

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

1807 13TH STREET, SUITE 103
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State of California
 The Resources Agency
 Department of Fish and Game
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD
 Minutes
 August 10, 2000

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA-THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

GRAY DAVIS, Governor

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WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

August 10, 2000

The Wildlife Conservation Board met at the State Capitol, Room 113, Sacramento, California on August 10, 2000. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 A.M. by Mr. Michael Chrisman, President, Fish and Game Commission. At this time he introduced the Board members present. Mr. Chrisman announced that Mr. John Schmidt, Executive Director of the Board, would be retiring at the end of August and that there would be a celebration in his honor on August 18 in Sacramento.

1. Roll Call

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS

Michael Chrisman, Chairperson
President, Fish and Game Commission
Annette Porini, Chief Deputy Director
Vice, B. Timothy Gage, Member
Director, Department of Finance
Robert C. Hight, Member
Director, Department of Fish and Game

JOINT LEGISLATIVE INTERIM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Senator Byron Sher

Priscilla Ouchida,
Vice, Senator Pat Johnston

Gavin Payne,
Vice, Senator Jack O'Connell

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

W. John Schmidt

Staff Present:

W. John Schmidt, Executive Director
Jim Sarro, Assistant Executive Director
Georgia Lipphardt, Assistant Executive Director
Frank Giordano, Senior Land Agent
Debra Townsend, Senior Land Agent
John Donnelly, Senior Land Agent
Bill Gallup, Senior Land Agent
Linda Drake, Senior Land Agent
Teri Muzik, Assistant Land Agent
Marilyn Cundiff, Wetlands Program Manager
Scott Clemons, Riparian Program Manager
Peter Perrine, Public Land Management Specialist
Roxanne Woodward, Budget Officer
Gary Cantrell, Staff Services Analyst
Maureen Rivera, Executive Secretary
Jan Beeding, Office Technician
Caroline Fudge, Office Technician
Marie Reed, Retired Annuitant

Others Present:

Jim Swanson, Department of Fish and Game
J. Jasper Lament, Ducks Unlimited
Robert Asher, County of San Diego
Dave Patterson, California Waterfowl Association
Rick Cooper, Bureau of Land Management
Sean Woods, Coastal Conservancy
Larry Eng, Department of Fish and Game
Bud Thrapp, Department of Water Resources
Patrick Laughlin, Stromer Realty
Marjorie Dickinson, U.C. Davis
Robert Treanor, Fish and Game Commission
Dale Whitmore, Department of Fish and Game
David Barber, The Environmental Trust
Bill Fischbeck, Fischbeck and Oberndorfer
Trenton Huls, Boys and Girls Clubs of East County Foundation
Jerry Fazio, Boys and Girls Clubs of East County Foundation
Michael McCollum, McCollum Associates
Bill Gaines, California Waterfowl Association
Pamela Milligan, County of Riverside
John Curci, Curci-Turner
Cheryl Allen
Steve House
Charlene Adams
James Watkins
Roger Heltsch

2.	<u>Funding Status as of August 10, 2000</u>	<u>Informational</u>
	(a) <u>2000-01 Wildlife Restoration Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget BMinor Projects	\$100,000.00
	(2) <u>1999-00 Wildlife Restoration Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget BLand Acquisition	\$200,000.00
	Less Previous Board Allocations	(2,000.00)
	Unallocated Balance	\$198,000.00
	Governor's Budget BMinor Projects	\$955,000.00
	Less Previous Board Allocations	(854,140.00)
	Unallocated Balance	\$100,860.00
	(3) <u>1998-99 Wildlife Restoration Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget BLand Acquisition	\$200,000.00
	Less Previous Board Allocations	(154,300.20)
	Unallocated Balance	\$45,699.80
	(4) <u>2000-01 Habitat Conservation Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget	\$20,005,000.00
	(5) <u>1999-00 Habitat Conservation Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget	\$18,932,000.00
	Less Previous Board Allocations	(3,632,887.00)
	Unallocated Balance	\$15,299,113.00
	(6) <u>1998-99 Habitat Conservation Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget	\$17,960,000.00
	Less Previous Board Allocations	(17,317,867.51)
	Unallocated Balance	\$642,132.49
	(g) <u>2000-01 General Fund Capital Outlay Budget</u>	
	Governor's Budget	\$115,000,000.00

(h) 1999-00 General Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor's Budget.....	\$33,100,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(11,403,987.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$21,696,013.00

(l) 1998-99 General Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor's Budget.....	\$4,850,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(4,352,320.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$497,680.00

(10) 1999-00 Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund

Governor's Budget.....	\$1,050,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(200,000.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$ 850,000.00

(a) 1999-00 Forest Resources Improvement Fund

Governor's Budget.....	\$2,600,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(500,000.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$2,100,000.00

(l) 2000-01 Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Bond Fund (River Protection Subaccount)

Governor's Budget.....	\$14,000,000.00
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(m) 2000-01 Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor's Budget.....	\$216,125,000.00
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(n) 1999-00 Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund

Continuously Appropriated [Sec. 5096.350 (a)(1), (2), (4) and (7)].....	\$38,000,000.00
Less Bond Costs (5% Set Aside)	(1,900,000.00)
Less Previous Board Allocations	(1,790,000.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$34,310,000.00

RECAP OF FUND BALANCES

<u>Wildlife Restoration Fund</u> (a), (b) and (c)	\$444,559.80
<u>Habitat Conservation Fund</u> (d), (e) and (f)	\$35,946,245.49
<u>General Fund</u> (g), (h) and (i)	\$137,193,693.00
<u>Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund</u> (j)	\$850,000.00
<u>Forest Resources Improvement Fund</u> (k)	\$2,100,000.00
<u>Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Bond Fund</u> (l)	\$14,000,000.00
<u>Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund</u> (m) and (n)	\$250,435,000.00

Mr. Schmidt asked if there were any questions regarding the above item. There were none.

3. Special Project Planning Account Informational

The Board has historically used a special project account to provide working funds for staff evaluation (appraisals, engineering, preliminary title reports, etc.) of proposed projects. Upon Board approval of a project, all expenditures incurred and recorded in the Special Project Planning Account are transferred to the Board approved project account which reduces the Special Project Planning Account expenditures. This procedure, therefore, acts as a revolving account for the pre-project expenses.

Some appropriations now made to the Board do not include a specific budgeted planning line item appropriation necessary to begin a project without prior Board authorization. Pre-project costs are a necessary expenditure in most all capital outlay projects. The Special Project Planning Account would be used for these costs.

The Board, at the May 6, 1986 meeting, authorized the Executive Director to use up to 1% of a budgeted appropriation to set up and maintain an appropriate planning account with the provision it would be reported to the Board as an information item at the next meeting.

Accordingly, a planning account has been set up as follows:

General Fund.....	\$60,000.00
Habitat Conservation Fund	\$40,000.00
Wildlife Restoration Fund	\$2,000.00
Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Bond Fund	\$30,000.00
Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund	\$60,000.00

Mr. Schmidt asked if there were any questions regarding the above item. There were none.

4. PROPOSED CONSENT CALENDAR (Items 7 - 20)

Mr. Schmidt reported that the Consent Calendar consisted of Items 7 - 20. Mr. Schmidt noted that the Board received a letter from an adjacent landowner regarding Item #11, expressing concern about the development of a lot of wetlands, since he has a turkey ranch downwind of the project. Mr. Schmidt stated that the Department of Fish and Game's Regional Manager from Fresno telephoned the adjacent landowner and that his concerns were discussed. Mr. Schmidt stated that the adjacent landowner is in support of the project, however, he was concerned about the possible major development of wetlands. Mr. Schmidt stated that it is his understanding that there is no intent to do major wetland development and that this work would not result in an increase in waterfowl in that area. Staff recommended that the Board approve the Consent Calendar as presented, absent any objection.

It was moved by Ms. Porini that the Board approve Consent Calendar items 7 - 20, as proposed in the individual agenda explanations, including funding as noted.

Motion carried.

5. Approval of Minutes B May 24, 2000 Meeting

Staff recommended that the Board approve the minutes of the May 24, 2000 meeting, as written.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the minutes of the May 24, 2000 meeting of the Wildlife Conservation Board be approved as written.

Motion carried.

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.

\$0.00 to the General Fund
\$0.00 to the California Environmental License Plate Fund
\$21,264.98 to the Habitat Conservation Fund \$9,928.59 to the Wildlife
Restoration Fund
\$4,361.80 to the River Parkway Subaccount

GENERAL FUND

San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Exp. # 10, Riverside County

Allocated	\$1,597,000.00
Expended	<u>-1,597,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Clayton Ranch, Contra Costa County

Allocated	\$200,000.00
Expended	<u>-200,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Total General Fund Recoveries \$0.00

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL LICENSE PLATE FUND

Bair Island Ecological Reserve, Exp. #1, San Mateo County

Allocated	\$266,000.00
Expended	<u>-266,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Total California Environmental License Plate Fund Recoveries \$0.00

HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND

Bair Island Ecological Reserve, Exp. # 1, San Mateo County

Allocated	\$254,000.00
Expended	<u>-241,790.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$12,210.00

Canebrake Creek Ecological Reserve Riparian Restoration, Kern County

Allocated	\$33,970.00
Expended	<u>-33,970.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Lake Earl Wildlife Area, Exp. # 22, Del Norte County

Allocated	\$485,000.00
Expended	<u>-484,423.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$577.00

Lakeside Linkages, Exp. # 3, San Diego County

Allocated	\$85,000.00
Expended	<u>-81,316.98</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$3,683.02

Lokern Ecological Reserve, Kern County Valley Floor Habitat
Conservation Plan, Exp. # 1 and # 2, Kern County

Allocated	\$28,000.00
Expended	<u>-28,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Lokern Ecological Reserve, Kern County Valley Floor Habitat
Conservation Plan, Exp. # 3, Kern County

Allocated	\$2,500.00
Expended	<u>-2,500.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Lusardi Creek Habitat Linkages, Exp. # 1, San Diego County

Allocated	\$990,000.00
Expended	<u>-989,440.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$560.00

Mud Slough Wildlife Area, Exp. # 2 (Gadwall Unit # 1), Merced County

Allocated	\$1,300,000.00
Expended	-1,295,839.94
Previously Recovered (05/00)	<u>-1,979.94</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$2,180.12

San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Exp. # 10, Riverside County

Allocated	\$1,600,000.00
Expended	<u>-1,597,945.16</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$2,054.84

Wetland Habitat Restoration and Enhancement, Santa Cruz Land
and Cattle, Merced County

Allocated	\$65,000.00
Expended	<u>-65,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00

Total Habitat Conservation Fund \$21,264.98

WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUND

Clayton Ranch, Contra Costa County

Allocated	\$1,000.00
Expended	<u>-720.00</u>

Balance for Recovery	\$280.00
<u>Heenan Lake Water and Storage Rights, Exp. # 1, Alpine County</u>	
Allocated	\$360,000.00
Expended	<u>-351,059.66</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$8,940.34
<u>North Table Mountain Wildlife Area, Exp. # 1, Butte County</u>	
Allocated	\$135,000.00
Expended	<u>-134,931.75</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$68.25
<u>San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Exp. # 11, Riverside County</u>	
Allocated	\$30,000.00
Expended	<u>-29,360.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$640.00
<u>Total Wildlife Restoration Fund Recoveries</u>	<u>\$9,928.59</u>
<u>RIVER PARKWAY SUBACCOUNT</u>	
<u>Bakersfield-Kern River Parkway, Kern County</u>	
Allocated	\$500,000.00
Expended	<u>-495,638.20</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$4,361.80
<u>Total River Parkway Subaccount</u>	<u>\$4,361.80</u>
<u>OTHER</u>	
<u>State Coastal Conservancy Grant</u>	
Allocated	\$613,499.00
Expended	<u>-0.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$613,499.00

At the May 24, 2000 meeting of the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Board accepted a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) to fund projects within the jurisdiction of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. Subsequent to the

meeting, the SCC decided to handle the project in a different manner. This entry is to close the project for the Board.

Total Other\$613,499.00

Staff recommended that the totals be recovered and that the projects be closed.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight to recover funds for the projects listed on pages 6 through 9 of this agenda and close the project accounts.

Motion carried.

At this time, Mr. Chrisman welcomed Mr. Gavin Payne, representing Senator Jack O'Connell's office.

