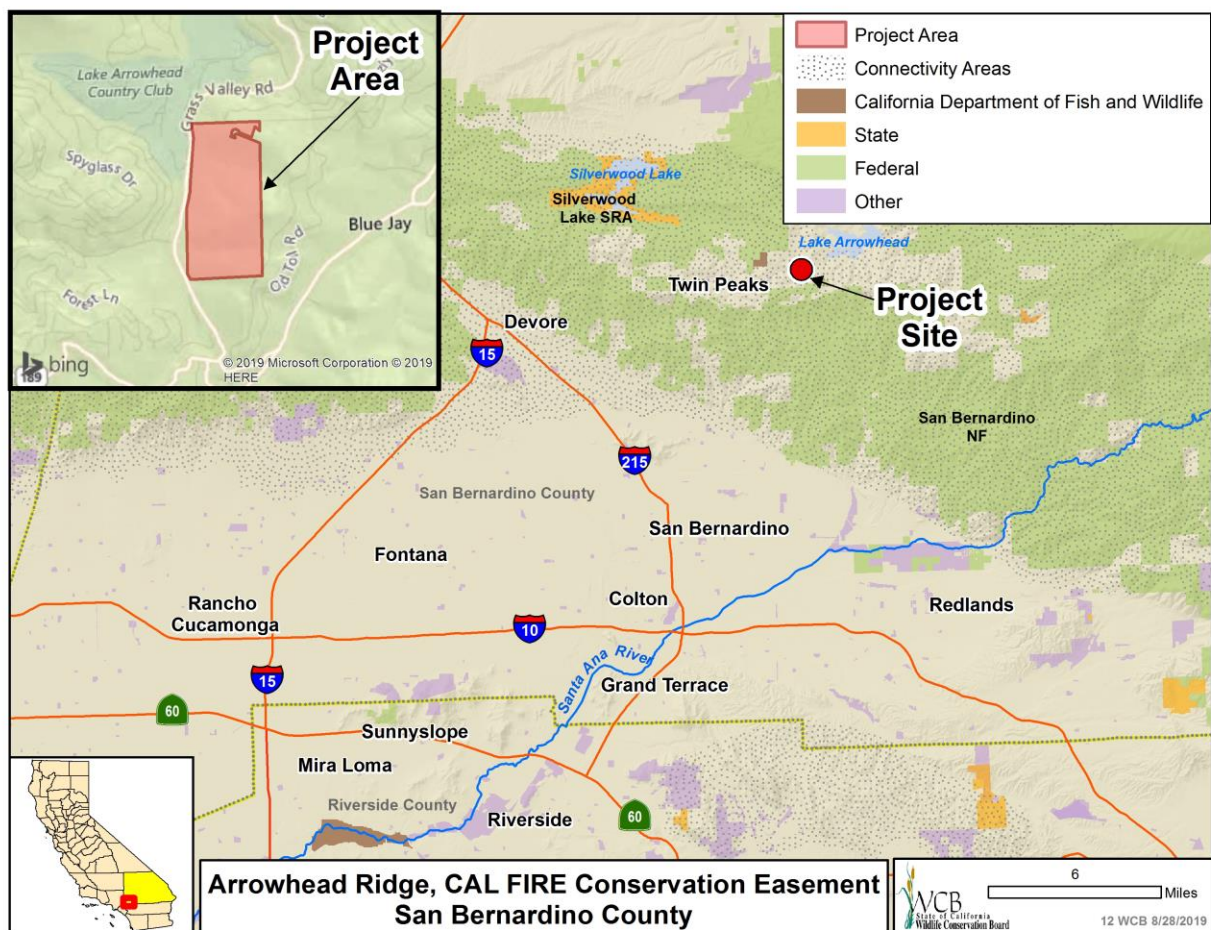
Staff recommend that WCB approve this project as proposed; approve the acquisition of the Easement over 78± acres on behalf of CAL FIRE under the California Forest Legacy Act; authorize staff and CAL FIRE to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CAL FIRE to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; approve the acquisition of the Easement over 78± acres on behalf of CAL FIRE under the California Forest Legacy Act; authorize staff and CAL FIRE to

enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CAL FIRE to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes
Bonham – Yes
Colborn – Yes
Creasman – Yes
Pavley – Yes
Sklar – Yes



***13. Palisades Ranch Restoration and Access Planning
San Bernardino County
\$375,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) for a cooperative project with CDFW and Mojave Water Agency to develop a conceptual ecosystem restoration and public access plan and complete environmental review for the Palisades Ranch, located approximately two miles south of the City of Helendale in San Bernardino County.

LOCATION

Palisades Ranch (Property) consists of 1,647± acres in an unincorporated portion of San Bernardino County. Spanning 3.5± miles along the north-south axis and 1.25± miles on an east-west axis, the Property is situated along a reach of the Mojave River known as the Transition Zone, where water runs perennially above ground. Steep 80-foot bluffs (known as “palisades”) separate the river channel in the eastern part of the Property from the alluvial flats to the west. Dating back to 1953, the Property was farmed for alfalfa and fruit trees. Improvements to the Property include four residences, two steel buildings, two hay barns, wells and water tanks, an airport runway, and miscellaneous improvements. All farming operations ceased as of 2013 and the airport runway has been decommissioned. Two of the residences are occupied by caretakers, while the others are in various stages of disrepair.

The site is approximately 15 miles north of Apple Valley/Victorville/Adelanto and 18 miles south-southwest of Barstow, which are the largest cities in the Mojave Desert region. Lands to the west are owned in a checkerboard pattern of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private lands. West of the Property sits the BLM-designated Fremont-Kramer Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), which corresponds to the Fremont-Kramer Critical Habitat Unit for Agassiz’s desert tortoises, and across the river to the east lies the Mojave Monkey Flower, Northern Lucerne Connectivity Corridor, and Ord-Rodman ACECs. Lands to the east are comprised mostly of active and fallow agricultural fields and solar panels, with sparse residential development farther east. Smaller private ranches lie south of the Property.

Helendale, the closest town to the Property, was historically an important stop on trails used by Native Americans and missionaries to get to the Pacific Coast from the east. Historical accounts suggest a desert clan of the Serrano Tribe known as the Vanyumé occupied the land along this stretch of the Mojave River as late as the mid-1800s. Other nomadic tribes were also observed in the Mojave River region by Spanish missionaries, including the Mojaves.

Onsite vegetation types include desert riparian, desert scrub, freshwater emergent wetlands, fallow cropland, and pasture. Creosote bush scrub is common in uplands, and Fremont cottonwood forest is mixed with mesquite and various willow species throughout most of the riparian and floodplain areas. At its widest near the southern boundary, the cottonwood-willow forest is approximately a quarter mile wide. This type of riparian habitat is limited to only a few places in the Mojave Desert, and is an important refugia for many key species in the region. Several invasive plant species occur on the Property as well including giant reed, salt cedar, and Russian thistle. Thirty-nine federally and state listed wildlife species are known to inhabit this area of the Mojave Desert. Surveys of the Property revealed 9 reptile, 76 bird, and 7 mammal species. These include desert tortoise, Cooper’s hawk, southwestern willow flycatcher, brown crested flycatcher, least Bell’s vireo, yellow warbler, yellow breasted chat, and summer tanager; all species of special concern.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Mojave River is an important lifeline for the Mojave Desert, which encompasses a quarter of the land area of California. Its waters provide the only significant corridor of riparian habitat in the western Mojave Desert and primary water source for many desert communities surrounding it. Flowing 100 miles from the San Bernardino Mountains to its terminus at Soda Lake, the Mojave River is the largest drainage system in the Mojave Desert with more than 50,000 acre-feet of water entering the system and percolating into local groundwater basins per year. Referred to as "an upside down and backwards river," it is unique for its inland flowing waters and predominantly subsurface baseflow, rising periodically to the surface in a few bedrock gorges in Victorville, Apple Valley, and the Palisades Ranch.

These surface flows sustain permanent riparian habitats rich in biotic diversity and support critical ecological functions within desert landscapes crucial to wildlife. Researchers found that over 80 percent of known desert wildlife species are dependent for a portion of their life cycle on desert riparian areas for refuge and/or water access. These extensive riparian zones along the Mojave River also act as important habitat linkages for migratory birds moving north out of Mexico, hosting one of the largest populations of brown-crested flycatchers in the state as well as summer tanagers, the endangered least Bell's vireo, and vermilion flycatcher.

Disturbances caused by human activities and explosive growth and expansion around Los Angeles and Las Vegas are putting intense stress on this sensitive desert riparian ecosystem. Lapsed agricultural activity, land clearing, road building, unauthorized off-road vehicle use, water diversion, and fires create disturbances that threaten the fragile Mojave River ecosystem. The Mojave Basin's groundwater has been in overdraft for decades, making access to critical sources of water more difficult for a wide range of vegetation and desert animals, including frogs, migrating birds, and several threatened or endangered species. Coupled with the impacts of accelerated climate change, this expansion reduces desert riparian ecosystem resiliency to droughts and increasing temperatures, and impacts habitat quality, water availability, and local biodiversity.

The MDLT purchased the Palisades Ranch in 2018 using funds provided by WCB and USFWS, for the purposes of conserving a corridor of riparian habitat in the western Mojave Desert as well as adjacent upland desert plateau land and for the protection of the southwestern willow flycatcher, least Bell's vireo, Mojave tui chub, western yellow-billed cuckoo, desert tortoise, Mojave ground squirrel, burrowing owl, and San Emigdio blue butterfly. The Property is operated and maintained only for the purposes of wildlife habitat preservation, restoration and management, wildlife-oriented education and research, and for compatible public or private uses. As part of this land acquisition, 10 acre-feet of water rights was transferred to the MDLT for use in managing and restoring the Property. In 2019, the MDLT acquired an additional 30 acre-feet of water rights.

The project proposes to develop a conceptual habitat restoration plan, including specific restoration actions and an ecological monitoring plan, and to perform technical analyses at the site. Sixty percent design plans will be completed for prioritized riparian habitat restoration, and environmental review and any necessary California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents will be completed.

The project will complete the following elements:

- 1) Conduct site assessments on the physical and biological environment designed to understand the ecological processes that maintain riverine, spring, riparian, or upland environments,
- 2) Complete a descriptive inventory of fish, wildlife, and native plant habitats,
- 3) Determine the degree of disturbance in each ecological zone found within the Property,
- 4) Develop appropriate adaptive restoration designs and strategies,
- 5) Develop budgets and plans for multiple project alternatives, and
- 6) Define appropriate public use of the Property.

Specific studies included with the project work will include hydrological and hydraulic analyses, groundwater monitoring, vegetation mapping, and a final GIS database. Project work will also include herpetological, mammalian, botanical, and cultural resource surveys.

MDLT personnel will lead stakeholder engagement and public outreach by working closely with the community, including educators, health and wellness organizations, parks and recreation agencies, businesses, and conservation partners to solicit input on long-term management and identify priorities for the Property. The MDLT will establish volunteer and community outreach programs with stewardship activities to engage the public and gather input in outlining appropriate low-impact public access activities. Core outreach initiatives will be developed following existing MDLT programs of conservation awareness, stewardship, low-impact practices, and education for underserved communities at the site. Media campaigns will also be created to provide public information on the scope of opportunities for community involvement.

Once complete, the MDLT will have the materials and processes necessary to begin implementation of the proposed restoration actions after future funding is secured. Additionally, it will have the data and targets necessary to develop a long-term management plan in accordance with the organization's future goals for the Property.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the California Riparian Habitat Conservation Program and meets the program's goal of increasing riparian habitat across California by implementing riparian habitat restoration and enhancement projects.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB 's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:

- Provide resilience in the face of climate change for refugia, corridors, and habitat connectivity.
- Enhance water resources for fish and wildlife.

Goal B.5 – Provide opportunities for greater public involvement in restoration projects:

- Stewardship among communities.
- Promotes participation in restoration activities.

This project conforms with the draft San Bernardino County Resource Conservation Investment Strategy by sustaining and enhancing biodiversity and ecological function within riparian and wetland environments of the Mojave River. Although just outside the covered area of the Apple Valley Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan that is in development, this project will develop habitat restoration designs that will enhance connectivity and wildlife corridors for the target species in that plan.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

MDLT will continue its role as landowner and manager of the Property. The data, studies, and analysis that result from this project will be used by the MDLT in the future to develop a long-term management plan for the Property that defines appropriate public use and management and monitoring of the site's ecological resources. Specific monitoring and management objectives for the designed habitat restoration will be included in the project habitat restoration plan.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	GRANTEE	CDFW	WATER AGENCY	TOTAL
Project Management	\$4,689	\$16,500	---	---	\$21,189
Planning, Designs, CEQA, and Permitting	\$323,945	\$12,450	\$222,253	---	\$558,648
Community Outreach	\$22,900	\$4,025	---	---	\$26,925
Stewardship	---	\$57,025	---	---	\$57,025
Water Rights	---	---	---	\$148,549	\$148,549
Contingency	\$16,961	---	---	---	\$16,961
Indirect	\$6,505	\$938	---	---	\$7,443
TOTAL	\$375,000	\$90,938	\$222,253	\$148,549	\$836,740

Cost share provided by CDFW and Mojave Water Agency, and in-kind contributions provided by the grantee.