- *7. Cache Creek Wildlife Area, Lake and Colusa Counties \$ -0-
(Change in Scope)

This proposal was to consider a change in scope for a previously authorized grant to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), approved by the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) at its November 18, 1999, meeting. Due to demands by the owner of the property, the RMEF was forced to close escrow prior to the WCB's final approval, which eliminated the Board's participation in the original 300± acre acquisition.

The RMEF and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are partners in the phased purchase of a much larger holding of which the WCB has become a part of by virtue of its previous and proposed actions. Currently the BLM and the RMEF have completed negotiations for Phase 3 of this phased project and have identified another 300± acre parcel, appraised at the same value as the original property. The RMEF has requested that the WCB allow them to apply the previously approved grant to this current purchase. Actually, the grant would be used to pay for a 300± portion of the 1,675± acre parcel being proposed for acquisition in this phase.

The subject area is located within Lake and Colusa Counties, lying south of Highway 20 and one-half mile east of Highway 16. The eastern boundary lies 1± mile westerly of the state's Wilson Valley Wildlife Area. Access is achieved from Highway 20 over BLM lands. In this particular phase, the property to be acquired consists of 20± acres within Lake County and 1,655± acres within Colusa County.

This area provides critical habitat for resident tule elk and wintering and feeding areas for bald and golden eagles. The key habitat types found within the Cache Creek/Wilson Valley area include blue oak woodlands, valley oak woodlands, valley foothill riparian, mixed chaparral, chamise-redshank chaparral, annual grasslands, riverine habitat and wet meadows. Because of the area's importance to tule elk and to the bald eagles, its protection continues

to be considered of statewide, and even national significance. Other wildlife species using the subject property include deer, tule elk, wild pig, black bear, wild turkey, California quail, dove and some species of waterfowl. The large size of the surrounding publicly-owned area and the lack of federal grazing leases on BLM administered lands also makes this area important to the state's mountain lion habitat protection effort. Species listed by the Department of Fish and Game as ASpecies of Special Concern@ that utilize the wildlife area include prairie falcon, golden eagle, osprey, long-eared owl and American badger.

All General Services' approvals and CEQA requirements were completed prior to the WCB's November meeting and funding from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a) has been encumbered. Therefore, staff recommended that the Board authorize the proposed change of scope and allow staff to redirect the previously approved grant funding to the pending 300± acre acquisitions, and authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to carry out this change in scope substantially as outlined. **As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board authorize the proposed change of scope and allow staff to redirect the previously approved grant funding to the pending 300± acre acquisitions, and authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to carry out this change in scope substantially as outlined.**

Motion carried.

- *8. Allensworth Ecological Reserve, Expansions #21 and #22, \$4,000.00
Tulare County

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of two separate ownerships totaling 14± acres of land for addition to the Allensworth Ecological Reserve, a Significant Natural Area providing habitat for the endangered Tipton kangaroo rat and Blunt-nosed leopard lizard, as well as the San Joaquin kit fox, a state listed threatened and federally listed endangered species. Funding for these proposed purchases has been made available from a Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) grant, accepted for this purpose by the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) at its November 18, 1999 meeting.

The Allensworth area is listed in the 1988 Annual Report of Significant Natural Areas of California prepared by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). The Valley Sink Scrub community found at Allensworth is one of the best remaining examples in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Due to the relatively large area it covers, it provides critical habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox, which requires sizable territories (one to two square miles) for hunting and breeding. In addition, because of its significant habitat for the Blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the Allensworth area has long been recommended for protection in the Recovery Plan for that species.

Much of the land in the general vicinity of the subject properties has been, or is currently

being, converted to extensive agricultural uses including alfalfa, cotton, milo, grapes or orchard use. In the long-term, it is almost a certainty that the subject properties would be developed to similar agricultural uses, thereby destroying their habitat values. DFG operation and maintenance costs for this area are expected to be minimal. The management focus is habitat preservation with potential species augmentation.

Good progress has been made to protect habitat in the Allensworth Ecological Reserve, with about 1,559± acres acquired to date, the last acquisitions being approved by the Board at its May 24, 2000, meeting. Continuing efforts are being made to join DFG ownership in this area.

Following is a brief description of the two individual parcels currently being recommended for purchase and acceptance under this grant program. It should be noted that separately the parcels may contain limited wildlife values. However, combined together with other DFG lands, they are very important to the overall, long-term program of creating a viable ecological reserve in this area. In essence, the acquisitions are an effort to buy inholdings within the Allensworth Reserve and simplify DFG management. The subject properties are not farmed, contain no improvements and have no current water availability.

Expansion #21

This 2± acre parcel is located in Tulare County, has no legal access and adjoins state property along its southern and eastern boundaries. The owners have agreed to sell at the approved fair market value of \$3,000.00. Administrative costs (appraisal, Department of General Services' fees, escrow, etc.) for this purchase are estimated at \$1,500.00.

Expansion #22

This 12± acre parcel is located in Tulare County, has no legal access and adjoins state property along its southern and eastern boundaries. The owners have agreed to sell at the approved fair market value of \$8,500.00. Administrative costs for this purchase are estimated to be \$2,500.00.

As noted above, the funding for these purchases has been made available through a grant from the BOR. The original grant was for \$150,000.00 and was amended later to total \$310,000.00. Then the BOR amended the grant to add another \$300,000.00, bringing the total amount of grant funds available to \$610,000.00. The BOR and the DFG, have identified a number of ownerships primarily in southern Tulare and northern Kern County area for protection, as discussed earlier.

The grant provides funding for the total purchase price of the properties acquired. The funds for the purchases are deposited directly into the state's escrow account, while administrative

funds for all other related real estate expenses, such as title, escrow and appraisal services, are to be provided on a reimbursement basis.

As noted, all owners have agreed to sell the above discussed lands for the total approved appraised fair market value of \$11,500.00. Total acquisitions costs are estimated to be an additional \$4,000.00 for title insurance, escrow fees and the Department of General Services' review charges, all of which will be reimbursed by BOR. The acquisitions are exempt from CEQA under Section 15313 as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve these transactions as proposed; authorize the acceptance of both the grant and the proposed properties; allocate \$4,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (b/c), to cover the related costs; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve these transactions as proposed; authorize the acceptance of both the grant and the proposed properties; allocate \$4,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (b/c), to cover the related costs; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

*9. San Bruno Mountain Ecological Reserve Disposal, San Mateo County \$3,000.00

This proposal was to consider the transfer of 9.8± acres of the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) San Bruno Mountains Ecological Reserve, to the City of Brisbane. The parcel, commonly referred to as the Aold Quarry Road, @ is located at the eastern boundary of the Reserve, at the base of San Bruno Mountain. Access to the reserve is from Quarry Road via South Hill Drive, and from San Francisco Avenue at the eastern boundary of the parcel.

The Wildlife Conservation Board acquired the adjoining Owl and Buckeye Canyon parcels in 1989, for habitat conservation and protection of endangered and threatened species. The reserve contains critical habitat for the federally-endangered Mission blue and the Calliope silverspot butterflies. In addition, potential habitat exists for the Bay checkerspot, listed as federally threatened. The canyon areas support mixed grasslands and a unique coastal scrub influenced by local fog and other climatic conditions. Sections of riparian habitat supporting

California buckeye, live oaks, willows and other species are located within the canyon's lower levels. In contrast, the portion of the parcel proposed for transfer does not contain habitat for any of the listed species for which the property was originally purchased. Therefore, transfer of this 9.8± acre parcel will not have a significant impact to the rest of the ecological reserve.

The DFG has benefitted from volunteer group efforts to control exotic vegetation that competes with native, foraging habitats for butterflies within Owl and Buckeye Canyons. However, due to limited personnel and budgetary constraints, DFG personnel have sought out alternative funding sources and outside agencies in the past to assist in management of the reserve. The public has traditionally used the adjacent county park properties on the mountains for recreation, while the Department only allows scientific study and research within its holdings. There are no plans by DFG to develop the area for general public access due to the steep topography and sensitive habitat conditions. The area suggested for conversion has become overgrown and has become burdened with transient camping, litter problems and other inappropriate public use.

Title research on the Quarry Road reveals an existing access and utility easement that reserves rights of access, roadway and public utility purposes for the City of Brisbane. The easement declares that the state agrees to cooperate in the dedication to the city at the appropriate time. Efforts were made by DFG in 1996, to facilitate the city's request that DFG transfer approximately 1.5 acres to the city. The project, referred to as AJet Way@ was not executed, but had DFG's approval at the time. After exploring several alternatives with the city, including entering into more easements, DFG proposed that the city would be in a better position to locally handle the management associated with the access way, as well as the numerous public utility easements on the property. DFG therefore approved a Land Disposal Evaluation recommending transfer of the Quarry Road to the city.

DFG normally gains access to the ecological reserve via Quarry Road from the north boundary. There is a locked gate on the eastern boundary at San Francisco Avenue and at the end of South Hill Road which lies within the potential conversion. As part of the transfer to the city, an easement will be reserved by DFG to gain access from South Hill Road for continued administrative purposes. In addition, the city has agreed to confine the use of the property to activities involving wildlife habitat preservation and management, wildlife-oriented education and research and compatible public uses, such as trails or open space.

The approved fair market value of the property is \$100,000.00. Costs to carry out this transfer, which include Department of General Services' review costs, are estimated at \$3,000.00. In accordance with existing statutes, sales proceeds would be deposited into the Wildlife Restoration Fund. The proposed sale is exempt from CEQA as a sale of government land for which the use has not changed since the time of purchase by the public

agency and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the transfer of the property as proposed; allocate \$3,000.00 from the General Fund for processing costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff of the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve the transfer of the property as proposed; allocate \$3,000.00 from the General Fund for processing costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff of the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *10. North Lake Tahoe Public Access Disposal, Placer County \$3,000.00

This proposal was to consider the sale of a 4.6 ± acre portion of the Wildlife Conservation Board's (WCB) North Lake Tahoe Public Access site to the Regents of the University of California, for expansion of the University's Lake Tahoe research program. The subject property was originally part of the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) North Lake Tahoe Fish Hatchery site but was converted to a public use area under the management of the North Lake Tahoe Public Utility District (PUD), after the hatchery was closed. The 3.5± acre hatchery building site, located adjacent to the westerly boundary of the subject site, was transferred to the University pursuant Fish and Game Commission approval at their October 6, 1995 meeting. As part of this transfer DFG retained the use of an office space.

The property is located within the city limits of Tahoe City, lying on the lake side of State Highway 28 just off Lake Forest Road. When the hatchery was closed, a portion of the subject property was improved with a campground and added to the adjacent WCB boat launching facility for management. This proposed sale does not include any of the area currently used for the boat launching purposes. The Regents have been working closely with the PUD and the City and have reached a tentative agreement on their proposed expansion plans. However, the full public hearing process and permit requirements must be met prior to the Regents completing this proposed acquisition.

The appraised value of the subject property, as approved by the Department of General

Services, is \$92,000.00. Terms of the proposed sale will include the Regents' development of shared parking for overflow needs of the WCB's boat launching facility and the relocation of the DFG's fish hatchery office from the old hatchery building to the new facility. This will allow the Regents to renovate the old building as they desire. In addition, it is proposed that the Regents and the WCB open an escrow account in which the purchase price will be deposited into an interest bearing account in favor of the WCB. This escrow account will remain open for two years, or until the Regents receive the necessary rezoning and permits to begin their project. Upon receipt of these items, escrow will close. If the permits and rezoning are not received by the Regents and the state's agreement with the Regents is not extended, escrow will be cancelled and the proposed transaction will terminate.

This proposed sale is categorically exempt from CEQA under Class 12 (a) and (b)(2), Section 15312. Any future development of the area by the Regents will require proper environmental clearances. It is estimated that \$3,000.00 will be needed to cover the Department of General Services' review fees, escrow and other related expenses.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the sale of the 4.6± acres of land to the Regents as outlined; allocate \$3,000.00 from the General Fund to cover the related sales expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve the sale of the 4.6± acres of land to the Regents as outlined; allocate \$3,000.00 from the General Fund to cover the related sales expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *11. Merced River, Robinson Ranch Unit, Merced County \$ -0-

This proposal was to consider the acceptance a CalFed Grant, a portion of which will be placed directly into a designated escrow account, on behalf of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) for the purpose of acquiring 318± acres of land for the protection and enhancement of a mix of riparian, wetland and upland habitats. The property to be acquired is located in northeastern Merced County, approximately 3 miles east of the town of Snelling and 3/4 of a mile west of the DFG's Merced River Fish Facility.