Project costs will be for avian and cultural surveys, public outreach, preparation of habitat restoration plan, designs, and CEQA document preparation.

FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(b), which provides funding for the development of scientific data, habitat mapping and other research information necessary to determine the priorities for restoration and acquisition statewide.

CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/ RECOMMENDATION

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262), as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by WCB.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$375,000 from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(b); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$375,000 from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(b); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

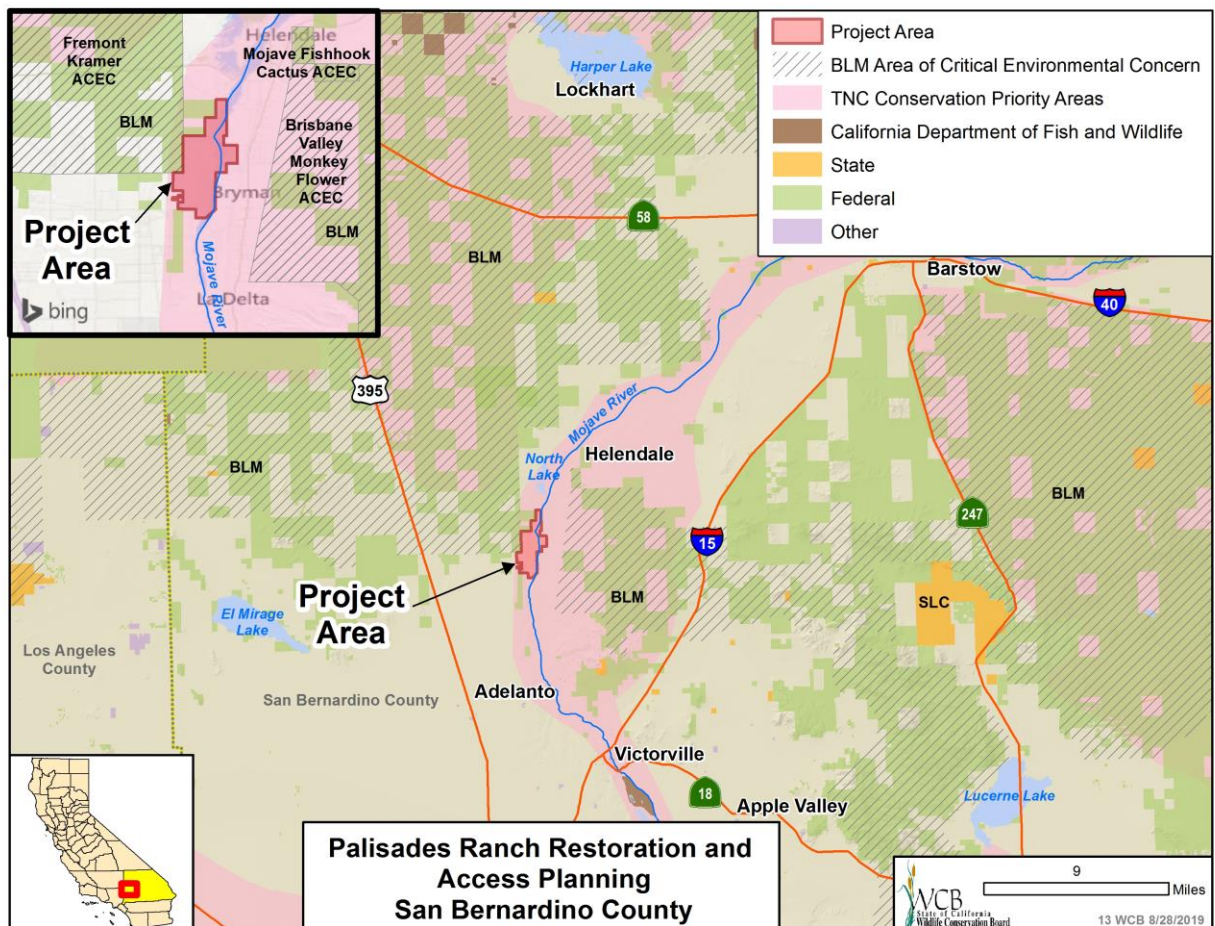
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



***14. Hearthstone Quitclaim
Ventura County
\$0**

This proposal was to consider a quitclaim of a CDFW held access easement of 1.1± acres to an adjacent landowner near Fillmore in Ventura County.

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The Access Easement (Easement) is located in the vicinity of the Santa Clara River in the Santa Clara River Valley in Ventura County. CDFW's Fillmore Fish Hatchery is immediately adjacent to the Hearthstone property.

The Santa Clara River is regionally significant as one of the least altered river systems in all of California with relatively natural flows, and one of the few remaining river systems in the southern California region that remains in its natural state without significant channelization and/or concrete. The river flows over 100 miles from the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County westward across Ventura County and meets the Pacific Ocean near the City of Ventura. It is a "flashy" river that experiences the majority of its water flows during high intensity, short duration storm events and transports a high sediment load. Due to its relatively natural condition, the Santa Clara River watershed not only provides habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species, but creates a fertile valley for agriculture, and is an important source of water for the surrounding communities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed transaction reflects an effort by the owners of the Hearthstone Development to clear easement issues with respect to the development of Hearthstone Estates. When CDFW purchased the Cienega Springs property (Property) in 2017, the Property came with secondary access from State Route 126 across the Hearthstone Property. This access was never developed and has never been used by the previous landowner or CDFW, nor does CDFW have need for the access easement. CDFW sent a letter to WCB in 2018 requesting a quitclaim of the access easement to Hearthstone.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed quitclaim is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program. The acquisition program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300 et seq.) authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW. Under the program, WCB may authorize CDFW to sell or otherwise transfer any real property held under the jurisdiction of CDFW. These activities are carried out in conjunction with, and at the request of, CDFW which requested WCB complete this transaction.

TERMS

The quitclaim has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$134,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services (DGS). The Property owner has agreed to pay the appraised fair market value of \$134,000 and pay for all transactional costs, including DGS review.

PROJECT FUNDING

The \$134,000 that will be received for this quitclaim will be deposited into the Wildlife Restoration Fund (WRF) account pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1348(c)(2).

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The City of Fillmore, as lead agency, prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff considered the EIR and has prepared proposed, written findings documenting WCB's compliance with CEQA. Subject to approval of this proposal by the Board, the appropriate Notice of Determination will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB adopt the written findings and approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; authorize WCB to accept the funds and deposit them into the WRF account; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; authorize WCB to accept the funds and deposit them into the WRF account; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

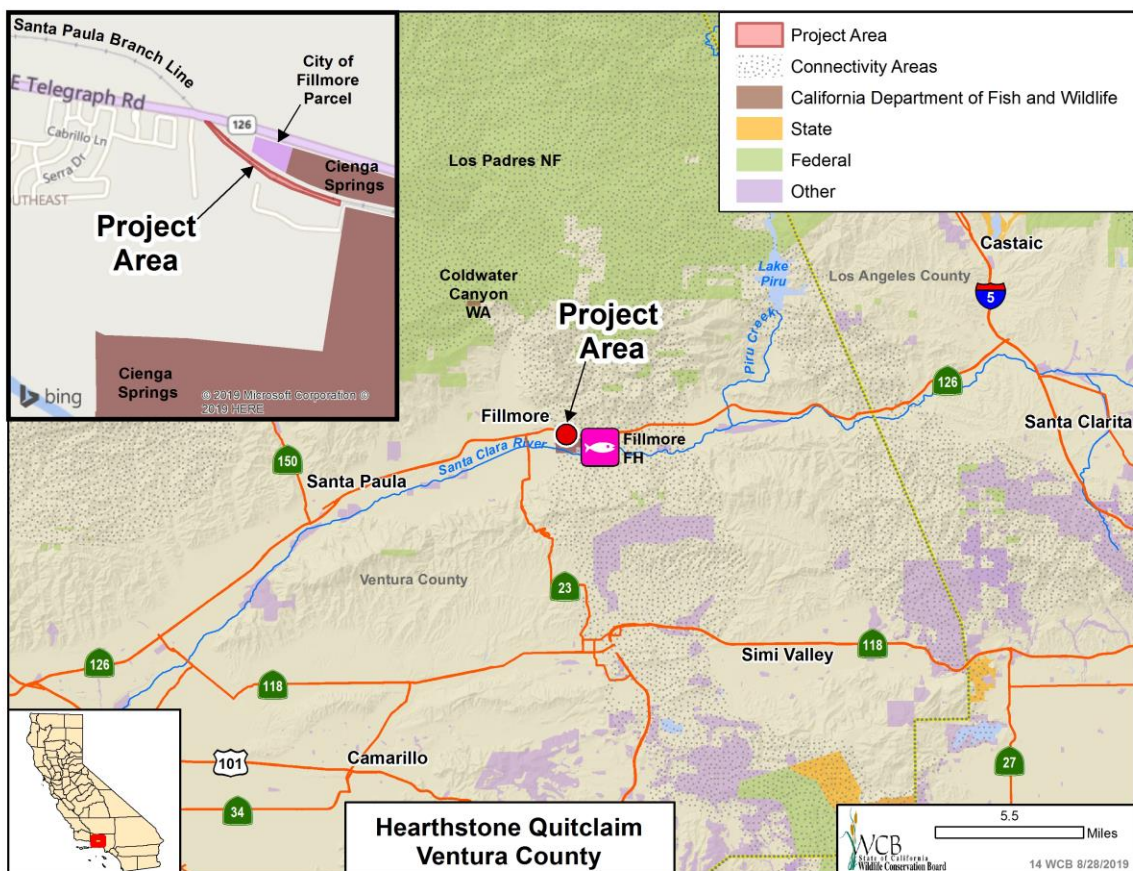
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



***15. Mendenhall Ranch Conservation Easement
San Diego County
\$61,250**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the California Rangeland Trust (CRT) for a cooperative project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to acquire a conservation easement (Easement) over 118± acres of land for the protection of a working landscape consisting of montane meadow, mixed conifer, and chaparral habitats that are beneficial to the Laguna Mountain skipper, San Bernardino bluegrass, and other plants and wildlife, and to promote the preservation of habitat linkages and corridors between existing protected lands.

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property), known as Mendenhall Ranch, is located in the Mendenhall Valley, east of Interstate 15 on Palomar Mountain, an unincorporated mountain community of north San Diego County. Palomar Mountain is a mountainous region located about 65 miles north of downtown San Diego and 40 miles north of Ramona and is best known as the home of the Palomar Observatory and the giant Hale telescope. Access to the Property is provided by way of Mendenhall Valley Road which runs into the western boundary of the Property.

The area immediately outlying the Property consists mostly of rural open space and mountainous acreage along with scattered small- to large-scale homesites that support permanent residents as well as providing second homes for others. The Cleveland National Forest abuts the Property on the northern and eastern boundaries, and Lake Henshaw, a popular public camping and fishing destination, is about three miles southeast of the Property. The headwaters of the West Fork of the San Luis Rey River watershed begin at Lake Henshaw and flows near the western boundary of the Property continuing through the City of San Luis Rey until it meets the Pacific Ocean, two miles north of the City of Oceanside.

The Property is identified as a priority for protection in the proposed East County Multiple Species Conservation Program, a cooperative program involving CDFW, USFWS, and San Diego County. The program looks to protect key plant and animal species and habitats in eastern San Diego County. In 2011, WCB supported CDFW with the acquisition of a conservation easement over 278± acres of the subject Property to protect critical habitat for the Laguna Mountain skipper and San Bernardino bluegrass, both federally endangered species. This proposed Easement would protect an additional 118± acres of the Property that contains the Cleveland's horkelia, a host plant for the Laguna Mountain skipper, as well as headwater areas of the West Fork of San Luis Rey River watershed.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property consists of four irregular shaped parcels with topography that varies from level and gently sloping to steep, rugged, and mountainous. The elevation gradient for the Property varies from 4,400 feet near the southwest corner to more than 4,600 feet at the top of a peak at the northeast corner. Most of the Property is comprised of vacant land except for a single-family residence and outbuildings located centrally on the Property. The Property currently supports cattle grazing which conforms to the present zoning of agriculture. Under the terms of the Easement, rural residential subdivisions and non-compatible agricultural uses will be prohibited. Cattle grazing will continue to be allowed,

but managed and monitored to ensure the conservation values of the Property are not compromised.

The Property is characterized by habitat types consisting mostly of mixed chaparral, grassland, mixed conifer, and montane meadow. This diverse habitat supports a variety of species including both the federally endangered Laguna Mountain skipper and San Bernardino bluegrass, along with deer, mountain lion, and other wildlife species. This proposed Easement would permanently protect the Property from overgrazing and development fragmentation and would preserve the habitat corridors created with the adjacent protected lands. The Easement would also support CDFW's efforts with the proposed East County Multiple Species Conservation Program by preserving intact core habitat linkages and key populations of sensitive species.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to WCB's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, *et seq.*) authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the Program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. These activities are carried out in conjunction with CDFW, who supported this project with its involvement in the proposed East County Multiple Species Conservation Program.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB 's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.1 – Fund Projects and Landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The proposed easement will increase the protection of the area's wildlife habitat corridors with the nearby protected lands to the north and east. The Property offers various elevation gradients and connectivity corridors that will allow for anticipated habitat and wildlife migration in the face of climate change.

Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.

The habitat resources of the Property have been evaluated in the proposed East County Multiple Species Program sponsored by CDFW. CDFW determined the Property is a high priority for protection due to the habitat it provides for both the Laguna Mountain skipper and San Bernardino bluegrass.

Goal E.1 – Maximize expenditures of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.

The Property is proposed to be acquired with WCB funds leveraged by the funding partnership with the NRCS.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

CRT will hold and be responsible for monitoring and managing the Property according to the terms of the Easement which provides that the Property will be used primarily as an open space working landscape supporting managed livestock grazing and potential agriculture. CRT will utilize a monitoring endowment to cover the cost of managing the Property.

TERMS

The Easement has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$245,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. The owner has agreed to sell the Easement for the approved appraised fair market value. The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant to CRT provide that WCB staff must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions, and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, WCB can seek specific performance of the grant or require the grantee to transfer the Easement to WCB or another qualified holder.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for this project is as follows:

WCB		\$61,250
Natural Resources Conservation Service		\$183,750
TOTAL Purchase Price		\$245,000

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source that allows for the acquisition of habitat to protect rare, endangered, threatened or fully protected species. [Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$61,250 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c) for the grant; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$61,250 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c) for the grant; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

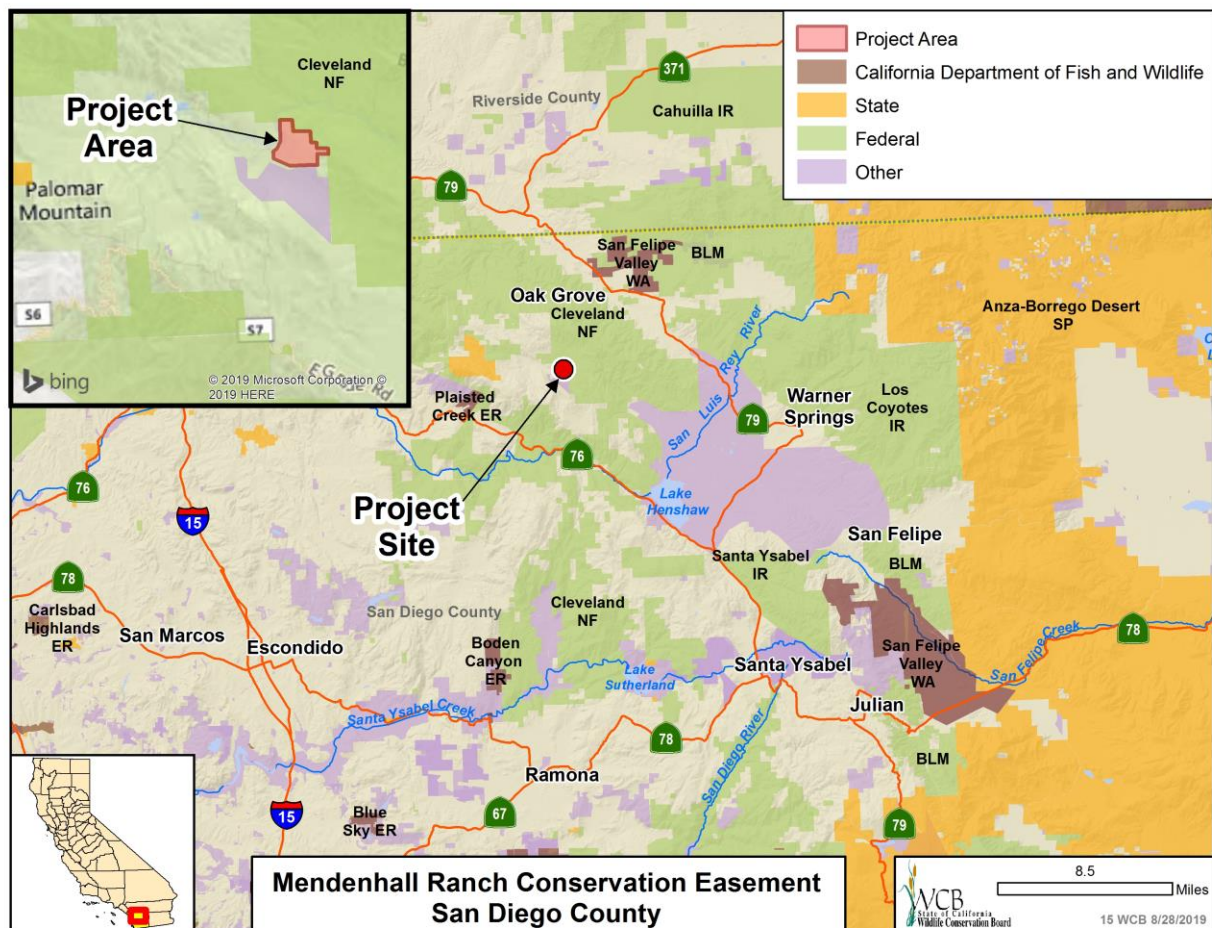
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**16. Recovering and Sustaining Monarch and Pollinator Populations
Various Counties
\$750,000**

Mr. Chad Fien presented this proposal.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) for a project to administer a block grant to Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) throughout California for the implementation of monarch and pollinator habitat improvements located on privately-owned land in various counties along California's coast and the Central Valley.

LOCATION

The project area lies within the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program priority area, identified as overwintering sites along coastal California, and breeding and migratory sites within California's Central Valley and surrounding foothills. More than one-third of the most prospective monarch butterfly habitat in California is on privately-owned land, which makes collaboration with landowners such a critical component for population recovery and sustainability.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program was created for the purpose of recovering and sustaining populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Monarch butterflies face a variety of threats, including loss of overwintering and breeding habitat, effects of climate change, pesticides, parasites, predation, and disease. Efforts to protect and restore overwintering and breeding habitat are the best strategies to employ for the recovery of the monarch butterfly population.

Concentrated action to restore migratory and breeding habitat throughout the monarch butterfly's spring and summer range can help rebuild populations relatively quickly. The monarch butterfly's migratory and breeding habitat includes California prairie, a blend of grasses, native wildflowers, and milkweed that, as documented by John Muir in the 1870s, once carpeted the Central Valley. Milkweed is the critical component. Monarch butterflies exclusively lay eggs on several species of native milkweed and they only feed on milkweed during the caterpillar stage. This same habitat, California prairie, provides food and shelter to a wide variety of pollinators, including native bees and bumblebees, and dozens of bird and mammal species.

The CARCD and RCDs form a statewide network of local experts, contractors, and personnel who are a critical part of the solution to monarch butterfly and pollinator population decline. CARCD will sub-allocate grant funds to participating RCDs from the Sierra foothills to the Pacific Coast to implement a coordinated and comprehensive statewide approach to creating monarch butterfly and pollinator habitat, provide technical assistance, and conduct outreach to communities. Priority for sub-allocating grant funds will be given to RCDs with projects that are located within and also fit the priorities of the Western Monarch Butterfly Conservation Plan, are shovel ready, and leverage resources across agencies.

The project aligns with goals listed in the State Wildlife Action Plan, the California Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California Plan, and the Western Monarch Butterfly Conservation Plan.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program and meets the program's goal of recovering and sustaining populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:

- Restore and enhance wildlife habitat that supports migration and movement of species by restoring patches of habitat across the landscape for monarch butterflies which travel up to seven miles per day
- Enhance habitats on working lands by restoring habitat on agricultural lands

Goal B.5 – Provide opportunities for greater public involvement in restoration projects:

- Stewardship among communities by sharing information and resources on RCD websites and in printed materials distributed at local education, outreach, and community events.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

- Provide or enhance habitat connectivity and corridors

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Participating RCDs will be responsible for all implementation activities. Management and monitoring will be completed by RCDs during the grant construction period. After the grant construction period concludes, the landowner or land manager will be responsible for maintaining the habitat improvements for the remainder of the 10-year grant life. Some RCDs or citizen scientists may also perform monitoring, in cases where an RCD is the owner of a property, they will be responsible for the monitoring. RCDs will also work with staff of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to determine when and where their staff may be able to support landowners and land managers with monitoring activities.

If at any time during the 10-year life of the sub-awarded projects, the project improvements are not maintained, the Grant Agreement requires that CARCD refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	RCDS	TOTAL COST
Project administration	\$20,530	\$7,300	\$27,830
Habitat restoration materials	\$308,060	\$119,500	\$427,560
Habitat installation, vegetation management, monitoring, reporting	\$302,150	\$127,500	\$429,650
Technical assistance, outreach, education	\$109,260	\$43,700	\$152,960

Project planning, coordination, consultation	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$12,000
TOTALS	\$750,000	\$300,000	\$1,050,000

Project costs will be for project administration, habitat materials and installation, technical assistance, education, outreach and project coordination.

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source that allows for one or more of the following objectives: restore or enhance California prairie and other appropriate breeding habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators, restore or enhance overwintering monarch butterfly habitat, provide technical assistance to grant recipients, provide grants for seasonal or temporary habitat improvements, or provide block grants in which sub-allocations are made by the grant recipient. [Fish and Game Code section 1374; General Fund, Budget Act of 2018, Chapter 29]

CEQA COMPLIANCE AND STATE REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION

Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4), the grant of funds to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts for a project to administer a block grant to RCDs for the implementation of monarch butterfly and pollinator habitat improvements located on privately-owned land in various counties is not a project subject to the requirements of CEQA, because it is a government fiscal activity which does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. Prior to commencement of any project funded by CARCD from this grant, any necessary environmental review required by CEQA shall be completed by the appropriate lead agency and documentation of that compliance shall be provided to WCB per the terms of the Grant Agreement.

The project was evaluated and scored by technical reviews from CDFW and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, both of which recommend this project for funding by WCB.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$750,000 from the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Fund Account (Fish and Game Code, §1374 et seq.); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Fien noted that Karen Buhr, California Association of Resources Conservation Districts, was in the audience.

Ms. Creasman asked since this is a block grant and we aren't sure what the projects will look like, what the process would be for collecting results and impacts, sharing those out, lessons learned.

Mr. Fien responded there are educational opportunities here and the local RCDs heavily promote all the projects that they do through their websites and through different engagements with landowners.

Mr. Donnelly noted all of the grantees will have reporting requirements and they will work with the statewide conservation association to report back and report on individual projects and they will have to report individually per project. Although this is a block grant, each project has to meet the guideline requirements and also fulfill the goals and objectives of the specific solicitation.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$750,000 from the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Fund Account (Fish and Game Code, §1374 et seq.); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**17. Butte Valley Wildlife Area Wetland Enhancement
Siskiyou County
\$872,000**

Mr. James Croft presented this proposal.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to California Waterfowl Association (CWA) for a cooperative project with CDFW and USFWS to enhance wetland units within the Butte Valley Wildlife Area (BVWA) located approximately five miles from the community of Macdoel, on the western edge of Meiss Lake in Siskiyou County.

LOCATION

The BVWA is a 13,400-acre, state-owned property composed of managed seasonal wetland units, sage flats, wet meadows, farmland, upland, and the 4,000-acre Meiss Lake. Historically, the property consisted of seasonally flooded Meiss Lake, emergent marsh, and wet meadow habitat within the Butte Valley basin. During the 1940s, previous landowners established dikes and excavated drain ditches to reclaim the land for grain production and other agricultural purposes. Several dams were created in order to capture seasonal runoff and utilize it to irrigate grain and meadow pasture on the reclaimed land. The State of California acquired the property in 1981 and established the property as a state wildlife area. In the years following, CDFW has managed many of the previously established grain units as seasonal wetlands. Other areas of the property are maintained as grain production units and upland grass stands in order to supply wildlife with forage, nesting, and spring staging resources. All of the proposed project acreage is currently being managed as seasonal wetland or upland/wet meadow habitat.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Currently, a narrow delivery ditch, which is completely overgrown with trees, supplies water to several lateral ditches between the proposed project's wetland units. Water must be supplied from the lowest elevation of the nearly one-mile long wetland units, and deeply excavated lateral ditches, during flood-up. Supplying water to the lowest areas within these large wetland units and raising it enough to compensate for flooding 1.5 to 2 feet of elevational rise in the same wetland unit is an extremely inefficient usage of water. The delivery ditch never dries up and is excavated well below the wetland unit field grades and has many dilapidated and non-functioning corrugated metal pipe water control structures installed along its course. As a result, BVWA managers have no way to completely drain, maintain, and clean out the supply ditch.

The project will construct a new highline delivery ditch parallel to the existing system. The ditch will be built with the bottom at the same elevation as the wetland unit's field grades, allowing for complete drainage of the system when not in use. The new ditch is designed to allow BVWA managers to periodically mow/re-grade the ditch bottom with their existing equipment as silt and vegetation dictates.

Several ditch crossings will be built allowing for elevated head pressure throughout the new delivery system, providing flexibility for delivery of water supplies to all wetland units. New water control structures and pipes will be installed throughout the system, increasing water delivery efficiency and providing the flexibility to independently apply water to each wetland unit. The old "delivery ditch" will serve as an overflow ditch during high seasonal runoff events, leading water into a drain ditch and lift pumps that supply Meiss Lake. The riparian growth will be left intact, serving as a buffer between managed wetland units and providing beneficial habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

The wetland units were built as agricultural farmland by previous landowners to drain water off the land, not impound water within the seasonal wetland units. This project will reconfigure several wetland units to reduce the overall elevational fall to a half foot or less, resulting in an increased wetland footprint with shallower average depth (good for foraging waterfowl/ shorebirds), resulting in less water use during flood-up and irrigations. Sections of existing levees would be removed; new levee sections built on designed elevation contours; and deep- drain laterals would be filled in. A series of meandering swales will be constructed within each wetland unit, with gradual elevational fall built in from the new highline delivery ditch to the units drain structure. Potholes will be excavated along newly constructed swales to provide material for levee building, while also increasing wetland habitat diversity. Existing dilapidated water control drain structures will be replaced with concrete risers and pipes. In total, 804 acres of wetland habitat will receive direct enhancement benefits.

To help land managers at BVMA manage invasive vegetation, a four-wire strand of wildlife-friendly fence will be installed allowing prescribed grazing. Selectively grazing upland and wet meadow habitats at BVMA will help improve foraging, spring staging, and nesting conditions for waterfowl and other wildlife species.

Additionally, eight concrete two-man hunting blinds and one mobility-impaired hunting blind will be installed, providing improved recreational opportunities and access for waterfowl hunters.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program and meets the program's goal of providing for the restoration of wetlands that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Inland Wetland Conservation Program.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:

- The project provides water-wise wetland habitat in critical times for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and other wildlife.

Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.

- The project maintains open space and develops opportunities for controlled hunting, recreation, and research and educational uses that are compatible with the managed wetlands.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

- Provide species strongholds or refugia.

New water supply infrastructure and improved ability to move water efficiently will enhance water resources for wildlife, in all years, wet or dry, and earthwork construction will

enhance management capabilities and habitat by providing wetland managers an efficient way to manage water.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The project will be on a portion of BVWA, and management of this project will be incorporated into the existing management of BVWA, pursuant to the BVWA Land Management Plan. The improved water management capabilities associated with this wetland enhancement will allow CDFW managers to provide improved wetland habitat through more efficient water delivery and drainage, with less staff time.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the project, CWA does not assure that the project improvements are managed according to the Land Management Plan, the Grant Agreement requires that CWA refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	CDFW*	NAWCA**	TOTAL COST
Project Management	\$105,000	\$17,635	\$37,000	\$159,635
Mobilization, site prep	\$57,600	\$23,000	\$34,500	\$115,100
Construction	\$652,400	\$89,410	\$225,555	\$967,365
Contingencies	\$57,000	---	---	\$57,000
TOTAL	\$872,000	\$130,045	\$297,055	\$1,299,100

*CDFW Duck Stamp Funds

**USFWS, North American Wetlands Conservation Act

Project costs will be for mobilization and site preparation, construction of highline water delivery ditch and ditch crossings, purchase and installation of water control structures, construction of habitat features, rehab or construction of levees, installation of wildlife friendly fencing, and purchase and installation of eight waterfowl hunting blinds, including one mobility-impaired hunting blind.

FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d)OW, Wetlands Outside the Central Valley. The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which allows for the acquisition, enhancement or restoration of wetlands outside the Central Valley.

CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

The project is proposed as exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15304 Class 4, as a minor alteration in land, water, and vegetation on an existing officially designated wildlife management area which results in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources. Subject to approval by WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by WCB.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$872,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Wetlands Outside the Central Valley; authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. James noted Greg Heydeman, California Waterfowl Association, was in the audience.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$872,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Wetlands Outside the Central Valley; authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

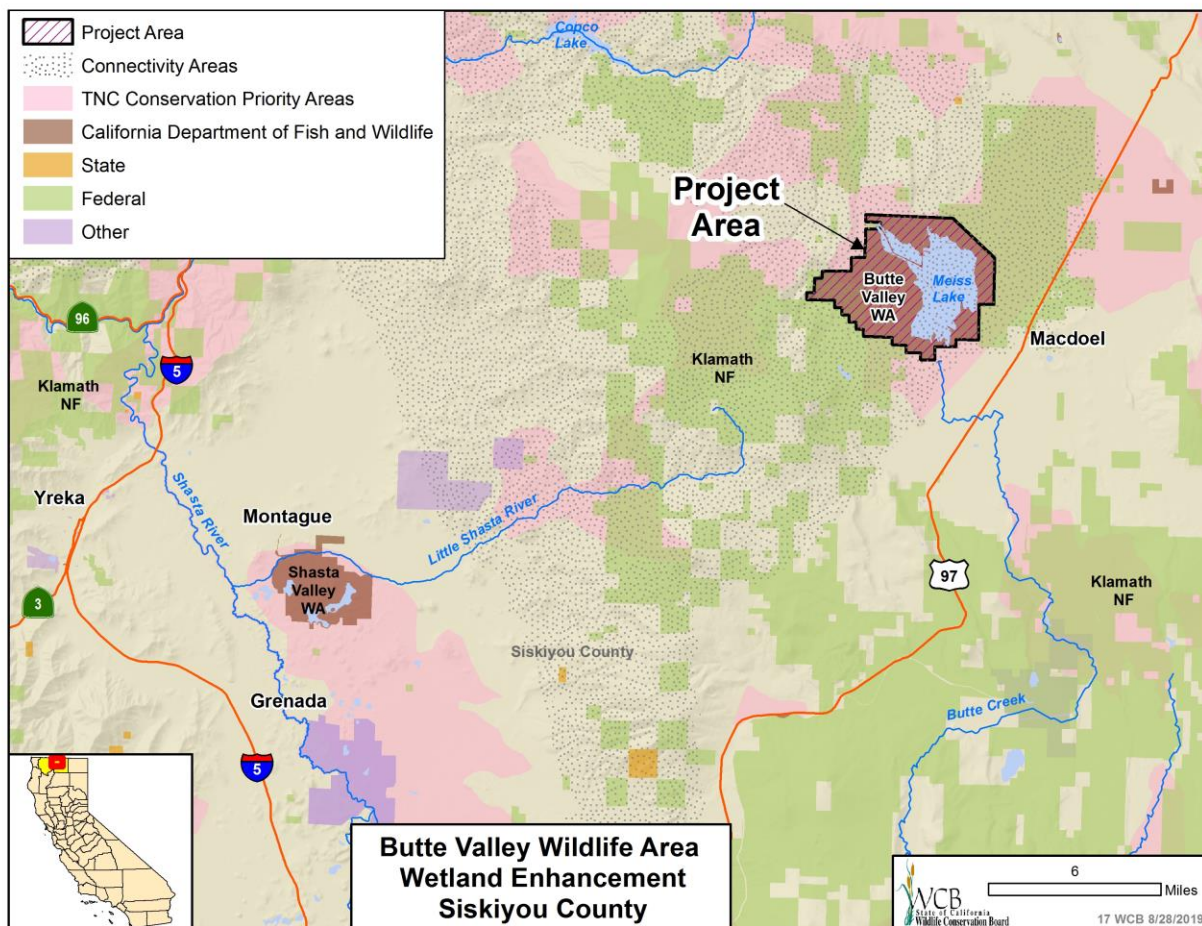
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**18. American River Ranch Parking Lot
Sacramento County
\$499,000**

Ms. Cara Allen presented this proposal.

Mr. Donnelly noted this was a proposal that was brought forward and recommended by the Board's Lower American River Conservancy Program Advisory Committee. He noted letters of support from Shawn Harrison, CEO of Soil Born Farms; Cyrus Abhar, City Manager, City of Rancho Cordova; and Christine Lewis, Nursery Director, Sacramento Valley Chapter, California Native Plant Society.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks for a project to enhance public access to the American River Ranch Interpretive Center in the City of Rancho Cordova in Sacramento County.

LOCATION

The American River Ranch (Ranch) site is the last working ranch on the Lower American River with a history of agriculture dating back to the 1840s. It was purchased along with other property by Sacramento County during the formation of the American River Parkway (Parkway) in the 1960s. It was closed to the public until 2008 when the American River Parkway Plan was updated by Sacramento County. In 2008, Soil Born Farms (SBF), a non-profit organization, signed a lease to operate the American River Ranch, and at that time the Ranch was opened to the public.

The project area lies within seven acres of a developed recreational land use area of the American River Ranch property, situated entirely within the American River Parkway. Located in the northwestern half of the City of Rancho Cordova, between Folsom Boulevard and the American River at mile 15 within the Parkway, the 48-acre Ranch is devoted to agriculture, gardens, pasture, and other farm-related activities. Seven acres are devoted to education and interpretation of the Ranch through facilities such as a farm office, staff quarters, and a multi-purpose barn (collectively referred to as the "Interpretive Center") that are operated by SBF. The Ranch offers a rare combination of natural resources, infrastructure, and activities that help interpret the dynamic interplay between food, personal health, and the environment.

At present, SBF operates the American River Ranch under lease with the County of Sacramento. The farm grows organic vegetables and fruit, serving 80 community-supported agriculture members, stores, restaurants, and farm stands. SBF programs focus on promoting health and providing experiential learning opportunities for youth and adults, producing healthy food, improving access to healthy food for all, and modeling land and environmental stewardship. They also maintain partnerships with three area high schools and their Future Farmers of America programs. SBF hosts regular interpretive, educational, and recreational activities including daily student field trips, summer camps for youth, teacher trainings, community events, and horticultural education. They also hold classes on environmental stewardship and promote restoration projects using Cordova Creek as a living laboratory for hands-on tasks and studies about water quality and conservation, native plants, soil, and local wildlife. They also provide agricultural training for future farmers. The California Native Plant Society, Sacramento Valley Chapter, operates the Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery and Demonstration Garden, an all-volunteer native plant nursery, at the Ranch. The nursery hosts weekly volunteer workdays and holds bi-annual native plant sales to the public.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Visitor use has increased dramatically since SBF started operating the Ranch. Since opening to the public in 2008, public visits have increased significantly to approximately 17,000 total visitors in 2017. However, no commensurate improvements have been made to public access facilities, and the site relies on an unimproved and uneven dirt parking lot to serve all visitors and educational events.

The existing 20,703-square-foot dirt parking area serves as the main parking site for the Ranch. During major events, an adjacent field outside of the Parkway boundaries is used for overflow parking. With substantial visitor use during events, in addition to regular drop-in visitors, the existing unimproved parking lot is inadequate. Vehicle circulation in the dirt lot causes significant dust issues. During the rainy season, the dirt lot becomes very muddy with large puddles, making ingress and egress difficult. The existing site conditions also prohibit improvements for mobility-impaired visitors.

The current proposed project will grade and lay gravel over the approximately 21,000-square-foot dirt parking lot. This will be the first step towards paving the parking lot which will happen in a future phase. Paving is not part of this project due to budget constraints of the 2018 Solicitation for the Lower American River Conservancy Program. The final enhanced parking lot will have 57 parking spaces, including three Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant (ADA) spaces. Fruit trees, native shrubs and ground cover will be planted in a future phase as well. Upon final completion of the site, the Ranch operator will enjoy a facility that is more durable, resilient, and easier to maintain over the project lifetime. ADA-compliant parking will provide benefits for mobility-impaired visitors.

The improved Ranch parking lot is a key element of the American River Ranch Master Plan which guides the development of the facility. This plan was approved in 2014 and was amended into the American River Parkway Plan. The parking lot project is essential to accommodate the current level of visitor use, as well as to facilitate expected visitor growth as other facilities in the Master Plan are built out. These facilities would ultimately include a new interpretive center building, farm kitchen, and barn.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project is included among the high priority projects recommended by the Lower American River Conservancy Program Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee), whose role is to evaluate and recommend projects to be considered by WCB. The project was recommended for submittal to WCB on February 7, 2019 by the Advisory Committee, which includes a representative from CDFW.

The proposed project will be funded through the Lower American River Conservancy Program, which the Board is authorized to administer pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5845 et seq. The proposed project meets the program's goals of expending funds for the benefit of the Lower American River, prioritizing the development and implementation of a natural resources management plan, and to improve access to, and protection and restoration of, the American River Parkway.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.

- The project supports experiential learning opportunities without degrading environmental resources.

Goal C.4 – Place greater emphasis on projects that accommodate compatible wildlife-oriented public uses, while supporting urban areas and disadvantage communities.

- The project supports wildlife-oriented public uses promoted and hosted through the American River Ranch Interpretive Center.