The Merced River traverses the northern portion of the property and the Merced Irrigation

District's (MID) main canal is located in the southern portion of the property. The area supports two primary habitat types consisting of foothill annual grasslands, located south of the MID canal, with the remainder of the property consisting of dredger tailings with typical cottonwood/riparian habitat interspersed among barren rock piles. Small ponds and other wetland areas can be found throughout the property.

The area supports a diversity of wildlife dependent upon riparian/wetland habitat types. These include wood ducks, mallards, great blue herons, common egrets, quail, and a variety of songbirds and raptors, with bald eagles roosting in the vicinity during the fall salmon runs. The property is also used by rabbits, skunks and racoons, and DFG personnel have documented the site to be a favorite fawning area for the local deer population.

In addition to the wildlife species found on site, and the diversity of habitats present, the property also contains large amounts of dredger tailings which were deposited during the construction of Lake McClure Dam. Legislation now mandates the restoration of anadromous fish (salmon and steelhead) populations in the Central Valley, including the San Joaquin River Basin. Much of the work necessary to restore these populations has centered around salmon spawning and rearing habitat restoration. Gravel supplies are a critical part of salmonid restoration efforts and long-term maintenance of river habitats. This acquisition will afford the DFG the opportunity to use the dredger tailings found on the property by DFG for salmonid restoration projects in the Central Valley, which makes good economical and ecological sense.

The Department has applied for and has been awarded a CalFed Category III Project Grant for acquisition of the subject property. The owners have agreed to sell the property, including all aggregate material, for the Department of General Services' (DGS) approved fair market value of \$324,000.00. The Grant also provides for all administrative expenses including appraisal, DGS review charges, title company costs and escrow fees. The purchase is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of the subject property as discussed, authorize the acceptance of the CalFed grant, \$324,000.00 of which will be placed directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; authorize staff to enter appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve the acquisition of the subject property as discussed, authorize the acceptance of the CalFed grant, \$324,000.00 of which will be placed directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed;

authorize staff to enter appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *12. Cantara - Ney Springs Wildlife Area, Cantara Loop Exp. #1, Siskiyou County \$ -0-

This proposal was to consider the acceptance of Cantara Trustee Council funds into a designated escrow account for the purposes of acquiring 61± acres of montane riparian habitat, and to expand public access to a portion of the Upper Sacramento River for fishing and other recreational uses. The subject property is located 3± south of the City of Mt. Shasta, westerly of Interstate 5.

The property received recognition in 1991 as the location of a devastating chemical spill which was labeled as California's largest inland ecological disaster. About 19,000 gallons of metam sodium were spilled into the upper Sacramento River from a derailed Southern Pacific tank-car at the Cantara Loop. Through the management actions of state and federal trustee agencies as well as local organizations and concerned citizens, the upper Sacramento River has nearly recovered to its pre-spill condition.

The Wildlife Conservation Board started acquiring property in the immediate area in the early 1980's. Since that time, the WCB staff has completed a combination of fee acquisition and conservation easement projects resulting in the protection of 230± acres of habitat, while at the same time, providing access to the upper Sacramento River for fishing and other recreational uses.

The subject property contains a balanced mix of habitats native to the upper Sacramento River canyon, including some mature conifer forests, spring-fed wetlands, montane riparian woodlands and willow scrub. The area provides forage for mule and black-tailed deer, black bear, osprey and band-tailed pigeons, and is a major feeding area for several sensitive species of bats. Foothill yellow-legged frogs, a California Species of Special Concern, are also found on the property. In addition, the upper Sacramento River is considered a world class fishery supporting a healthy population of wild rainbow trout.

The subject property is highly recommended for acquisition by both the Department of Fish and Game and the Cantara Trustee Council (CTC). The CTC was established in 1995 to administer funds received in the settlement for natural resource damages caused by the 1991 Southern Pacific Railroad spill of metam sodium into the upper Sacramento River. It is the CTC's mission to ensure that the proceeds of the settlement are used effectively to restore natural resources and to replace resource values that were lost as a result of the spill. They have requested WCB staff to handle recommended acquisition projects.

The owners have agreed to sell at the Department of General Services' (DGS) approved fair

market value of \$290,000.00. All administrative expenses including appraisal, DGS review charges, title company costs and escrow fees will be paid by the CTC. The purchase is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize acceptance of Cantara Trustee Council funds in the amount of \$290,000.00, for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; authorize staff to enter appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board authorize acceptance of Cantara Trustee Council funds in the amount of \$290,000.00, for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; authorize staff to enter appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *13. Butte Valley Wildlife Area, Meiss Lake Conservation Easements, \$95,000.00
Siskiyou County

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of three conservation easements totaling 119± acres to enable the restoration of 1,100± acres of wetlands located within the Butte Valley Wildlife Area. The purchase of these easement will actually allow the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to maintain the historic lake level of Meiss Lake, thereby allowing for additional wetland restoration opportunities within the wildlife area.

The Butte Valley Wildlife Area is located in northern California, approximately one mile westerly of the community of MacDoel, and 14 miles southerly of the California/Oregon border. The property is situated 5± miles west of State Highway 97, and can be accessed off Schoolhouse Road, which parallels the property to the west.

The area consistently provides a diverse, high quality habitat for a host of wildlife including

mule deer, antelope, coyote and Swaison's hawk. In addition, its semi-permanent and permanent wetland habitat, interspersed with upland nesting, upland foraging and wet meadow habitats, provide for a diversity of migrant and breeding waterbirds including waterfowl, shorebirds and greater sandhill cranes.

Prior to the Board's first acquisition in Butte Valley, Meiss Lake was reclaimed for farming. In the early 1940s the Meiss Ranch constructed a levee which divided the 7,500± acre lake to reclaim the westerly 3,500± acres for farming. For more than 50 years these drained wetlands were intensively farmed to cereal grain crops and heavily grazed by livestock. An extensive network of drainage canals and two pumping stations were developed to evacuate the water from the west side of the historic lake bed. The water was pumped to the existing 4,000± acre Meiss Lake which is located on the east side of the levee. In 1981, Board staff completed acquisitions, in two phases, of over 13,000± acres which prompted the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to start restoring the wetlands on the west side. By 1997, approximately 2,400 acres of the drained wetlands on the west side had been restored. Further, restoration of the remaining 1,100± acres of the lake bed on the Butte Valley Wildlife Area could not occur because it would result in the inundation of the private property being considered in this proposal.

Acquisition of the conservation easements over the 119± acres will allow the DFG to manage the water level in Meiss Lake at its historical level of 4,228 feet, thereby allowing for the restoration of these remaining 1,100± acres on the west side of the lake. The restored wetlands will be intensively managed as seasonal, semi-permanent and permanent wetlands. Moist-soil management practices will be used over 600± acres of the seasonal wetlands to encourage the growth of waterfowl food plants such as red goosefoot, swamp timothy, smartweed and bulrush. Approximately 500 acres of the semi-permanent and permanent wetlands will be managed as nesting and brood rearing habitat for waterfowl and other wetland associated birds. Farming may continue on an intermittent basis in some selected areas of the historic lake bed to provide waterfowl food or to control undesirable vegetation as needed. Therefore, consistent with long-range planning purposes, staff of the Board present the following three proposals for Board consideration.

A. Butte Valley Wildlife Area, Meiss Lake Conservation Easement

This is a proposal to acquire a conservation easement over 17± acres of land located adjacent to the Wildlife Area's northwestern boundary and contiguous to the following two proposals. The owner has agreed to sell the easement to the state at the approved appraised value of \$6,375.00. An additional \$2,625.00 is estimated to be required to cover the costs of appraisal, title insurance, escrow and other project expenses for a total of \$9,000.00.

B. Butte Valley Wildlife Area, Meiss Lake Conservation Easement, Exp. #1

This is a proposal to acquire a conservation easement over 74± acres of land and located adjacent to the area explained in above. The owner has agreed to sell the

easement to the state at the approved appraised value of \$64,750.00. An additional \$7,250.00 is estimated to be required to cover project expenses for a total of \$72,000.00.

C. Butte Valley Wildlife Area, Meiss Lake Conservation Easement, Exp. #2

This proposal is to acquire a conservation easement over 28± acres of land and is located adjacent to the most northwesterly corner of the Butte Valley Wildlife Area and contiguous with the northern boundary of the property described in above. The owner has agreed to sell the easement to the state at the approved appraised value of \$10,433.00. An additional \$3,567.00 is estimated to be required to cover project expenses for a total of \$14,000.00.

In order to enable wetland restoration over this area, the DFG has recommended the acquisition of the proposed conservation easements. The acquisitions are exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as an acquisition of interest in land for wildlife conservation purposes.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of these conservation easements as proposed; allocate \$95,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d) to cover acquisition costs and project expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve the acquisition of these conservation easements as proposed; allocate \$95,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d) to cover acquisition costs and project expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- * 14. Wetland Habitat Restoration, Napa Marsh Wildlife Area, \$71,000.00
Huichica Creek Unit, Napa and Sonoma Counties

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to Ducks Unlimited, for a cooperative project with the DU, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the Board, to restore 25± acres of native grassland nesting habitat adjacent to seasonal wetlands on DFG's Napa Marsh Wildlife Area. The restoration site is located approximately ten miles southwest of the City of Napa.

The Huichica Creek Unit of the Napa Marsh Wildlife Area contains a mixture of seasonal wetlands, upland annual grasslands, oak woodlands and riparian habitats. The areas were

acquired by the Board in a series of purchases between 1983 and 1991, with much of the area in need of restoration at the time they were acquired. DFG staff has been actively planting oaks and riparian trees for the last few years, with more wildlife species moving into these areas as habitat is improved. The seasonal wetlands on these properties are currently being proposed for restoration under a grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (agenda item # 29). The remaining habitat type in this unit, the upland grasslands, are dominated by weedy annual grasses and other exotics. As such, they provide little nesting or foraging habitat for most species of wildlife that normally use grassland habitats. Many of these species are dependent on grasslands for a portion of their life cycles and use the other habitats in this unit as well. The proposed restoration of these grasslands will complement the value of the other habitats in the area.

This project will result in 25± acres of native perennial grasslands adjacent to an existing 70 ± acres of seasonal wetlands and five acres of oak woodlands. The grassland restoration will be planted in the fall of 2000, after the site has been mowed and treated with herbicides. Additional treatments by mowing, burning and herbicide applications will be done over the following three years to assure the establishment of a robust stand of native grasses. These restored uplands will provide nesting cover for pheasants, waterfowl, including mallards, gadwalls and cinnamon teal, and songbirds such as the western meadowlarks. It will also provide forage and escape cover for California quail, mourning doves, pheasants and songbirds.

Cost estimates for this project have been reviewed and approved by staff as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Field work over four years	\$19,500.00
Controlled burns	16,000.00
Permits	10,500.00
Native grass consultant	9,120.00
Project sign	1,000.00
Project administration	12,177.00
Contingencies, excluding in-kind	2,703.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$71,000.00</u>

The Department of Fish Game has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the Board. The grantee will complete the appropriate notice to satisfy CEQA requirements and obtain any necessary permits, including burn permits.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$71,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by

Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$71,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *15. Riparian Habitat Restoration, Harper's Well, Imperial County \$12,000.00

This proposal was to consider a grant to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a cooperative project to restore riparian habitat on a desert wash at Harper's Well, in Imperial County. The wash is wet during seasonal storm events and during those times serves as a tributary to San Felipe Creek, located approximately six miles southwest of the Salton Sea and approximately thirty miles northwest of the City of Brawley. The proposed project will restore six± acres of native riparian vegetation along approximately one-half mile of the Harper's Well wash. BLM is currently treating this site to remove tamarisk, a non-native invasive plant that has invaded this sensitive desert riparian and wetland area. Other partners in the project are the Department of Fish and Game (Department), Joshua Tree National Park, and the California Conservation Corps.