Sacramento County Regional Parks completed the American River Parkway Compliance Analysis for the project at its February 28, 2019 Recreation and Parks Commission meeting, in accordance with Public Resources Code section 5845.5. The proposed project was determined to be consistent with the American River Parkway Plan.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE AND NEEDS

SBF is responsible for the maintenance, repairs, safety and cleanliness of the project as it lies within their leased premises. Regular maintenance will include clearing debris from gravel parking lot and roadway, retaining gravel within parking lot, and keeping future planting areas clear of noxious weeds and invasive plants. Major maintenance activities include repairing vandalism and reconstructing bioswale if damaged. If SBF fails to perform maintenance duties or should they choose not to renew their lease in the future, the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks, as landowner, will become responsible for the project's maintenance.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the project, Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks does not manage and maintain the project improvements, the Grant Agreement requires that it refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	GRANTEE	TOTAL
Project Management	---	\$16,000	\$16,000
Engineering, Designs, Outreach, and Permits	\$50,000	\$37,195	\$87,195
Construction	\$409,230	\$44,500	\$453,730
Inspections and Project Closure	\$39,770	\$32,962	\$72,732
TOTAL	\$499,000	\$130,657	\$629,657

Project costs will be for final engineering specifications, permitting and construction of a parking lot and bioswale.

FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Fund of 2018 (Proposition 68),

Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3), which provides funding to be made available to the Lower American River Conservancy Program.

CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION

The City of Rancho Cordova, as lead agency, prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the project pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff considered the MND and has prepared proposed, written findings documenting WCB's compliance with CEQA. Subject to approval of this proposal by WCB, the appropriate Notice of Determination will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB adopt the written findings; approve this project as proposed; allocate \$499,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Fund of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff to proceed substantially as planned.

Ms. Allen noted Liz Bellas, Sacramento County Regional Parks, and Shawn Harrison, Soil Born Farms, were in the audience. She also noted that over 100 letters of support were received from the community.

Mr. Donnelly wished to welcome Department of Finance representative, Gayle Miller. He then stated that as part of Advisory Committee process, WCB is hosting a tour of the Lower American River Parkway on September 9, 2019 and the public is welcome.

Mr. Keith Cialino asked if there were conceptual designs for the second phase, paving, and does that include any type of green infrastructure in addition to the bio-swale; things like impervious pavement instead of just regular asphalt?

Ms. Allen responded that in addition to the bio swale which will mitigate any impacts from the impervious parking lot, there is an element of pedestrian pavers that is permeable that will also be another avenue for rainwater and stormwater runoff to penetrate the ground.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$499,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Fund of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



19. Franklin Ridge, Expansion 2
Contra Costa County
\$2,000,000

Mr. Kurt Weber presented this proposal.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the John Muir Land Trust (JMLT) for a cooperative project with East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) to acquire in fee 281± acres of land for the protection of oak woodlands, open space, and expansion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Corridor.

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property) is located southwest of the City of Martinez in the northern portion of Contra Costa County. Locally known as the Almond Ranch, the Property has been in family ownership since the late 1800s and has historically been used for ranching and grazing. The Property is located within the Franklin Ridge Wildlife and Trail Corridor Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP). This CAPP lies within the 60,000-acre Briones Hills Agricultural Preserve, which includes the 10,000-acre East Bay Municipal Utilities District watershed lands as well as the EBRPD's 6,000-acre Briones Regional Park. WCB previously gave a grant to the JMLT to acquire the Fernandez Ranch, a 702-acre parcel and the Dutra Ranch, a 158± acre parcel, both located to the east of the Property.

Three tributaries (Vaca, Strentzel, and Franklin creeks) to the Alhambra Creek watershed are co-located on the Property. Alhambra Creek and its watershed drain into the Carquinez Strait at a point designated as Tidal Marsh Core Habitat within the Baylands Ecosystems Habitat Report which is a report that sets restoration goals for the San Francisco Bay estuary.

Public access to properties within the Franklin Ridge Corridor is managed by both the JMLT and EBRPD via the Bay Area Ridge Trail. A joint land management agreement will be pursued to incorporate JMLT properties along the Bay Area Ridge Trail into EBRPD's revised Master Plan. The Bay Area Ridge Trail council has proposed and built a segment of the ridge trail across the Property which will give hikers, bikers and equestrians the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of this land.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property is comprised of a single parcel of 281± acres zoned for agricultural use. The Property is located in the community of Alhambra Valley, with Vaca Canyon extending to the west. This community is bordered by urban development within the City of Martinez to the east, by undeveloped rural hills to the north and west, and low-density residential development to the south in the unincorporated county. A predominant geographic feature of the area is Franklin Ridge Corridor, which lies to the north of Alhambra Valley and includes the Property.

Acquiring priority lands within the Franklin Ridge Corridor will contribute to statewide habitat protection, agricultural land conservation, riparian corridor protection, and recreational access priorities. The annual grasslands, oak woodland, riparian, and aquatic habitats provide valuable habitat for several special-status wildlife species that have essentially been undisturbed. These species include the Alameda whipsnake, California red-legged frog, and western pond turtle. The Property is located within the USFWS area designated as critical habitat for the Alameda whipsnake, while habitat for raptors and birds of prey such as hawks, owls, and falcons is abundant in the area. The Property's development potential is seriously limited due to zoning, lack of water and sewer, and poor

access. Threats to the Franklin Ridge Corridor are occurring in the form of large single family “trophy” homes being built on the ridgeline. Land in this area is considered affordable when compared to other parts of the county. Contra Costa County has the ninth largest population in the state and is one of the fastest growing counties in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Wildlife and land management objectives will involve activities such as preserving and enhancing habitat, reintroduction of native plant species, and controlling non-native plant and animal species. The restoration of riparian corridors for wildlife movement will also be directed toward benefiting special-status species.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to WCB's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, *et seq.*) authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the Program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. These activities are carried out in conjunction with CDFW which evaluates the biological values of property through development of a Land Acquisition Evaluation/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (LAE/CAPP).

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A-1 – Fund Projects and Landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The project conserves natural forest and riparian habitats that support healthy fish, wildlife and plant populations, and ecosystem functions in a changing climate. Furthermore, the project protects connectivity areas between critical habitats to allow the movement of species in response to climate change.

Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.

The habitat resources of the Property have been evaluated in a CAPP approved by CDFW. CDFW determined the Property is a high priority for protection due to the linkage it creates with protected lands to the west and extensive undeveloped lands to the east.

Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g. hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.

Future recreational opportunities on the Property will include JMLT-led hikes and conservation education and research. These recreational activities will be limited to areas determined to have nominal impact on the habitat resources of the Property.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The Property will be owned and managed by JMLT. In addition to the Almond Ranch Property, JMLT manages a number of other properties in the area for habitat preservation and provides public use opportunities, relying on a combination of employees, volunteers, partners, and members to support this effort. The acquisition of the Property will provide an opportunity for JMLT to protect and preserve the Property's open space and natural resource values, and potentially afford future recreational opportunities to the public such as hiking, photography, horseback riding, and simply exploring John Muir's backyard.

TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$2,982,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. The Property owner has agreed to sell the Property for the approved appraised fair market value. The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant provide that staff of the WCB must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. Under the terms of the WCB Grant Agreement, JMLT will be required to hold the Property in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Grant Agreement. The Property cannot be sold, transferred, exchanged or otherwise conveyed without WCB approval. In the event of default, WCB may require the JMLT to convey a conservation easement over the Property in favor of the state, or another entity or organization authorized by California law to acquire and hold the conservation easement that is willing and financially capable.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$2,000,000
East Bay Regional Park District	\$982,000
TOTAL ALLOCATION	\$2,982,000

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which allows for the acquisition, protection and restoration of coastal wetlands, upland areas adjacent to coastal wetlands and coastal watershed lands within the San Francisco Bay Area. [Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002 (Proposition 50), Water Code Section 79572(c)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The acquisition has been reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and under Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$2,000,000 from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002 for the grant; and authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as

planned.

Mr. Weber noted that Linus Eukel, Executive Director, John Muir Land Trust, was in the audience.

Mr. Eukel spoke in support of the project and thanked WCB for their support over the past 30 years.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Member Alina Bokde that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$2,000,000 from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002 for the grant; and authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

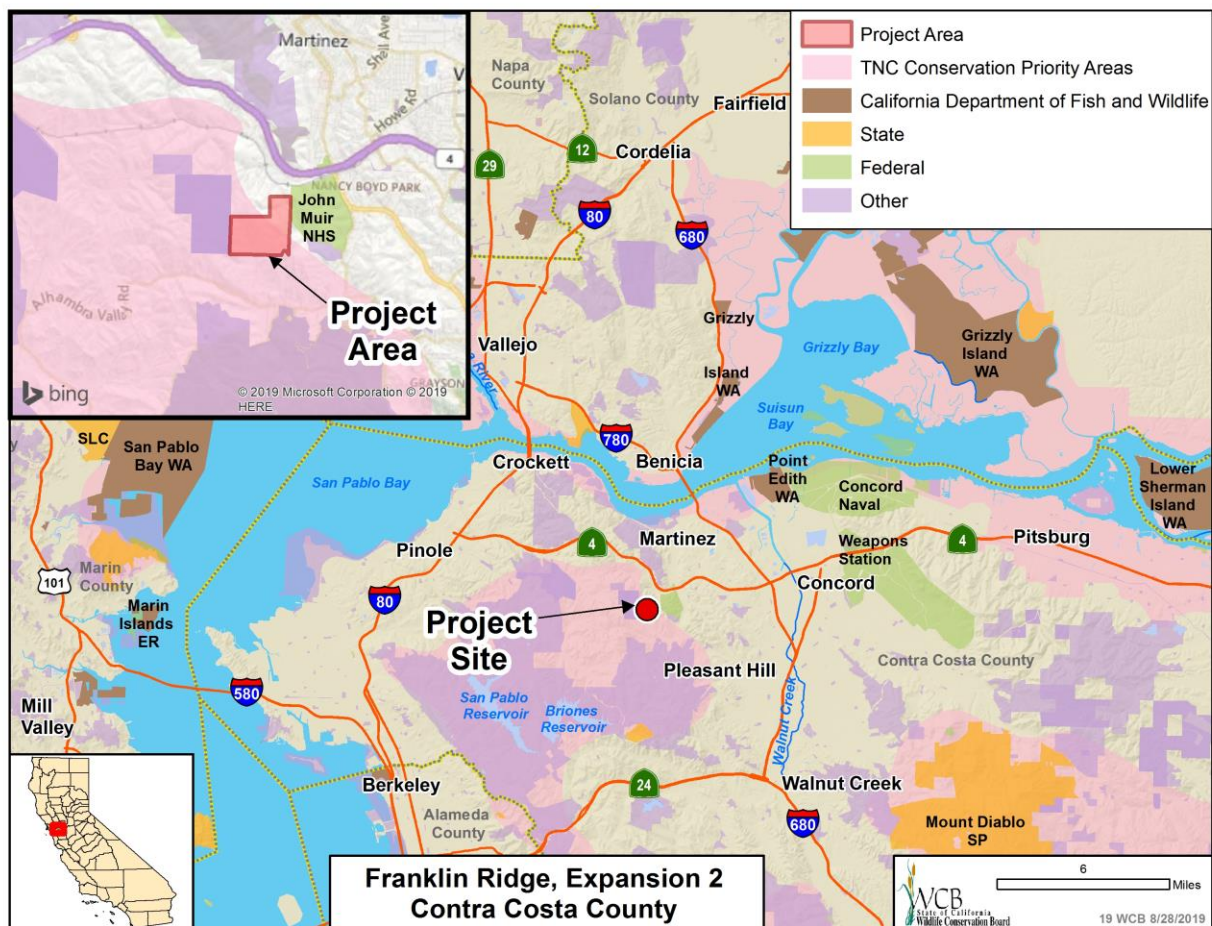
Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



20. Mormon Meadows
Mono County
\$1,320,000

Ms. Sadie Smith presented this proposal.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to The Wilderness Land Trust (WLT) to acquire 960± acres of land for the protection of deer, mountain lion, and sage-grouse habitat and to increase protection of regional wildlife habitat corridors and provide potential future wildlife-oriented, public-use opportunities.

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property) is 960± acres and is located in the Bodie Hills, about eight miles southwest of the town of Bridgeport in Mono County. The Property includes a single large 640-acre parcel along Bodie Road (State Route 270) at Mormon Meadow and two 160-acre parcels in Bridgeport Canyon accessible from Coyote Springs Road.

The Property is adjacent and integral to two Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) (the contiguous Bodie Mountain WSA and the Mount Beideman WSA). Situated between the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the California/Nevada border, Mono County has several lightly populated small towns and a large tourist population that visit for the vast scenic views and outdoor recreation opportunities the county has to offer.

The Property is included in the Bodie Greater Sage Grouse Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP). The primary purpose for this CAPP is to conserve and enhance high quality essential habitat for the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the greater sage-grouse. CDFW has committed to continued efforts to protect and conserve sage-grouse habitat within the range of the Bi-State DPS. Other objectives of the CAPP include maintaining a critical migration and holding area for mule deer from the East Walker and Mono Lake herds.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property consists of one irregular shaped parcel at Mormon Meadow along Bodie Road and two congruent adjoined parcels in Bridgeport Canyon accessed from Coyote Springs Road.