Most desert riparian and wetland habitat areas within this portion of the Sonoran Desert have been degraded by historic grazing practices, illegal off-highway vehicle travel and invasion by tamarisk. This plant invades disturbed riparian zones, drying up springs, impairing access for wildlife and humans, and outcompeting native riparian vegetation. San Felipe Creek, the only remaining perennial stream that drains into the Salton Sea, contains several key springs and marsh areas, including the San Sebastian Marsh. This complex of desert riparian and wetland habitats, which is protected by a checkerboard pattern of state and federal ownerships and management, is designated as a National Natural Landmark and a BLM-designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The proposed project was developed using a strategy outlined in BLM's San Felipe Creek ACEC management plan, which contains significant contributions from the Department.

During the past few decades, tamarisk has completely choked out the water supply of Harper's Well, depleting the surface water. The federally endangered Peninsular Bighorn Sheep drinks from springs and seeps like this one in the San Felipe Creek area, and the federally and state endangered Least Bells Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher are dependent on the cover, water and insects typically found in this type of riparian area. Portions of San Felipe Creek contain perennial water which harbors desert pupfish. The segment of the creek adjacent to the Harper's Well site has been designated as critical habitat for the pupfish by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If Harper's Well is rehabilitated, and surface water returns, this site may also provide habitat for the desert pupfish to colonize.

During the spring of 2000, BLM and other partners began to remove tamarisk from

approximately six acres of the riparian zone at Harper's Well, and completed the closure and rehabilitation of roads that allowed illegal off-highway vehicle travel in the area. The proposed three-year project will replant the areas where the tamarisk is removed with mesquite and other desert riparian and wetland species. This will be accomplished with locally produced seeds of native riparian species that will be collected, grown for one year at the Joshua Tree National Park nursery, and then planted in the desert wash area. Irrigation will be necessary for the first one or two growing seasons to assure that the plants survive and become established.

BLM and the Department will monitor the project during the initial three-year period for survival to determine whether or not the desert pupfish can be re-established in the project area. BLM has also agreed to continue management of the project area for 25 years. However, it is anticipated that they will continue to protect the project area beyond that date, as part of its strategy for habitat management, as provided in the San Felipe Creek ACEC Plan.

Cost estimates for this project, which have been reviewed and recommended for funding by the Department of Fish and Game, are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>	<u>BLM</u>	<u>Joshua Tree</u>	<u>CCC</u>	<u>WCB</u>
Tamarisk removal	\$15,984	\$15,984			
OHV route closure and stabilization	10,484	5,684		\$4,800	
Road grading, monitoring and signing	5,000	5,000			
Seed collection,	15,200		\$8,000		\$7,200

propagation and planting					
Supplies: cages and plant protectors	2,300				2,300
Project sign(s)	1,000				1,000
Contingencies	<u>1,500</u>				<u>1,500</u>
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST BY PARTNERS	\$51,468	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$4,800	\$12,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST:	\$84,268				
WCB PROPOSED SHARE:	\$12,000				

The Department of Fish and Game has reviewed this project and recommends it for funding by the Board. BLM has approved a Finding of No Significant Impact under the National Environmental Protection Act that addresses the tamarisk eradication activities, and staff has determined that this project is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act under Section 15034, minor alteration of land to benefit fish and wildlife resources.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$12,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (e/f); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$12,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (e/f); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *16. Wetland Habitat Restoration (Richins), Butte County \$45,000.00

This proposal was to consider an allocation of \$45,000.00 for a grant to California Waterfowl Association (CWA), for a cooperative project with the CWA, the landowners, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Department of Fish and Game, and the Board, to restore and enhance approximately 200 acres of wetlands and associated upland nesting habitat in Butte County. NRCS is in the process of acquiring a conservation easement over the subject property, thereby assuring that

it will be protected as wetland habitat in perpetuity.

Consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Plan (CVHJV), this project is designed to contribute to the CVHJV objective of protecting and restoring 120,000 acres of wetlands. The project site is located within the CVHJV American Basin, lying about 12 miles from the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, about 9 miles from the Oroville Wildlife Area, and approximately 5 miles southeast of Gridley. The American Basin contains approximately 600 square miles and lies east of the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, west of the Sierra foothills, between Oroville on the north and the American River on the south.

Historically, water from the American, Yuba, Feather, Sacramento, and Bear Rivers flooded the area. However, as with most wetlands remaining in the Central Valley, construction of flood control reservoirs and levees now prevent most flooding in the American Basin. Until recently, there were about 12,000 acres of wetlands in the basin, consisting of 3,200± acres of natural wetlands, and 8,800± acres of flooded rice fields. However, because of the area's importance to migrating waterfowl, especially Canada geese, the area has become a CVHJV priority for protection and restoration efforts. The CVHJV plan for the American Basin calls for the protection, in fee or easement, of approximately 2,000 acres of existing wetlands and the protection and restoration of an additional 10,000± acres of restorable wetlands. Contributing to the high priority ranking is the rapid loss of critical agricultural operations beneficial to migrating waterfowl. Historically a rice and cereal grain producing area, the Basin is experiencing a transition from cereal grain operations to higher paying cash crops such as vineyards, cotton, and orchards, as well as to residential development.

The proposed project contributes toward the CVHJV objective and compliments previous work the WCB has approved along the Honcut Creek area. To date, WCB, working with its many partners, has protected and restored approximately 782 acres of wetland habitat. In addition, to protecting the wetland areas and providing a critical food source for migrating waterfowl wintering in this area, WCB has protected 933± acres of agricultural land, in either fee or easements.

This proposal will create an area of diverse and moist soil habitat and provide quality vegetation for wintering waterfowl, wading birds, and shore birds. In addition, nesting areas and brood ponds for breeding waterfowl and other resident wetland related wildlife will be provided. When completed, the project will benefit mallards, gadwall, American green-winged teal, cinnamon teal, northern pintail, northern shoveler, American wigeon, white faced ibis, and the long billed curlew.

The restoration and enhancement effort will provide 153± acres of seasonal wetlands. Spring and summer water will be provided on about 30 percent of the wetlands to provide habitat for

breeding ducks and other wetland dependent wildlife. In addition, 30± acres will be natural uplands, interspersed with excavated potholes that will provide habitat for breeding ducks. More than 17 acres of the property will also provide riparian habitat. New drainage channels and ditches will be constructed so that each of the wetland units can be independently managed and water properly controlled. New levees and channels will be constructed, screw gates, and new water control structures will be installed.

Cost estimates for the construction of the new water delivery and drainage system have been reviewed and approved by staff as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Conservation Easement (NRCS)	\$299,685.00
Levee Preparation and Construction	44,525.00
Flashboard Risers and Installation (12)	5,965.00
Flapgates (2)	600.00
24± A.D.S. Polyethylene Pipe (420± ft.)	5,386.00
Habitat Planting (tule transplanting, cottonwoods and willowsB900± each)	4,500.00
Construction Management and Control	8,678.00
Contingencies	5,316.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$374,655.00</u>

<u>Proposed Funding Breakdown</u>	
Natural Resources Conservation Service	\$299,685.00
Wildlife Conservation Board	45,000.00
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	14,985.00
Landowners	14,985.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$374,655.00</u>

To protect the state's investment, the landowners have agreed to manage and maintain the property to benefit waterfowl and other wetland dependent species for 25 years in accordance with a detailed management plan. If during the 25-year life span of this project, the landowners determine they are no longer able to manage and maintain the property to benefit wetlands and waterfowl, they have agreed to reimburse the state an amortized cost of the project.

Recognizing that approximately 70 percent of the remaining wetlands in the Central Valley are located on private lands, this project further exemplifies the importance of public/private partnerships and the benefits associated with providing incentives to private landowners. Consistent with the provisions of CEQA, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301, Class 1 (i), maintaining fish and wildlife habitat to protect wildlife resources.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$45,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d), as designated for the Inland Wetland Conservation Program; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to

accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$45,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d), as designated for the Inland Wetland Conservation Program; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *17. Wetland Habitat Restoration (Bluebird Farms), Yuba County \$40,000.00

This proposal was to consider an allocation of \$40,000.00 for a grant to the California Waterfowl Association (CWA) for a cooperative project, to restore approximately 147 acres of wetlands and associated upland nesting habitat in Yuba County. Consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Plan (CVHJV), this project contributes to the plan's objective of protecting and restoring 120,000 acres of wetlands and waterfowl habitat.

This proposed restoration project will be accomplished on privately-owned property, locally known as Bluebird Farms. In addition to the Board, other partners in this proposal include the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the Landowners, and the CWA. The NRCS has purchased a conservation easement over the entire property, thereby assuring that it will be protected as wetland habitat in perpetuity. This proposal is intended to restore the property into quality wetland and associated upland habitat.

Bluebird Farms is located within the CVHJV American Basin, approximately 9 miles southeast of Marysville, and is surrounded by rice land and a contiguous block of over 500± acres of protected and restored wetlands and riparian sloughs. As defined in the Plan, the basin contains approximately 600 square miles and lies east of the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, and west of the Sierra foothills, between Oroville on the north and the American River on the south.

Historically, water from the American, Yuba, Feather, Sacramento, and Bear Rivers flooded the area. However, as with most wetlands remaining in the Central Valley, construction of flood control reservoirs and levees prevent most flooding in these historic wetland areas.

Until recently, there were only about 12,000 acres of wetlands in the American Basin, consisting of 3,200± acres of natural wetlands, and 8,800± acres of flooded rice fields.

Because of the area's importance to migrating waterfowl, especially Canada geese, it has become a CVHJV priority for protection and restoration efforts. The CVHJV plan for the American Basin calls for the protection, in fee or easement, of approximately 2,000 acres of existing wetlands and the protection and restoration of an additional 10,000± acres of restorable wetlands. Contributing to the high priority ranking is the rapid loss of critical agricultural operations beneficial to migrating waterfowl. Historically, a rice and cereal grain producing area, the American Basin is experiencing a transition from cereal grain commodities to higher paying crops such as vineyards, cotton and orchards, as well as to residential development.

This restoration project will create an area of diverse and moist soil habitat and provide quality vegetation for wintering waterfowl, wading birds and shore birds. In addition, nesting areas and brood ponds for breeding waterfowl and other resident wetland-related wildlife will be provided. When completed, the project will benefit mallards, gadwall, American green winged teal, cinnamon teal, northern pintail, northern shoveler, American wigeon, white faced ibis and the long billed curlew.

The proposed project will provide 89± acres of seasonal wetlands, together with the enhancement of 58± acres of riparian habitat. Best Slough and other channels currently provide good riparian habitat and the proposed planting of willows and cottonwood cuttings will further enhance this corridor.

Spring and summer water will be provided on about 20 percent of the wetlands to provide habitat for breeding ducks and other wetland dependent wildlife. New drainage channels and ditches will be constructed so that each of the wetland units can be independently managed and water properly controlled. New levees and channels will be constructed and screw gates and new water control structures will be installed.

Cost estimates for this proposed protection and restoration project have been reviewed and approved by staff as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Conservation Easement (NRCS)	\$168,000.00
Levee Preparation and Construction	30,743.00
Delivery Ditch	3,028.00
Cross Checks (3)	1,500.00
Flashboard Risers and Installation (11)	7,000.00
Flapgates (2)	800.00
Polyethylene Pipe (380± ft.)	4,753.00
Habitat Planting (tule transplanting)	
Cottonwoods and willowsB1,100± each)	6,000.00
Project Engineering and Design	4,000.00

Construction Management and Control	7,000.00
Contingencies	<u>5,316.00</u>

<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$238,140.00</u>
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Proposed Funding Breakdown:

Natural Resources Conservation Service	\$171,250.00
Wildlife Conservation Board	40,000.00
California Waterfowl Association	13,600.00
Landowners	<u>13,290.00</u>

<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$238,140.00</u>
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To protect the state's investment, the landowners have agreed to manage and maintain the property to benefit waterfowl and other wetland dependent species for 25 years in accordance with a detailed management plan prepared by DFG. Staff from DFG will be meeting with the landowner during the spring and late summer to evaluate and monitor the restoration effort for each of the next 25 years. If during the 25-year life span of this project, the landowners determine they are no longer able to manage and maintain the property to benefit wetlands and waterfowl, they have agreed to reimburse the state an amortized cost of the project.