The parcel at Mormon Meadows includes two historic lek (sage-grouse breeding site) locations and extensive wet meadow habitat located along Clearwater Creek. The parcel also provides the scenic backdrop to Bodie Road which bisects the property, providing one of the only green meadows along the road to the popular Bodie State Historic Park in summer. The vegetation is a mix of meadow, sagebrush, pinion/juniper and aspen. The elevation ranges from 7,200 feet to nearly 8,000 feet and from various points on the property has attractive views of Dunderberg Peak and the nearby Sierra Crest.

The parcels in Bridgeport Canyon are adjacent to satellite leks. Springs on the property support meadow used by the greater sage-grouse. The site supports habitat for numerous special status species including golden eagle, bald eagle, Swainson's hawk, pygmy rabbit, and western white-tailed jackrabbit. Mule deer, pronghorn antelope, black bear, and mountain lion are also transients.

The Property has historically been used for summer sheep grazing on meadows irrigated using significant water rights adjudicated under the Walker River Decree which will be

transferred to WLT as part of the acquisition. WLT will prepare a Land Management Plan for WCB approval, that will describe how the site will be managed and monitored while under its ownership. The plan will address the following topics: continued livestock grazing (permitted and/or trespass), irrigation and the continued beneficial use of associated water rights, invasive plant control, public access, monitoring, and how these tasks will be funded and accomplished.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program. The Land Acquisition Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, et seq.), authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property, or rights in real property and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. These activities are carried out in conjunction with CDFW, which evaluates the biological values of property through development of a Land Acquisition Evaluation/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (LAE/CAPP).

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.1 – Fund Projects and Landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The proposed acquisition will increase the protection of the area's wildlife habitat corridors with the surrounding protected lands. The Property offers various elevation gradients and will allow for anticipated habitat and wildlife migration in the face of climate change.

Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.

The habitat resources of the Property have been evaluated in a CAPP. CDFW determined the Property is a high priority for protection due to the quality of habitat for the bi-state greater sage-grouse and other wildlife.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The Property will be owned and managed by WLT. WLT staff and volunteers will provide stewardship and monitoring. Funding for management operations is derived from various sources that include foundations and state and federal grants. WLT will consider the potential for future public uses such as self-guided nature trails, hiking, nature viewing, and outdoor educational programs for local schools. There is a chance that in the future the Property may be transferred to the BLM. Should this transfer occur, it would be subject to WCB approval and any transfer must be consistent with the requirements of the proposed fund source for the project.

TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$1,320,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. The owner has agreed to sell the Property for the approved

appraised fair market value. The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant to WLT provide that WCB staff must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, WCB can require the grantee to encumber the property with a conservation easement in favor of the state or another entity approved by the state and seek reimbursement of funds.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$1,320,000
TOTAL Purchase Price	\$1,320,000
TOTAL ALLOCATION	\$1,320,000

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source that allows for the acquisition of habitat, including native oak woodlands, to protect deer and mountain lions. [Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,320,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) for the grant; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Ms. Smith noted that Aimee Rutledge, Project Manager, Wilderness Land Trust (WLT) was in the audience.

Mr. Donnelly noted a letter of support was received from Kay Ogden, Executive Director, Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

Chair Bonham asked hypothetically if WLT considered transferring to the federal government, would WCB have an objection?

Mr. Donnelly stated they would need to go through WCB first for approval.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,320,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) for the

grant; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

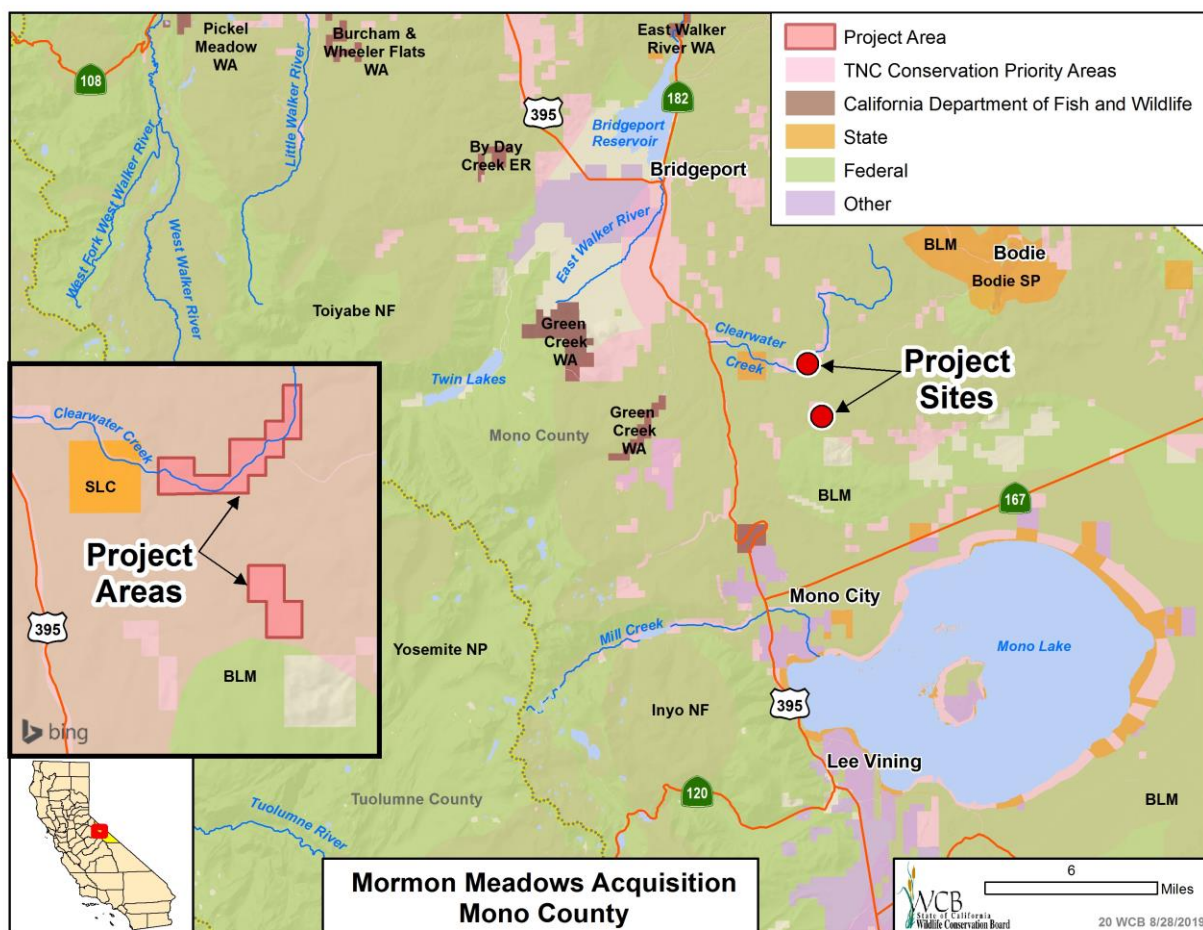
Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



21. Deadman II Forest Resilience Project
Santa Cruz County
\$885,500

This item has been withdrawn from consideration at this time.

**22. Tricolored Blackbird Wetland Habitat Enhancement
Kern County
\$719,000**

This item has been withdrawn from consideration at this time.

23. Colton Sand Dunes
San Bernardino County
\$1,934,000

Mr. John Walsh presented this proposal.

Mr. Donnelly noted a letter of support from Mr. Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Rivers & Lands Conservancy (RLC) as well as the acceptance of two USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grants and the approval to sub-grant these federal funds to RLC, to acquire 34± acres of land for the protection and preservation of habitat for the federally endangered Delhi Sands flower-loving fly (DSF).

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property) is located south of Interstate 10 in the City of Colton, San Bernardino County. Specifically, the Property is located west of Pepper Avenue, east of Riverside Avenue, and north of Slover Avenue.

To the north of the Property is vacant land and railroad tracks, to the west are fuel holding tanks, and to the east is a railyard and aggregate plant. To the south is the Vulcan Mitigation Bank (Bank). The Bank allows area developers to buy conservation credits to mitigate construction and development impacts to DSF habitat in other areas of southern California's Inland Empire. At approximately 150 acres, the Bank is the largest protected area of essential habitat for the DSF. The Bank is conserved in perpetuity through a conservation easement held by RLC. In 2006, the Bank received the California Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership award.

The DSF is endemic to San Bernardino and Riverside counties and is in danger of extinction due to widespread loss and degradation of its habitat which has been significantly reduced by urban development, with very little of the Colton Dune ecosystem remaining. The Property is located within the largest remaining block of DSF habitat.

If approved, this acquisition will result in permanent protection of conservation lands that complement the West Valley, City of Colton Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP is a single species habitat conservation plan that addresses the federally endangered DSF. The conservation of the Property also supports several other endemic species.

The HCP is generally bounded to the north by San Bernardino Avenue, to the west by the Rialto City limits, and to the east by Hermosa Avenue. The HCP includes about 420 acres of lands within the City of Colton north of Interstate 10, and approximately 6 acres south of Interstate 10. The southern portion of the HCP conservation area directly adjoins the Property.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property is 34± acres in size and consists of two, rectangular-shaped legal parcels. The topography is level to rolling. The proposed acquisition parcels are within the USFWS's Colton Recovery Unit as described in the 1997 DSF Recovery Plan. The acquisition of the Property will expand the reserve area within this portion of the Colton Recovery Unit. The acquisition parcels are primarily remnants of the Colton Dune ecosystem, a rare habitat type comprised of Delhi Sands. In addition to the Delhi Sands

soils, plants such as California croton, telegraph weed, and California buckwheat are found on site.

The most characteristic feature of all known DSF habitat sites is their fine sandy soils forming aeolian dunes. The Colton Dunes are the result of sand blown from the canyons in the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains by the Santa Ana winds in the fall. Over millennia, the dunes grew to cover some 40 square miles. The region, also known as the Colton Dunes, is the largest inland sand dune formation in southern California, exclusive of the desert.

All existing known populations of the DSF occur within an eight-mile radius. The distribution straddles Interstate 10 in the vicinity of Colton and Rialto in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Conservation of the proposed acquisition parcels is critical to the long-term survival and recovery of the DSF.

The DSF is the only fly presently on the USFWS's Endangered Species List. This subspecies is restricted to the Delhi Sands formation, an area of ancient inland dunes of which only a few hundred acres out of more than 40 square miles remain. Residential and commercial development, agricultural conversion, sand mining, invasion by exotic species, dumping of cow manure and trash, and off-road vehicle use have resulted in significant loss and modification of the species' habitat. Estimates are that over 97 percent of the original habitat is already gone, and only a portion of what remains is suitable habitat for these flies.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant and subgrants for this project are being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, et seq.) and enables WCB to grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property, or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. The USFWS grants proposed for acceptance for this project have been reviewed and approved by CDFW as a participant in the USFWS Land Acquisition grant selection and review process.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by the WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.1 – Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The Project enhances habitat connections by expanding a network of protected linkages.

Goal E.1 - Maximize expenditures of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.

The Property is proposed to be acquired with WCB funds leveraged by the matching funds from the two USFWS Section 6 subgrants.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

RLC has agreed to hold fee title and manage the property once it is acquired for conservation. RLC has secured funding for future management of the Property which will be monitored and managed in conjunction with other properties being held by RLC.

TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$9,627,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services and the USFWS. The owner has agreed to sell the Property for \$5,934,000, less than the approved appraised fair market value. The USFWS funds require a non-federal match that is being provided by WCB. The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant and subgrants to RLC provide that staff of WCB must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions, and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, WCB can require the grantee to encumber the Property with a conservation easement in favor of WCB and seek reimbursement of funds.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

WCB Grant	\$1,934,000
USFWS Subgrant Funds	\$4,000,000
TOTAL Purchase Price	\$5,934,000

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source, which allows for the acquisition of habitat to protect rare, endangered, threatened or fully protected species and to implement the Habitat Conservation Program. [Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The acquisition has been reviewed for compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve the project as proposed; approve the acceptance of two Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant funds from the USFWS in the amount of \$4,000,000 and approve the subgrants of the federal funds to RLC; allocate \$1,934,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund for the grant; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Walsh noted that Mary Beth Woulfe, USFWS Service Biologist, and Jack Easton, Executive Director, Rivers & Lands Conservancy, were in the audience.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board adopt the written findings and approve this project as proposed; approve the acceptance of two Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant funds from the USFWS in the amount of \$4,000,000 and approve the subgrants of the federal funds to RLC; allocate \$1,934,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund for the grant; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