Recognizing that approximately 70 percent of the remaining wetlands in the Central Valley are located on private lands, this project further exemplifies the importance of public/private partnerships and the benefits associated with providing incentives to private landowners. Consistent with the provisions of CEQA, this project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301, class 1 (i), maintaining fish and wildlife habitat to protect wildlife resources.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$40,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund/Section 2786 (d), as designated for the Inland Wetlands Conservation Program; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$40,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund/Section 2786 (d), as designated for the Inland Wetlands Conservation Program; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *18. Wetland Habitat Restoration North Pintail Slough, Kern County \$110,000.00

This proposal was to consider an allocation of \$110,000.00 to augment a previous grant to the California Waterfowl Association (CWA), to construct a water conveyance system designed to enhance approximately 1,000 acres of wetland habitat in northern Kern County. Consistent with the goals and objectives of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV), this project contributes to the CVHJV objective of enhancing 291,555 acres of wetlands.

In November of 1998, the Board (WCB) approved the allocation of \$800,000.00 for a grant to the CWA, toward the total estimated project cost of \$1.3 million, to construct a 3.25± mile water conveyance system. The system, known as North Pintail Slough, was designed to connect Poso Creek to the Alpaugh Canal. The purpose of the Slough is to deliver non-contract surface water to the existing Alpaugh Irrigation Canal and ultimately to the existing wetlands south of the Kern County line. The existing wetlands are found on the Poso Creek floodplain. The project is intended to enhance wetland habitat and provide wetland landowners with an alternative source of quality water.

The proposed enhancement project will be accomplished on privately-owned property, within the jurisdiction of the Tulare Basin Wetland Association (TBWA). In addition to the Board, other partners in this project include the landowners, the TBWA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Semitropic Water Storage District (SWSD), the CWA, and the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), originally proposed as a contributor of \$100,000.00 toward the total project costs, is no longer a partner in the project. Additional funds are needed to replace this \$100,000.00 shortfall. In addition, to facilitate the conveyance of water down the Alpaugh Canal, debris needs to be removed from the bottom of the five-mile reach. Costs estimates to remove the debris and place it in a sanitary landfill total \$10,000.00.

Nowhere in the Central Valley has the loss of natural wetlands been felt more than in the Tulare Basin in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Historically in wet years the ancient Tulare Lake, that once dominated the region, contained as much as 500,000 acres of seasonal wetlands, the largest block of contiguous wetland habitat west of the Mississippi. Today, with less than 15,000 acres remaining, this region has suffered the greatest percentage of habitat loss in the lower 48 states. Approximately 99 percent of the historic wetlands have been lost. Furthermore, pintail populations, that depend on wetlands in the Tulare Basin for wintering and breeding habitat are in serious decline. Therefore, the retention of the wetlands remaining in the basin is of critical importance.

This restoration proposal is highly supported by the DFG and the other project partners.

Consistent with the provisions of CEQA, this project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301, Class (i), maintaining fish and wildlife habitat to protect wildlife resources.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$110,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund/Section 2786 (d), as designated for the Inland Wetlands Conservation program; authorize staff to enter the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$110,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund/Section 2786 (d), as designated for the Inland Wetlands Conservation program; authorize staff to enter the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *19. Cosumnes River Preserve Public Access, Sacramento County \$ 315,270.00

This proposal was to consider a cooperative project with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to construct barrier-free public access improvements including trails, a viewing platform, parking areas and restroom facilities at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitors' Center located in southern Sacramento County. The Cosumnes River Preserve is a 37,000± acre natural area located near the confluence of the Cosumnes and Mokelumne Rivers, just east of Interstate 5. Over 25,000 acres of this protected area are owned in fee, while the remainder is controlled either through conservation easements or other voluntary agreements with private landowners.

The WCB was one of the original partners to the Cosumnes River Preserve, having acquired a 38± acre parcel in 1984, prior to the beginning of the official preserve project. The Preserve has become a cooperative conservation effort between its various property owner partners, which include BLM, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Ducks Unlimited, the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Water Resources, the M & T Staten Ranch and Sacramento County. Management of the area is handled through a Cooperative Agreement signed by the various owners of land within the Preserve. In 1991 the Board allocated \$175,000 toward the construction of a Visitors' Center at the Preserve and entered into a 25-year Lease and Operating Agreement with the BLM to operate and maintain the facility. The construction was completed in 1992 and an arson-suspected fire totally destroyed the building in 1995. In addition to the building, the fire consumed all of its contents which included many valuable wildlife exhibits originally funded by TNC. In February, 1996, the Board contributed \$100,000 toward reconstruction of the building, and with the help of BLM and TNC, a new Visitor Center, including new wildlife exhibits was completed that same year.

The Cosumnes is the largest free-flowing river in the Central Valley. Because of this, the frequent winter flooding allows for a healthy growth of native riverside vegetation, such as valley oak, wild grape, wild rose and elder. The preserve contains two important plant communities; the riparian valley oak forest community and the freshwater marsh community. Less than one percent of each community type remains in the state. The preserve is one of California's largest wintering areas for the threatened Greater sandhill crane, as well as providing important migratory and resident bird habitat. During the winter migration, tundra swans, blue winged teal, Canada geese, and numerous duck species may be seen on the preserve. More than 200 species of birds have been sighted on the preserve, including nesting Swainson's hawks and wood ducks.

The Visitors' Center and associated trail system receive extensive use by the public and specialized groups. TNC's educational program, which has a high level of support within the schools and the local community, furthers the Preserve partners' objectives by strengthening the relationship with key gateway communities of Lodi, Galt, Elk Grove, Sacramento and Stockton, and by providing new and enhanced interpretive and educational opportunities associated with the greater Bay-Delta estuary. The number of student visitors to the Preserve has increased gradually since 1995 from a low of 815 to over 3,000 annually for the past three years. Improving public access will enhance the value of the Cosumnes River Preserve as an educational site and promote public awareness of the importance of protecting these threatened ecosystems.

To meet the overall outreach and education goals and to create a barrier-free environment for visitors, BLM, on behalf of the Preserve partners, has requested funding to enhance the existing facilities. To date, the Preserve has received funding from other sources to construct two pedestrian bridges, which will provide direct access back and forth, from the Willow Slough Trailhead to the Visitor Center. The bridges will also allow buses to park and disembark students at the Willow Slough Trailhead, a quarter mile north of the Visitors' Center, and allow the students to access the Center via the trail. In addition, the bridges will allow visitors to reach portions of the trail that will provide excellent opportunities to view waterfowl and other wildlife common to this area. One of these bridges has been constructed and the other one will be constructed this fall.

The Preserve is now seeking funding to upgrade the Willow Slough Trailhead entrance with improved access for vehicles, signage, a restroom facility and to provide a turnout area for a single bus. Currently, this site is not barrier-free and will be reconfigured to accommodate visitors with disabilities. In addition, a 1600± foot section of trail, between the trailhead and the eastern terminus of the new bridge, will be upgraded to provide for barrier-free trail access and connect the trail to the bridge. Funds are also being requested to improve the Lost Slough trail and parking area. Improvements include reconfiguring the parking area for better access from Franklin Boulevard, improving drainage in the parking area, and constructing a barrier-free trail along the Lost Slough wetlands unit. As part of this component, a sandhill crane viewing area, or Ahide@, will be constructed. In addition, two crosswalks on Franklin will be installed to complete the link between Lost Slough trail, Willow Slough trail and the Visitors' Center.

Funds are also being requested to construct additional parking and lighting at the Visitors' Center. The current available parking at the Center will not accommodate school busses, larger motor homes or vehicles with large trailers. At present, any larger vehicle entering the Center must back out on Franklin Boulevard when leaving, which creates a significant hazard. The new parking area would be constructed to facilitate safe access and parking for two larger vehicles as well as 12 to 14 standard vehicles. Construction of the parking area will require the placement of borrow material to bring it to grade. BLM hopes to obtain the borrow material from construction of wetland restoration projects being done elsewhere on the Preserve.

The improvements should improve the quality of the visitor's experience by providing opportunities for interpretation and education related to the Bay-Delta system, including the role of tidal estuaries and wetlands, the value of flooded habitats for fishery and aquatic mammals, and the results of riparian forest and wetland restoration projects. Overall, the completion of these improvements will provide barrier-free access and self-guided trail facilities. Cost estimates for the project, which have been developed by BLM and reviewed and approved by staff, are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Engineering and Design	\$15,000.00
Permits	4,000.00
Parking areas construction and/or improvements:	
Willow Slough (6,000± square feet.)	11,000.00
Lost Slough (10,000± square feet)	5,000.00
Visitor Center (20,000± square feet)	15,500.00
Trail areas construction and/or improvements:	
Willow Slough (1550± feet)	28,000.00
Willow Slough Bridge Boardwalk (30± feet)	1,000.00
Lost Slough (1570± feet)	28,500.00
Lost Slough Viewing Platform	5,000.00
Lost Slough Boardwalk Gate	1,000.00
Embankment/Levee construction for trails and parking areas (fill material)	152,000.00
Single unit barrier-free vault toilet	12,000.00
Security Lighting and signage	9,000.00
	0
Contingencies	28,000.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$315,000.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services' review costs for the project, bringing the total allocation necessary to complete this project to \$315,270.00. BLM will continue to provide project administrative overview on the entire project, will complete the appropriate notice to satisfy CEQA and/or NEPA, and will assure compliance with building codes and ADA requirements. In addition, BLM has agreed to extend the

Lease and Operating Agreement to August 10, 2025.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$315,270.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/Section 5096.350(a)(2) for the project costs and General Services' review costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$315,270.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/Section 5096.350(a)(2) for the project costs and General Services' review costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

*20. Lakeside Linkages, Expansion #4, San Diego County \$81,500.00

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the County of San Diego to be applied toward its acquisition of an 8.7± acre parcel, located in the community of Lakeside. The proposed acquisition would protect some of the last remaining natural habitat linkage connecting major populations of the California gnatcatchers in southern San Diego County and allow for management of this habitat in a manner consistent with other lands already included in the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Reserve. The acquisition would further implement the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) efforts in the County.

The MSCP recognizes the importance of and need for connectivity between major blocks of conserved habitat. In particular, DFG has identified the Lakeside Linkage as very important to the continued existence of the California gnatcatcher populations in San Diego County. This linkage may ultimately comprise a series of semi-isolated but nearby Aislands@ of habitat. These semi-isolated patches of habitat would enable gnatcatchers and other flying and wind-dispersed species to remain as interbreeding populations. The subject property supports coastal sage scrub, grassland and riparian vegetation communities, as well as known breeding sites for the California gnatcatcher and other sensitive animal and plant species.

Lakeside is an unincorporated portion of San Diego County, north of the City of El Cajon and about 20 miles east of the San Diego Airport. The area of the property proposed for acquisition is bounded on the south by Interstate 8, on the north and west by State

Highway 67, and on the north and east by Lake Jennings Park Road. The subject property, together with the four properties previously acquired by the County and the Board, comprise the Lakeside Linkages, which wind through the community of Lakeside from the DFG Crestridge Ecological Area, lying south of Interstate 8, to Lake Jennings to the northeast. These properties (some joined by existing open space easements on developed property) form the backbone of the last remaining habitat corridor in the area.

The subject unimproved property is located north of Interstate 8, and has access to Los Coches Road, just south of Antelope Hills Drive. It contains natural habitat (medium to high coastal sage scrub) and its primary value is as part of the linkage of natural habitats. Specifically, the property offers connectivity to holdings directly south and is also quite important to the overall linkage.

The property owners have proposed to subdivide a portion of their property which is level with Los Coches Road. However, they have agreed to sell the subject 8.7± acre portion to provide corridor protection, at its approved, appraised fair market value of \$153,000.00. The proposed grant to the County will provide \$76,500.00 toward the acquisition.

The County's management objectives for the subject property would be to preserve the key open space habitat land, continue the process of protecting a critical wildlife corridor and protect rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species that currently use this habitat. The plan also calls for some limited habitat restoration within the property. Long-term management goals may include some foot trails that traverse the area to provide for passive uses by the public. The DFG will have no management responsibilities and will not have any obligation to provide funds for management of the subject property.

In addition to the proposed \$76,500.00 grant, it is estimated that \$5,000.00 will be needed for administrative expenses, including Department of General Services' review costs, bringing the total allocation for this proposal to \$81,500.00. The proposal is exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife habitat conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

The terms and conditions of the proposed grant provide that staff will review all proposed title documents, appraisals, preliminary title reports, agreements for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and the instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into an escrow or escrows. The grant will also require that maintenance and monitoring of the property be accomplished by the County in conformance with its MSCP Framework Management Plan and relevant Area Specific Management Directives.

Staff therefore recommended that the Board approve the award of a grant to the County of

San Diego to be applied to the acquisition of the 8.7± acres as proposed; allocate \$81,500.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6)BNCCP; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve the award of a grant to the County of San Diego to be applied to the acquisition of the 8.7± acres as proposed; allocate \$81,500.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6)BNCCP; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

21. Arroyo Seco Wildlife Area, Expansion #1 (Cosumnes River Preserve), \$1,648,000.00
Sacramento County

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider the acquisition of a conservation easement over 3,433± acres of land for expansion of the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Arroyo Seco Wildlife Area, a component of the Cosumnes River Preserve, for the protection of vernal pools, valley oaks and mountain lion and deer habitat. The Board approved the first purchase of a 3,575± acre conservation easement, from a larger 13,000± acre parcel locally known as the Howard Ranch, at its March 2, 1999, meeting. If this proposal is approved, the DFG will own a total of 7,008± acres under a conservation easement. The protection of the entire ranch has been a cooperative effort involving the DFG, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with grants from the North American Wetland Conservation Council, Central Valley Project Improvement Act Restoration Fund, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Packard Foundation. The Packard Foundation is also involved in this proposed expansion. TNC was the key negotiator for the entire purchase, still owning portions of the area including the subject parcel. However, as with many purchases made by TNC, it was their original intent to sell to other parties to insure continued protection of the area while allowing them to work in other critical areas within the state. Following Mr. Giordano's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

The property is located along the Sacramento and Amador County Line, in the southeastern portion of Sacramento County. It can be accessed from several locations along State Highway 104 as it approaches Amador County.

The Howard Ranch, which is considered to be located in the Cosumnes River Watershed, contains high quality vernal pools and other wetlands in addition to its oak woodlands and grasslands, supporting nine rare species, two of them vernal pool invertebrates. Protection of this site more than doubles the number of acres protected to date in the watershed by increasing it from 12,000± acres to 25,000± acres. Downstream more than 12,000 acres of Cosumnes River Watershed have been protected as the Cosumnes River Preserve, located southerly of the City of Sacramento.

The ranch features vernal pools extraordinary for their integrity, density and diversity of soil and geographic formations. Vernal pools contain a uniquely diverse flora and fauna found nowhere else and, because of this fact, contribute to the preservation of the region's biodiversity. The proposed acquisition would ensure protection of these pools, as well as the other community types, in perpetuity. Howard Ranch represents one of the last and best remaining large contiguous blocks of undisturbed vernal pool/grassland/oak woodland matrix in the Central Valley.

Nine listed or candidate species will be protected through this acquisition including vernal pool fairy shrimp, tadpole shrimp, slender orcutt grass, Sacramento orcutt grass, California tiger salamander, giant garter snake, peregrine falcon, Swainson's hawk and greater sandhill crane. Tiger salamanders use the pools for breeding purposes while the giant garter snake exists in lower Laguna Creek and is expected to occur in the upper creek. The pools provide grazing habitat for wintering geese and an essential high protein food source for migratory ducks, geese, shorebirds and other birds at the critical time of the year when they are required for building flight muscles and reproductive organs.

Historically, the Ranch has been used for a combination of cattle grazing and recreational use, including hunting and fishing. Future management will focus on implementation of a grassland and vernal pool ecosystem restoration and management plan, which will include prescribed grazing schedules that are compatible with wetland and other natural community health, restoration of springs and fencing of sensitive wetlands. Public access may be allowed on fee-owned portions of the Ranch, but would be closely supervised. Activities such as birdwatching, photography, wildflower study and nature interpretation would be encouraged and, while hunting may be permitted, there would be no public access to the easement area.

Protection of Howard Ranch has been urgently needed due to a number of major threats in the region. Most immediate among them is the conversion of rangelands to vineyards. A drive in the vicinity of the Ranch provides visual evidence of this trend, as several adjacent farms now grow grapes. Residential development is also a threat to the protection of these systems. Many of the other lands in the region outside the County's urban services boundary have been purchased by speculators. The acquisition is also considered a key step in the next

phase of the watershed strategy: expanding on protection successes in the lower flood plain in an effort to protect biologically important sites throughout the watershed.

The conservation easement proposed for acquisition at this time has a Department of General Services' approved appraised value of \$2,059,800.00. TNC has agreed to sell the conservation easement for the appraised value. The Packard Foundation has consented to provide a grant in the amount of \$420,000.00 to assist in this purchase, thereby reducing the state's purchase price to \$1,639,800.00. Processing costs, including Department of General Services' review fees and title and escrow fees, are estimated to be an additional \$8,200.00, bringing the total allocation necessary to complete this purchase to \$1,648,000.00. The acquisition is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of categorical exemptions as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize the acquisition of the 3,433± acre conservation easement as proposed; allocate \$1,648,000.00, [\$500,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(3) and \$1,148,000.00 from the General Fund]; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Schmidt reported that Mr. Rick Cooper, Manager of the Cosumnes River Preserve, was in the audience should there be any questions. Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

It was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board authorize the acquisition of the 3,433± acre conservation easement as proposed; allocate \$1,648,000.00, [\$500,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(3) and \$1,148,000.00 from the General Fund]; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

22. Redwoods to the Sea Corridor, Expansion #1, Humboldt County \$2,560,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to Save-the-Redwoods League (League), to assist them in the purchase of 1,075± acres of privately-owned land for the preservation of old-growth Douglas fir and mixed hardwood-conifer forest types. The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) received an appropriation of \$2.6

million in the 1999/00 budget specifically itemized for acquisitions within the Redwoods to the Sea Corridor. At the WCB meeting of November 18, 1999, the Board approved the first proposal with these funds, a grant to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for their purchase of 1,394± acres in this area. Following Mr. Giordano's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

The property proposed for purchase through the proposed grant is located in Humboldt County, about 50 miles south of Eureka, approximately 11 miles inland from the coast and 5 to 10 miles west of the towns of Weott, Myers Flat and Miranda, which lie along U.S. Highway 101 on the South Fork of the Eel River. It adjoins the BLM's Gilham Butte Late Seral Reserve, a Resource Natural Area, on the south and east. It also adjoins the California Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) Humboldt Redwoods State Park (HRSP) along part of its northern border. Road access is through the HRSP, on Bull Creek Road, an unimproved dirt road. Gilham Butte is the divide between the Eel River and the Mattole River watersheds. It is also the physical connection between the HRSP and the BLM's King Range National Conservation Area (KRNCA). Elevations range from approximately 1,600 feet along the creeks to 2,600 feet along the ridge tops. Current land use is timber production.

The subject 1,075± acre parcel is rugged, low-elevation old-growth Douglas-fir and mixed hardwood-conifer (oak, madrone and second growth Douglas-fir) forest types. These forest types typically provide habitat for a number of sensitive species, such as the northern spotted owl, goshawk, red tree vole, Pacific fisher and the southern torrent salamander, as well as salmon and steelhead. Species known to exist on the subject property include Coopers Hawk, Northern Spotted Owl, Ruffed Grouse, Red Tree Vole, Coho Salmon, Chinook Salmon, Steelhead Trout and the Foothill Yellow-legged Frog.

The primary purpose for the acquisition of this property is to protect the habitats of these species, and to provide public access between two existing blocks of public lands. The structural complexity and high volume seed production of the forests found in the proposed acquisition provide significant habitat for species dependent on late-succession forest, including many rare, threatened and endangered species.

As the land proposed for acquisition is zoned Timber Production Zone, the only hope for achieving these objectives is a conversion to public ownership. Retention of the existing continuity of a large, structurally diverse, forested landscape ranging across watersheds, with multiple gradients in elevation, topography and vegetative species composition, will protect wildlife habitat values for both the HRSP and the KRNCA. Providing a significantly larger protected land base improves population viability for species with large home ranges.

After purchasing the property, it is anticipated that the League will transfer its ownership to BLM for inclusion in BLM's adjoining ownership. A portion of the proposed acquisition that adjoins the state park may be transferred to DPR. In either event, the grant conditions,

restricting the use of the property to habitat protection and compatible public uses, will run with the land in perpetuity.

Management objectives would be 1) to conserve existing high quality coastal low-elevation old growth Douglas fir, deciduous and live oak, and madrone forest types, 2) to prevent fragmentation and maintain wildlife travel and migration corridors, 3) to restore and enhance habitat for listed and candidate fish and wildlife species, and 4) to assist the recovery of viable populations of fish and wildlife species in jeopardy of extirpation or extinction on both the local and regional levels.

Public use would include vehicular access to the currently landlocked Gilham Butte Late Seral Reserve and a hiking trail linking the HRSP, in the Eel River watershed, through the proposed acquisition to the Gilham Butte Late Seral Reserve in the Mattole River watershed. Other public uses could include camping, wildlife and bird viewing, hunting and fishing. Additionally, the purchase of the property would significantly aid the effort to insure permanent and sustainable protection for a wildlife corridor linking the largest old-growth redwood grove in the world, the 55,000-acre HRSP, with the old-growth Douglas-fir forests of the 60,000-acre KRNCA, extending to the longest unroaded coastline in the contiguous United States, the Lost Coast. Both the DPR and the BLM strongly support the acquisition.

The appraised fair market value of the subject property, as approved by the Department of General Services, is \$2,552,000.00. It is anticipated that an additional \$8,000.00 will be needed for General Services' review costs. The grant is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as participating in an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes.

As noted above, WCB's 1999/00 budget contained a \$2.6 million allocation from the Forest Resources Improvement Fund, specifically earmarked for the Redwoods to the Sea Corridor, \$500,000.00 of which was allocated by the Board at the November 18, 1999, meeting for the first purchase. The balance of funding necessary to complete this proposed purchase is recommended to come from the 1999/00 General Fund appropriation to the WCB.

Staff therefore recommended that the Board authorize the grant as proposed; allocate \$2,560,000.00 for the purchase and related expenses (\$2,100,000.00 from the Forest Resources Improvement Fund and \$460,000.00 from the General Fund); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Giordano reported that Mr. Richard Cavanaugh, representing Save-the-Redwoods League, was in the audience should there be any questions. Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board authorize the grant as proposed; allocate \$2,560,000.00 for the purchase and related expenses (\$2,100,000.00 from the Forest Resources Improvement Fund and \$460,000.00 from the General Fund); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

23. Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area, Expansions #5, #6 and #7, Yuba County \$3,908,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider the acquisition of fee title and conservation easements over three separate ownerships totaling 3,820± acres of land as additions to the Department of Fish and Game's Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area (previously known as Collins Lake Wildlife Area). Mr. Schmidt reported that there were corrections in the acreage figures regarding Expansion #5, which are reflected in the following description.

The proposed acquisitions will provide for the protection of deer winter range, bald eagle winter range, and mountain lion and upland game habitat. In five previous Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) meetings between 1989 and 1998, the Board approved the acquisition of a total of 2,600± acres, creating the existing wildlife area. The subject properties are located approximately 20 miles northeast of the City of Marysville, and are accessible from either a public road or from various portions of the existing wildlife area. Following Mr. Giordano's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

Deer herd composition counts have been conducted on the adjacent wildlife area where it is common to count over 150 deer in a two-hour evening count. The natural communities found on the property can be described as a mixture of montane manzanita chaparral and blue oak woodlands, with buckbrush being the dominant shrub species, one that is heavily browsed by deer. Redbud, coffeeberry and manzanita are also commonly found in the area. This mixture of plant cover provides excellent habitat for wild turkey, California valley quail, band-tailed pigeon, mourning dove, various species of rabbit and numerous non-game species. Hunting, as well as nonconsumptive uses, would be consistent with the current wildlife area management plan.

The two smaller parcels proposed for acquisition are currently subdivided, while the larger one is not subdivided yet, but is certainly threatened with development. Management of all properties would be undertaken by the DFG as a part of the existing wildlife area, at minimal additional costs.

Following is a brief description of the three individual properties being recommended for purchase at this time. It should be noted that separately the smaller ownerships may contain lesser wildlife values, but as they adjoin the current wildlife area, they are important

additions to the overall, long-term program at the Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area.