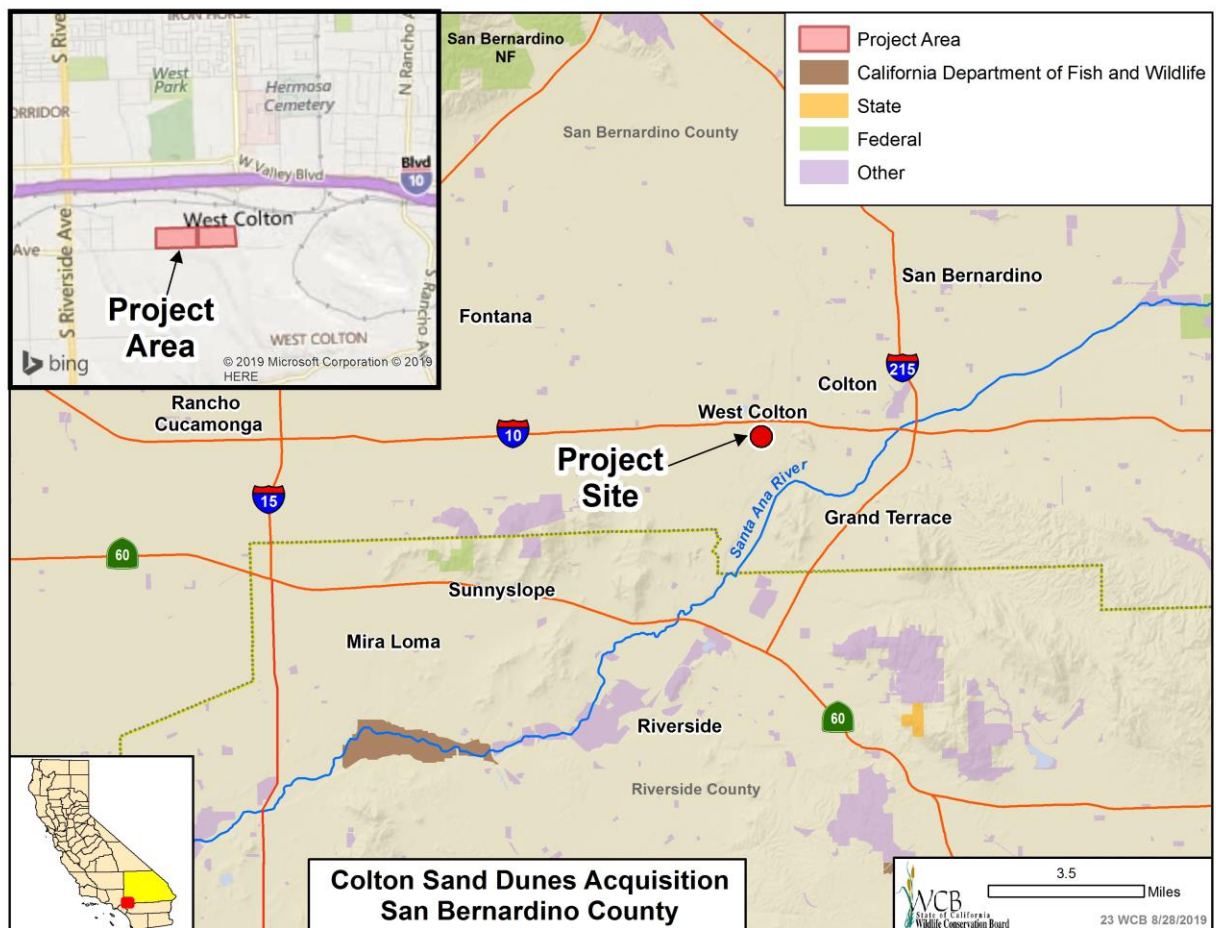
Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**24. Liberty Canyon Wildlife Underpass Project
Los Angeles County
\$390,000**

Mr. Don Crocker presented this proposal.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM) for a cooperative project with Caltrans, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to improve the ability of wildlife to cross U.S. Highway 101 by restoring and enhancing an existing wildlife undercrossing that was damaged in the 2019 Woolsey Fire, located approximately nine miles east of Thousand Oaks in Los Angeles County.

LOCATION

The project will consist of enhancing an under-crossing located at the Liberty Canyon Road and U.S. Highway 101 interchange site in Agoura Hills, California. At this location, Liberty Canyon Road passes under the freeway and becomes Canwood Street to the north of the interchange. The project site has been selected because there are contiguous protected lands on both sides of the freeway.

This location is the best remaining connection between undeveloped open space in the Santa Monica Mountains to the south and the Simi Hills and Los Padres National Forest to the north. Due to the purchase of public lands in the vicinity and limited development, this is one of the only remaining stretches of U.S. Highway 101 with undeveloped habitat on both sides of the freeway. At its narrowest point, there is at least a quarter mile of protected land between the nearest suburban development which makes large animal movement to and from the project site feasible.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

U.S. Highway 101 in Los Angeles County prevents the movement of mountain lions and other wildlife between two major wildlife habitat areas, specifically the Santa Monica Mountains to the south and the Simi Hills to the north, which then connects further north into the Los Padres National Forest. The resulting fragmentation and severing of critical wildlife habitat linkages has reduced the genetic health and adaptability of this sensitive species. The mountain lion population in the Santa Monica Mountains is now isolated by development and freeways, which has forced inbreeding, and puts the population at risk of extirpation.

To address this isolation, scientists identified the area near the Liberty Canyon Road and U.S. Highway 101 interchange as the prime target for restoration projects aimed at restoring habitat connectivity. As the first step in this process, WCB approved the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Crossing Project in November 2014. This project involved building a dry stream bed to simulate riparian areas that connect and create a safer path of travel between the Liberty Canyon Road underpass, the northbound on-ramp, and the southbound off-ramp. The dry creek bed also created a bio-swale to capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater runoff from the southbound Liberty Canyon Road off-ramp.

This project was nearing completion in the Fall of 2018, but the site was unfortunately part of the more than 96,000 acres that were burned in the Woolsey Fire that impacted large areas of Southern California in November 2018. The fire completely destroyed the reclaimed water irrigation system installed for the project, approximately 80-90 percent of the native plants that were installed, and around 20 percent of the cobble and boulders

installed to create the bio-swale stream feature. The fire also created a substantial amount of trash and debris comprised of burned irrigation pipe and equipment, other destroyed infrastructure, and partially burned dead vegetation.

In spite of this loss, the project site remains the best option for restoring the connectivity necessary for a healthy mountain lion population. The currently proposed project will salvage as much of the original project's work as possible, remove debris from the fire, re-install irrigation lines, and replace the destroyed vegetation by planting more than 3,500 native plants to provide cover and concealment to animals using the crossing. This new project will restore or enhance approximately one acre of riparian, three acres of valley oak grasslands, and three acres of coastal sage scrub habitats on site.

The repair of this area will increase large-scale ecosystem function by creating a functional habitat corridor that should result in improved species use by mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, deer, and small mammals. Enhanced vegetation, increased shade, and improved access paths will also benefit recreational users and repair of the southbound off-ramp bio-swale will improve water quality flowing into Liberty Canyon, Las Virgenes, and Malibu Creeks. The proposed restoration and passage improvement elements of this project will also work in concert with a future wildlife overpass near Liberty Canyon Road which is currently in the planning stage.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program and meets the program's goal of providing for and protecting habitat corridors.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB 's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife, and enhance habitats on working lands. The project will:

- Provide resilience in the face of climate change by allowing movement between protected habitat areas currently separated by U.S. Highway 101.
- Enhance water quality and quantity through its 700 linear feet of bio-swale.
- Remove invasive species and restore native habitats that will be better suited to warmer and drier conditions due to climate change.

Goal B.5 – Provide opportunities for greater public involvement in restoration projects:

- The project will promote stewardship among the local community through the use of educational signs detailing the project's role in beautifying the underpass and providing a safe path for mountain lions and other wildlife to migrate between the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in WCB's Strategic Plan:

- Provide or enhance habitat connectivity and corridors
- Improve habitat for threatened or endangered species

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Long-term maintenance will be conducted by MRCA and is being used as an in-kind match for the project valued at about \$12,000 per year or \$300,000 over the life of the project. MRCA will continue to inspect the site at least four times per year and conduct weed removal activities around plantings a minimum of twice per year (late spring and fall).

The temporary in-line drip irrigation system is expected to be disconnected by the end of year two. If it is determined that the irrigation system will be used after the two-year establishment period, MRCA will test the irrigation system, remove and clean the filter every two months while the system is in use. MRCA will photograph the site and write up any notes annually.

The National Park Service (NPS) will provide any pertinent wildlife monitoring data from GPS mountain lion tracking studies and potential future mule deer tracking studies. Additionally, NPS will continue to deploy multiple wildlife cameras near the project site and will share any pertinent data regarding wildlife movement between the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the project, RCDSMM does not manage and maintain the project improvements, the Grant Agreement requires that it refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

PROJECT TASK	WCB	RCDSMM	MRCA	TOTAL
Site Preparation	\$42,860	---	---	\$42,860
Irrigation Installation	\$42,000	\$8,000	---	\$50,000
Planting	\$155,800	\$5,300	---	\$161,100
Plant Establishment and Maintenance	\$81,200	\$8,160	---	\$89,360
Project Management	\$68,140	---	---	\$68,140
Long term Maintenance	---	---	\$300,000	\$300,000
TOTAL	\$390,000	\$21,460	\$300,000	\$711,460

Project costs will be for site preparation, irrigation infrastructure installation, native plant installation and maintenance, and project management.

FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resource Code Section 80132(e)(1) which allows for construction, repair, modification, or removal of transportation or water resources infrastructure to improve wildlife or fish passage.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15301, Class 1, as the repair or minor alteration of existing facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use; and Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration in the condition of land that does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Subject to

Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$390,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80132 (e)(1); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Crocker noted Clark Stevens, Resources Conservation District of Santa Monica Mountains, was in the audience to answer any questions.

Mr. Donnelly took a moment to introduce Ms. Katerina Robinson, representing Senator Nancy Skinner.

Ms. Creasman noted Mr. Crocker said we moved forward with \$12 million in applications, so what does that leave us in roll over?

Mr. Crocker stated \$17.4 million, but there is about a \$2 million overhead, so \$15.4 million.

Ms. Creasman asked for clarification on spending that percentage of allocation.

Mr. Crocker noted he received a lot of inquiries early on as to whether there would be a solicitation next year. He felt there were a lot of potential projects that weren't ready to apply this year, and felt we'd see more wildlife corridor projects next year.

Ms. Creasman then asked if this was a new program, or a revamped old program, or a program that we have used for a long time?

Mr. Crocker said it was a new temporary program.

Chair Bonham noted that, for a long time, participants in this space have understood the need for corridor connectivity and the interface with transportation. In his personal view what is unique about this within Proposition 68 is a dedicated amount of money for that purpose. The issue is old, the effort is old, the intense focus with a pot of money, might be newer. With Ms. Creasman's earlier questions, it might be incumbent on this Board to allocate, appropriate, implement, show results, and position whomever for what might be the next discussion about an investment in this area.

Ms. Creasman noted in looking at the geographic depicting where WCB received proposals from throughout the state, do you have the numbers of how many were in Northern as opposed to Southern California. Is WCB still struggling with adequate outreach partnerships and visibility in Southern California to make sure we are getting good applications and meeting Southern California's needs?

Mr. Crocker pointed out that if you take out the fact that you will naturally get less fish passage applications in Southern California, and the wildlife corridor applications were pretty evenly distributed, you have a natural bias for northern fish passage projects. He felt he had enough contact with people in Southern California that work on these issues, such as CalTrout, and they were all aware of the solicitation. There can always be more

outreach, but he wasn't sure that it was a significant issue here. Most likely the distribution is a result of the geographic nature of where the projects fall.

Ms. Creasman noted WCB has an opportunity to play an important role in wildfire cleanup and restoration, and to promote WCB and the funds available in Southern California.

Mr. Crocker noted this is an area that is used a lot by people for recreational purposes and there is signage there with our name on it.

Mr. Donnelly pointed out that when the Strategic Plan Update is discussed later at this meeting, one of the strategic initiatives and some of the objectives associated with that initiative, implements exactly what Ms. Creasman is asking about.

Board member Eric Sklar thanked Senator Henry Stern for being present and noted that as an environmental leader in the Senate, he had some very big shoes to fill in replacing Senator Fran Pavley. Mr. Sklar thanked him for the work he has done already, the work on the extension of funding, and other bills over the past few years.

Senator Stern thanked the Board and stated that shaping Proposition 68 and articulating a vision that all of California could feel wildness and that sort of sense of wonder in their own backyard, regardless of where you come from, that was the promise we made to voters and now we are starting to fulfill it. He loves to see the diversity and appreciates the thoughtfulness in terms of thinking about fish and wildlife and maybe growing new constituencies for these. He did wonder about opportunities for follow-on funding or packaged funding or thinking in sort of an integrated way. In SB 1 for instance, he believes there is an environmental mitigation account or program where Caltrans and DOT are looking at this notion of as we do transportation infrastructure in the state, how do we account for corridors. As WCB moves forward and looks at projects, how do you incorporate cross-departmental thinking?

Chair Bonham answered that this was a topic area of personal interest that influenced his choice to continue as Director for CDFW. He noted he had just met with Secretary Crowfoot and other cabinet secretaries in a taskforce that the legislature created around transportation infrastructure permitting. In that venue he made a presentation that California could become an international leader on corridors and habitat connectivity; it's not there yet. There are many reasons to do so, public policy reasons, public safety reasons, vehicle collisions that are an astronomical insurance issue. They discussed Liberty Canyon as a landmark project. His personal view is there is an interesting moment ahead where WCB, at a project level, state departments at an integrated, forward looking, how do you do green infrastructure using SB 1 level, can really move the needle in an exciting way. We aren't there yet, but it's very promising and he felt the right folks were there in the Newsom administration to help us take that leap.