Expansion 5

This 3,558± acre ownership is commonly referred to as the Sugarloaf Ranch. It is proposed that the Board authorize the purchase of a conservation easement over 1,915± acres of the property, generally the northern portion of the ranch, and the purchase of fee title to 1,643± acres of land, which is the southerly remainder of the property. Both portions adjoin DFG ownership and front on public roads. The property is currently vacant and is used for cattle grazing and a private hunting club. The approved fair market value of the fee and conservation easements proposed for purchase total \$3,859,400.00. The owners have agreed to sell these ownership interests for \$3,572,150.00. This represents a donation to the state of \$287,250.00.

Expansion 6

This 60.4± acre ownership is actually composed of two separate parcels, both of which adjoin state ownership and are accessible from a public road. These properties are currently threatened with residential development which could have a detrimental impact on the existing wildlife values of this area. The owner has agreed to sell the fee title in these parcels for the approved appraised fair market value of \$178,000.00.

Expansion 7

It is proposed that a conservation easement be acquired over this 200± acres parcel which adjoins the Bureau of Land Management wildlife area. The main threat to this property is potential development to vineyards. The conservation easement provides for the development of one residential home and necessary outbuildings, but will not provide for further development or conversion to vineyards. The owner has agreed to sell the conservation easement for the approved fair market value of \$100,000.00.

The combined approved fair market value for the proposed fee and conservation easements is \$3,850,150.00. An additional sum, estimated at \$27,850.00, will be needed for appraisal, escrow fees, Department of General Services' fees and other related costs. In addition, the DFG has indicated that they will need \$30,000.00 in order to provide appropriate public use at the area. These funds would be used to construct two separate parking areas, post signs and to construct approximately one and one-half mile of fence to separate the state's proposed fee ownership from the conservation easement ownership, bringing the total allocation necessary for this project to \$3,908,000.00. The acquisitions are exempt from CEQA under Section 15313 as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed.

The County of Yuba has been accumulating mitigation funds which are to be used for deer habitat mitigation purposes, subject to the approval of the County and Department of Fish and Game. It has been proposed by the County that \$40,000.00 to \$100,000.00 be contributed toward these acquisitions. However, at the time of this writing, the County

Board of Supervisors had not yet approved the use of any of these funds for these purchases. Should the County approve funding, it is proposed that the funds either be credited to the purchase price and deposited into the WCB escrow account, or deposited as a reimbursement of expended WCB funds.

Mr. Giordano reported that Mr. Patrick Laughlin, agent for the owner, was in the audience should there be any questions, in addition to Mr. Dale Whitmore, Department of Fish and Game Biologist, representing the project area.

Mr. Schmidt reported that this project did not receive any letters of interest or support, however, Ms. Charlene Adams requested to speak in opposition of this project. Ms. Adams stated that she, along with other property owners in the area, with the exception of one, did not receive notice of this meeting. Ms. Adams requested clarification on how this property would be managed during the winter months. Mr. Whitmore explained that the property would continue to be grazed and that the Department was very concerned about the adjacent property owners and minimizing fire hazard by keeping the same number of firebreaks in that area. Ms. Adams also requested clarification regarding the maintenance of the irrigation water ditches that presently run through the property. Mr. Whitmore explained that the easement is still in place and the maintenance would continue as it has in the past. Ms. Adams asked if there would be any fencing in the area. Mr. Whitmore explained that the fencing in the area would continue to be the same, however, there will be parking lots developed for public access to the area. Mr. Whitmore stated that the Department would be looking closely at the location of nearby houses to the property lines to avoid future problems. Ms. Adams had no further questions or concerns. Mr. James Watkins stated that his property is next to Sugarloaf Land and Cattle Company's property and expressed concern that he will lose his grazing permits within the project area. Mr. Whitmore explained that once the Department of Fish and Game owns the property, the land would be leased out through competitive bidding. Mr. Watkins was advised that he would have an opportunity to participate in that bidding process as well as other interested parties. Mr. Watkins requested clarification on the name of the project area. Mr. Whitmore explained that Daugherty Hill is south of Marysville Road and that it is the name of the prominent landmark on the existing wildlife area. Mr. Watkins stated that he was opposed to the acquisition. Mr. Chrisman expressed his appreciation to Mr. Watkins for attending. Mr. Schmidt explained that in regard to the notification to adjacent landowners, the Board is required to notify adjacent landowners and that the Board uses Assessor records. Mr. Schmidt stated that the Board had a long list of adjacent landowners for this project and apologized for any possible oversight.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize the acceptance of any funds from the County of Yuba for deposit into the WCB escrow account, or as a reimbursement for funds expended; allocate \$3,908,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a), for the purchase price, related real estate expenses and public

improvements; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize the acceptance of any funds from the County of Yuba for deposit into the WCB escrow account, or as a reimbursement for funds expended; allocate \$3,908,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a), for the purchase price, related real estate expenses and public improvements; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

24. Del Mar Mesa Vernal Pool Preserve, San Diego County \$275,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the City of San Diego to assist in its purchase of 17 parcels, totaling 294.2± acres of land. The purpose of the acquisitions are to preserve a regionally-significant wildlife corridor and nationally recognized vernal pools in the Del Mar Mesa area. Following Ms. Townsend's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

Del Mar Mesa is located in the northern part of the City of San Diego, approximately 20 miles north of downtown San Diego. The area is four miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and approximately halfway between Interstate 5 and Interstate 15. The subject parcels are located on the mesas west of the community of Rancho Penasquitos. To the west and north of Del Mar Mesa are the developing new communities within the city's future urbanizing area. To the southwest lies the City's Los Penasquitos Canyon Regional Open Space Preserve.

The subject parcels contain a multitude of endangered, threatened and sensitive vegetation and wildlife species as well as a regionally-significant wildlife corridor and nationally-recognized vernal pools. Del Mar Mesa is an integral part of the Multiple Species Conservation Program and the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Vernal Pool Stewardship Project planning area. The area is also one of the only undisturbed blocks of core habitat that remains within the urbanizing landscapes of the City of San Diego.

The primary vegetation communities on Del Mar Mesa are southern mixed chaparral, scrub oak chaparral and Diegan coastal sage scrub, with some native and non-native grasses occurring throughout. Clearings in the chaparral and coastal sage scrub contain numerous vernal pools. Several federal and state-listed endangered species flourish within the vernal pools including San Diego button celery, San Diego mesa mint, San Diego fairy shrimp and

California gnatcatcher. In addition to the vernal pools, the Del Mar Mesa and Deer Canyon provide a large block of habitat (approximately 1,479 acres) for larger mammalian species, such as mountain lion, deer, bobcats and coyotes. Conservation of Del Mar Mesa provides a critical wildlife movement corridor between other large open space areas. Habitat linkages to the south connect Del Mar Mesa with the 3,600±-acre Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve. To the north, they connect with the 1,500±-acre Black Mountain Park Open Space Park.

Del Mar Mesa represents the best opportunity for the long-term protection and management of a core block of vernal pools within the City of San Diego. This fact is recognized at the federal level by the inclusion of Del Mar Mesa in the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Vernal Pool Stewardship Project. While several recent and pending acquisitions by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the City of San Diego, and private individuals have secured portions of Del Mar Mesa, there is still a high potential for private development on the remaining parcels. Development on Del Mar Mesa could reduce the biological integrity of habitat linkages, introduce exotic vegetation and non-native predators and increase the indirect effects of adjacent construction. The conservation of these areas would create a significant block of habitat by maximizing the ratio of surface area to perimeter, thus reducing edge effects. Coupled with continuing federal and local purchases of property in this area, this proposal represents an opportunity to conserve San Diego's unique biological heritage.

The lands acquired would be managed by the City as part of its Penasquitos Canyon Park system. Several City-owned parcels are currently being managed on a daily basis by Park Rangers for recreational uses and to control illegal off-road vehicle activity and illegal dumping in the area. The parcels identified for acquisition are in a pristine condition and, therefore, no restoration or enhancement is necessary. The management goals will be to continue to maintain the natural resources in their current undisturbed condition and to coordinate future management and monitoring activities with the USFWS Refuge staff to maximize federal and local government resource management efforts.

An Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) Grant in the amount of \$250,000.00 has been approved by the California Transportation Commission for this project. The Board's proposed grant would provide the required \$250,000.00 match for the EEMP funds and could be applied on a 50 percent matching basis to acquire one or more of the parcels identified in the project. It is estimated that an additional \$25,000.00 will be needed for administrative expenses, including Department of General Services' review costs, bringing the total allocation for this proposal to \$275,000.00. The project is exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

The terms and conditions of the proposed grant provide that staff will review all proposed title documents, appraisals, preliminary title reports, agreements for purchase and sale,

escrow instructions and the instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into escrow.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the award of a grant to the City of San Diego to be applied toward the acquisition of 17 parcels, totaling 294.2± acres, as proposed; allocate \$275,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund [P-117, Section 2786 (b/c)]; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the award of a grant to the City of San Diego to be applied toward the acquisition of 17 parcels, totaling 294.2± acres, as proposed; allocate \$275,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund [P-117, Section 2786 (b/c)]; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

25. Iron Mountain Wildlife Area (Boys and Girls Club), San Diego County \$3,830,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider the acquisition of 1,135.4± acres of natural land, and to accept the donation of 240± acres, for the protection and enhancement of sensitive habitats located within the eastern foothills of San Diego County. Acquisition of the subject property would help to ensure the long-term protection of the wildlife corridor between the City of Poway's existing Iron Mountain Preserve, adjoining the subject to the north, and the open space surrounding San Vicente Reservoir, adjoining the property to the south. Following Ms. Townsend's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) recently approved a Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) identified as the Iron Mountain Ridge - Canada de San Vicente preserve, located in the western-most front of the mountains of San Diego County, near the communities of Ramona, Lakeside, Poway and the Barona Indian Reservation. Iron Mountain Ridge, is the westerly most portion of the CAPP, and Canada de San Vicente is the easterly most portion of the CAPP. The two portions are distinct and are divided by the deep and heavily wooded valley of A West Branch@ (the major western tributary to San Vicente Reservoir).

Acquisition of Iron Mountain Ridge - Canada de San Vicente preserve would provide an essential connection, resulting in the connection of 19 adjoining preserves and conserved areas (outside of the Cleveland National Forest and Miramar Naval Air Station). This preserve system would extend from the south section of the Cleveland National Forest, east

of Lakeside, nearly to the San Dieguito Valley, approximately 18 miles between the north and southeast ends. The combined area of these preserves, outside of the Cleveland National Forest, would be approximately 25,066 acres.

Highest priorities for acquisition by DFG were given to properties that contain particularly sensitive habitats and to properties on the edge of the CAPP area, where development pressures are greatest. The subject property, which occupies two miles of the north-south running ridge line, canyons of the West Branch and Foster Creek and highlands to the north of San Vicente Reservoir, was identified by DFG as the second highest priority for acquisition within the CAPP.

The topography of the site is characterized by steep hillsides, interconnecting ephemeral streams, and rock outcrops. Foster Canyon and its associated stream flows from north to south, along the western portion of the property and, ultimately, empties into San Vicente Reservoir. Elevations within the property range from approximately 800 feet above mean sea level, where the stream in Foster Canyon crosses the southern boundary of the site, to approximately 1,725 feet above mean sea level on the ridges in the northeast corner of the property. Outside of an approximately eight-acre eucalyptus woodland, this property is in nearly pristine natural condition. The ridges and some of the valley areas are developable.

This core area of largely undisturbed habitat would provide source plant and animal populations for maintaining healthy ecosystems functioning throughout a broad reach of central San Diego County. It would also provide a biological reservoir for protection against future extirpations of species within smaller preserves to the west, where corridor connections are maintained. Native habitats found within the proposed biological preserve area include various types of chaparral, oak woodlands, riparian forests, freshwater marshes and seeps, vernal pools, coastal sage scrub and grasslands. Several sensitive species observed on the site include the coastal California gnatcatcher, Engelmann oaks, heart-leaved pitcher sage, ashy spike-moss, Lakeside ceanothus, San Diego goldenstar, California adder's tongue and orange-throated whiptail.

The state and the County of San Diego are already working together to acquire and manage open space land at the north and south ends of this corridor. Although the state would be assuming fee title of the subject property, the county has agreed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with DFG to undertake management responsibility for the property. The county will work with DFG to prepare a detailed management plan to identify passive uses by the public that are compatible with the long-term survival of the fragile resources known to occur on the site.