Mr. Sklar stated he views a parallel to the marine protected areas. We are a leader on marine protected areas which provide similar protections to marine life and we need to be a leader on this as well and the Fish and Game Commission stands by working with CDFW and it is a top priority.

Senator Stern agreed this is a huge opportunity to develop partnerships and strategic initiatives and he strongly suggested using the legislature. Let them help celebrate this innovation.

Ms. Pavley wanted to make sure everyone was aware of the upcoming International Conference on Ecology and Transportation, September 23-26, right here in Sacramento.

Mr. Donnelly noted three letters of support: Senator Henry Stern, 27th District, Mr. Paul Edelman, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Mr. Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$390,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80132 (e)(1); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**25. Mission Center
San Diego County
\$1,600,000**

Mr. Kurt Weber presented this proposal.

Mr. Donnelly noted a letter of support from Mr. Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League.

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Endangered Habitats Conservancy (EHC) to acquire in fee 42± acres of land to protect habitat that implements in the establishment of the City of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) which is both a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) and Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES

The property (Property) is generally located within the San Diego River watershed and is bisected by Mission Center Road just west of Interstate 805, in the community of Sierra Mesa of the City of San Diego in the County of San Diego. The community of Sierra Mesa and surrounding land uses include residential subdivision, with larger estate developments and intermittent commercial development along the major thoroughfares. Not protecting this Property and allowing further development and encroachment would result in a fragmented landscape further reducing connectivity between already protected areas.

The Property is located in the MSCP which is both a NCCP and HCP. The Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA) was established by state law in 1991 (Fish and Game Code Section 2800 et. seq.). This legislation and the subsequent state-funded program were intended to address the need for broad-based planning to provide for effective protection and conservation of the state's wildlife heritage while continuing to allow for appropriate development and growth. The Southern California Coastal Sage Scrub NCCP Process Guidelines, prepared in 1993, was the first such specific application developed under the law. The MSCP Subarea Plan was adopted by the San Diego City Council in 1997, and in 1998 became one of the first NCCPs approved by CDFW. In 1998, USFWS also issued an HCP for the MSCP Subarea Plan.

The MSCP is a comprehensive long-term plan addressing the needs of 85 plant and wildlife species and the preservation of natural vegetation communities. The MSCP further addresses the potential impacts of urban growth, natural habitat loss, and species endangerment and creates a plan to mitigate for the potential loss of covered species and their habitat due to the direct impacts of future development of both public and private lands.

The Property is located within Murray Canyon, an urban canyon system bounded by residential development and roads which ultimately restrict its broader use by wildlife. Although the canyon is not designated as an MSCP regional wildlife corridor, it does provide a throughway for wildlife species by connecting to open space to the north and south of the site, and ultimately to the San Diego River, which is an MCSP Regional Wildlife Movement Corridor. This connectivity to off-site habitat provides a "stepping stone" for avian and small mammal species but would not facilitate large terrestrial wildlife moving through the area as they would be stopped at the south end by roadways.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Property is comprised of four parcels totaling 42± acres zoned for either open space or mixed residential use. Approximately 21 of the 42 acres are designated with a MSCP planning overlay identified as the Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). The MHPA is targeted for 75 percent conservation to ultimately provide the bulk of the final City MSCP Preserve. However, because most of the MHPA is privately owned, landowners are entitled to develop 25 percent of the property and the resulting development/conservation configuration may be less than ideal for species preservation over the long term. For this reason, acquisition of the entire Property is desirable to minimize habitat fragmentation, lessen edge effects, and ensure better habitat connectivity through the length of the Property.

The Property contains a variety of landscapes and habitats, including coastal sage scrub habitat for the federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, and habitat for other locally sensitive species known or expected to be present. The MSCP target species confirmed on site include the yellow warbler and the southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, and the orange-throated whiptail is expected to inhabit the Property.

WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to WCB's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, *et seq.*) authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the Program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. The Property has been reviewed and approved by CDFW under its NCCP program, substantiating the biological values of the Property and recommending it for funding.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

Goal A.1 - Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.

The Property contains habitat and wildlife corridors for threatened and endangered species. In addition to the California gnatcatcher and the yellow warbler, the Property supports habitat for the following four sensitive plant species: Nuttall's scrub oak, San Diego barrel cactus, San Diego viguiera, and southwestern spiny rush. Linkages and corridors between important habitat areas will be protected and maintained to allow for range shifts and migration of species to utilize suitable habitat as necessitated by climate change or temporary loss of habitat due to catastrophic fires or drought.

Goal A.3 - Fund projects that support the implementation of Natural Community Conservation Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans and recovery of listed species.

The Property is within the MSCP, which is both a federal HCP and a state approved NCCP. Conservation of this property will help meet the goals of the MSCP. The project has been reviewed and approved by CDFW under its NCCP program, substantiating the biological values of the Property and recommending it for funding.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

EHC's management team will conduct annual surveys and monitoring of MSCP plant and animal target species, invasive species, and rare plants. Monitoring data will be integrated into the regional NCCP management and monitoring program. Possible future public use opportunities that may be considered for the Property include hiking, photography, and bird watching.

TERMS

The Property was appraised as having a fair market value of \$1,665,000. WCB reviewed the appraisal and submitted it to the Department of General (DGS) and USFWS for review. DGS approved the appraisal. The landowner has agreed to sell the Property for \$1,600,000.

The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant provide that staff of WCB must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. Under the terms of the WCB Grant Agreement, EHC will be required to hold the Property in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Grant Agreement. The Property cannot be sold, transferred, exchanged or otherwise conveyed without WCB approval. In the event of default, WCB may require the EHC to convey a conservation easement over the Property in favor of the state, or another entity or organization authorized by California law to acquire and hold the conservation easement that is willing and financially capable.

PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

WCB	\$1,600,000
Total Purchase Price	\$1,600,000
TOTAL WCB ALLOCATION	\$1,600,000

FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which allows for the acquisition of real property subject to a natural community conservation plan adopted pursuant to Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of the Fish and Game Code. [Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Code Section 5096.350(a)(6)]

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by WCB.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve the project as proposed; allocate \$1,600,000 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Code Section 5096.350(a)(6) for the grant to the

Endangered Habitats Conservancy; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,600,000 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Code Section 5096.350(a)(6) for the grant to the Endangered Habitats Conservancy; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

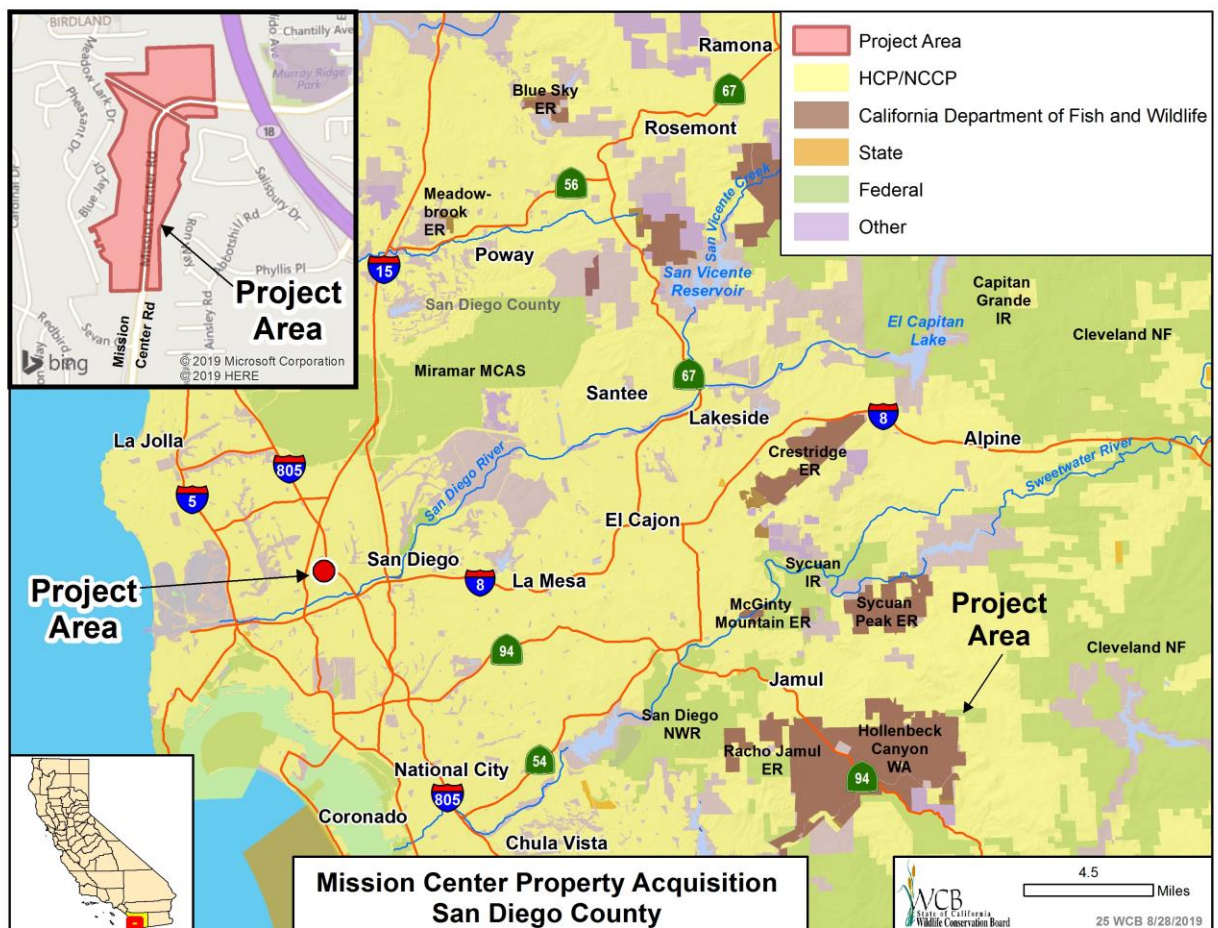
Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



26. Strategic Plan Update Action

Assistant Executive Director Rebecca Fris presented this update.

To consider adopting the update of WCB's Strategic Plan (Plan) as required by Proposition 68. The Plan update relies on the fundamentals of the 2014 Strategic Plan while defining more focused measurable objectives tailored to emerging conservation priorities and a strategic path forward.

A draft Strategic Plan Update was posted for public comment for the month of July. Comment letters received during that period were evaluated and incorporated into the Plan Update as appropriate. A final Strategic Plan Update will be provided to the Board and posted to the [Strategic Plan update page](#). Staff will provide a summary of the final measurable objectives identified in the Plan Update. Upon Board approval, the document will be finalized and posted to the website.

Ms. Fris noted this is WCB's plan moving forward. The key points she wished to emphasize: WCB will continue their ongoing programs, but what they do with the plan update is actually emphasize some newer programs, and programs that have had less money in the past, that are now infused with money from Proposition 68 and other sources. The key is to actually get to the quantification of what WCB is doing and tell a better story about what is being done and how that is meeting the collective conservation objectives of the state. Ms. Fris wished to thank the CDFW Office of Communications, Education, and Outreach for their support in designing the layout of the report. She noted the Plan Update is posted to the WCB website, and once approved by the Board, it will be finalized, reproduced, and posted to the web page. The really hard work then starts; doing the tracking and quantification and telling the story of how WCB will meet those objectives outlined in the Plan Update.

Chair Bonham asked how long this process took?

Ms. Fris stated six to eight months from initiation of the subcommittee who met several times over that process. Retired annuitant, Kevin Hunting, contributed heavily to the drafting process and advising the subcommittee in developing objectives. Finally, the public comment makes this a better document.

Ms. Colborn, one of the subcommittee staff, wished to thank everyone who worked on the Plan Update. She felt it was a great collaborative project and was especially happy that they emphasized the priority WCB was putting on moving forward with climate change adaptation, wildlife corridors, and other new legislative programs recently enacted. Also, highlighting the emphasis on public access and diversity and communicating more widely to the public the importance of the work the Board is doing. She felt the staff did a really good job of incorporating that in the Plan Update.

Ms. Bokde also wished to echo staff's hard work and effort in turning this around. She noted the success of the Los Angeles workshop to get input from Southern California. She felt the outcomes and objectives were really good and hoped to continue to push the issues related to greater transparency and push the Board about other ways to get the word out at different meetings, conferences, events, and webinars to share the opportunities for grants.

Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

It was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve the update of the Strategic Plan as required by Proposition 68. Upon approval, staff is authorized to finalize the Plan Update and post it to the WCB website.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Creasman – Yes

Miller – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes

27. Discuss and Act on Board Administrative Items

- New Business
- Next WCB Meeting – November 21, 2019

Executive Director Donnelly wished to note that the Strategic Plan Update is a big deal for WCB from a staff perspective, and probably even more so for the Board. It is the face of WCB moving forward for the next five years recognizing that things will change but the implementation of this is really going to springboard forward in the context of climate resiliency, climate change, and biodiversity conservation in California. He wished to reiterate thanks to the subcommittee, Rebecca Fris, and especially Kevin Hunting who was instrumental in the development of the Plan Update. Lastly, he thanked WCB staff noting this was their document and they should be proud of it.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

John P. Donnelly
Executive Director