The property owner has agreed to sell the subject 1,135.4± acre portion of the property to the Wildlife Conservation Board at the approved, appraised fair market value of \$3,800,000.00. In addition, the owner, a California non-profit corporation, has agreed to donate an additional

240± acres to the state. Costs to carry out this purchase, which include Department of General Services' review costs, appraisal costs, title insurance costs and escrow fees, are estimated at \$30,000.00. Therefore, the total allocation necessary to complete this purchase with costs, is \$3,830,000.00.

The project is categorically exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife habitat conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

Mr. Schmidt reported that the Board received letters of support from the Holly Oaks Ranch Community Improvement Organization and the Ramona Parks and Recreation Association. He also stated that Director Hight had received several letters from the Lakeside Community Planning Group indicating their opposition to this item, feeling that the Lakeside area, which was approved as Item #20 in the consent calendar, was a higher priority than this area. In addition to those letters, Mr. Schmidt stated that the Board received a letter from the San Diego Off-Road Coalition, not opposing the transaction, but indicating that they were not entirely happy with it, that they would oppose it if they were not assisted in finding a substitute location and requested support from the Department of Fish and Game and the San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation. The Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Parks and Recreation have been assisting in their endeavor to find another location. Mr. Schmidt stated that because of the number of people requesting to speak on this project, he wanted these items of potential opposition noted for the record. Mr. Schmidt reported that several representatives from the San Diego County were in attendance and requested to speak, if needed. Mr. Chrisman invited those in the audience who wanted to speak to feel free to comment and ask questions. Mr. Robert Asher, Chief of the County of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program, expressed the County's appreciation for the Board's efforts in this area and distributed to the Board members a copy of a Memorandum of Agreement between the County of San Diego and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (see attachment) which expresses the County's desire to work with the State to find a suitable off-road vehicle site in San Diego, noting this as an important recreational need, expressing a willingness to work with the stakeholders as well as the State agencies. Mr. Chrisman expressed his appreciation to Mr. Asher for attending and sharing this information with the Board. Mr. Chrisman also expressed his support of this project. There were no further questions or comments from the audience.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of this property as proposed; allocate \$3,830,000.00 for the purchase and related costs from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6)BNCCP; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board approve the acquisition of this

property as proposed; allocate \$3,830,000.00 for the purchase and related costs from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6)BNCCP; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

26. Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area, San Diego County \$1,010,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the County of San Diego to assist in its purchase of a 285.7± acre portion of a larger 3,820± acre ownership, located in the Hollenbeck Canyon. The primary purpose of this proposed acquisition is to preserve critical habitat and wildlife corridors that would provide a connection between the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve and Hollenbeck Canyon, and ultimately connect other wildlands with the Cleveland National Forest. The acquisition would allow for management of this habitat in a manner consistent with other lands already included in the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Reserve and further implement DFG's Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) efforts in the County. Following Ms. Townsend's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

Hollenbeck Canyon is located approximately five miles east of the unincorporated town of Jamul, at the junction of State Highway 94, Otay Lakes Road and Honey Springs Road. It is near the rapidly growing rural area of Jamul and Lyons Valley and is within the Metro-Lakeside-Jamul segment of the County's MSCP Subarea Plan. The County has recently completed its initial purchase of a 312.5±-acre portion of the 3,820± acre property identified by DFG as its highest priority for acquisition in the canyon.

The landscape in this vicinity is comprised of a chain of peaks and ridges and several canyons, the most prominent feature being Hollenbeck Canyon. Elevations range from 2,076 feet at the highest peak to 750 feet at the lowest point where Hollenbeck Canyon approaches State Highway 94. Acquisition of the subject property is particularly important in that it will preserve a key canyon in the western-most front of the San Diego County mountains providing a wildlife corridor between Otay Mountain and the Jamul Mountains. The protection of the canyon will also enhance the continuity of otherwise isolated preserves north of State Highway 94. This core area of largely undisturbed habitat provides a source of plant and animal populations for maintaining healthy ecosystems functioning throughout a broad reach of south central San Diego County. Where corridor connections are maintained, the preserve will also provide a biological reservoir for protection against future extirpations of species within smaller preserves to the west.

Native habitats found within the proposed wildlife area include Coastal sage scrub, various types of chaparral, oak woodlands, riparian forests, freshwater marshes, and grasslands. These vegetation communities provide suitable habitat for over 13 sensitive plant species and 25 animal species, including but not limited to California sagebrush, San Diego Thornmint, the California gnatcatcher, Engelmann oak, Palmer's sagewort, Cooper's hawk and the red-shouldered hawk. Although most of the land is undisturbed and in relatively pristine condition, the property also provides restoration and revegetation opportunities in areas that have been historically used as cultivated agricultural and grazing lands.

It is the County's intention to acquire fee title to the subject property and assume full management responsibility. The County will work with state and federal agencies to prepare a detailed management plan to ensure the protection of the fragile resources that are present within the proposed boundaries of the wildlife area, including significant historical and archaeological sites. Signs will be posted to notify the public that the property has been acquired as part of the County and state's commitment to the MSCP, and will advise them about appropriate activities.

The County entered into an agreement with the property owner to acquire the subject 3,820± acre property, as follows: 1) completion of the purchase of an initial 312.5± acre portion of the property, having a fair market value of \$1,000,000.00; and 2) an option agreement to acquire the remaining 3,506.7± acres, over a period of three years, with annual price escalations of 8 percent built into the value per acre (Phase 1: \$3,500 per acre; Phase 2: \$3,700 per acre; and Phase 3: \$4,000 per acre). The Department of General Services has approved the appraised fair market value of the subject property, and the values as established in the option agreement. The Board's proposed grant, in the amount of \$1,000,000.00, would allow the County to proceed under Phase 1 of the option, to acquire 287.5± acres. It is estimated that an additional \$10,000.00 will be needed for administrative expenses, including Department of General Services' review costs, bringing the total allocation for this proposal to \$1,010,000.00. The project is exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

The terms and conditions of the proposed grant provide that staff will review all proposed title documents, appraisals, preliminary title reports, agreements for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and the instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into escrow. The grant will also require that maintenance and monitoring of the properties be accomplished by the County in conformance with their MSCP Framework Management Plan and relevant Area Specific Management Directives.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the award of a grant to the County of San Diego

to be applied to the acquisition of the 285.7± acres, as proposed; allocate \$1,010,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6)BNCCP; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the award of a grant to the County of San Diego to be applied to the acquisition of the 285.7± acres, as proposed; allocate \$1,010,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6)BNCCP; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

27. Carmel Mountain, Torrey Surf, San Diego County \$614,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the City of San Diego to assist in its acquisition of 9.4± acres, including vernal pools and 23 adjacent residential building sites, to preserve critical habitat and a key open space and wildlife corridor in the Carmel Mountain/Carmel Valley area. This proposal is also to consider the acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds, in the amount of \$550,000.00, to be deposited directly into an escrow by the Service pursuant to a Cooperative Agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board. Following Mr. Sarro's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

Carmel Mountain, the last undisturbed coastal mesa in San Diego County, is a refuge for endangered, threatened and sensitive plant and animal species. It is the most important biological core area within the City and it functions as a regionally-significant wildlife corridor. Carmel Mountain has never been grazed or plowed for agriculture, as were the surrounding mesas and valleys. Nowhere else does the combination of coastal fog, sandstone soils and mild temperatures allow for the diversity and uniqueness of the species that live on Carmel Mountain. As such, the old-growth vegetation community present is unlike that anywhere else in the world.

In the 1970's the City of San Diego prepared what was, at the time, a very progressive community plan that proposed to establish a vibrant community with easy access to community facilities and preservation of a significant open space system. Since the mid-1980's, developers have proposed to implement the Community Plan for Carmel Mountain. For a variety of reasons, including the recession of the early 1990's, these planning efforts were stalled until 1996. In 1996 the property owners revived the planning activities for Carmel Mountain just as the City's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) was

establishing the regional habitat preserve system.

The scientific basis for the MSCP is substantially more advanced than that which was the basis for the community plan open space element. Through the MSCP it became apparent that the Community Plan Open Space system was biologically inadequate and that it was essential to preserve most of Carmel Mountain. Carmel Mountain is now an integral part of the MSCP and is a key core biological area, serving as the only viable long-term corridor for the wildlife movement between Los Penasquitos Canyon and Los Penasquitos Lagoon (and Torrey Pines State Park) via Carmel Valley.

The primary vegetation communities are southern maritime chaparral, Diegan coastal sage scrub, with some native and nonnative grasses and vernal pools occurring throughout. Some of the clearings in the chaparral and coastal sage scrub contain populations of the State-endangered short-leaved dudleya, which is found only on Carmel Mountain and in two other locations in coastal San Diego.

Southern maritime chaparral is the dominant vegetation type on Carmel Mountain. Southern maritime chaparral is restricted to sandstone soils in the coastal fog belt in the vicinity of Del Mar and Torrey Pines State Reserve. The California Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) has inventoried less than 2,000 acres of this plant community in San Diego County and it is considered rare and unique. Diegan coastal sage scrub is also inventoried in the NDDDB, which estimates a remaining acreage of 224,659 in San Diego County, with far less remaining in the coastal areas. This community is present on dry south-facing slopes and ridges and in openings in the chaparral. Vernal pools are located on the more level sections of Carmel Mountain and benefit from the extensive watershed areas represented by the slopes from the mesa's ridge. Ninety-eight percent of the County's vernal pool habitat has been destroyed because of the urbanization of the coastal mesas.

There is a diversity of wildlife species existing in the predominantly native brush land habitat on the mesa top and slopes of Carmel Mountain, including 10 species of mammals, 50 bird species, 4 reptile species, as well as one invertebrate and one amphibian. Of the 66 observed species, 18 are considered sensitive species, including the federally-listed threatened California gnatcatcher and the federally-listed endangered San Diego fairy shrimp. A number of MSCP Acovered@ species are also found on the property including the San Diego horned lizard, orange-throated whiptail, California horned lark, southern California rufous-crowned sparrow and the Bell's sage sparrow.

The Carmel Mountain/CarmelValley area also provides for regional wildlife movement in addition to providing habitat and forage for sensitive species. The canyons and mesas of Carmel Mountain are an integral part of the only remaining intact wildlife corridor between the existing reserves of Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve and Los Penasquitos Lagoon/Torrey Pines State Park. The Carmel Mountain wildlife corridor is critical to

maintaining connectivity and, thus, the long-term viability of the Torrey Pines State Reserve.

Due to the critical nature of the Carmel Mountain/Carmel Valley habitats for MSCP and for the federal/state/local Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) for the area, the federal government and the City of San Diego have thus far spent more than \$32.1 million in these acquisition and habitat protection efforts. The City is now seeking WCB assistance with the purchase of a key 9.4± acres, considered by the City to be the last piece of the Carmel Mountain puzzle.

In September 1998 the San Diego City Council approved a tentative map for 63 units on an 18± acre parcel. Based upon the input from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the environmental stakeholders, the City, state and federal wildlife agencies now propose that the City acquire an additional 9.4± acres of vernal pool habitat and the associated watershed lands within the 18-acre parcel. Protection of the additional watershed area would help to increase the long-term viability of already conserved vernal pools. The additional watershed area would also increase the native plant habitat surrounding the vernal pools, allowing for the conservation of a greater species diversity and an increase in pollinators. The property owner is supportive of the idea and has proposed a revised tentative map, eliminating 23 residential lots, that will show 9.4± acres to be acquired by the City. The City is requesting that the Wildlife Conservation Board partner with the City, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Coastal Conservancy to jointly acquire the property to provide for additional conservation of a vernal pool watershed and protect the integrity of Carmel Mountain.

The property has a state-approved fair market value of \$7,349,000.00. The City's purchase would be at fair market value, with contributions as follows:

State Coastal Conservancy	\$4,200,000.00
City of San Diego	1,500,000.00
Sales of Mitigation Credits	500,000
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	550,000.00
Wildlife Conservation Board (Grant)	599,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$7,349,000.00</u>

In addition to the proposed grant of \$599,000.00, appraisal and Department of General

Services' review costs are estimated to be \$15,000.00, bringing the total allocation necessary to complete this transaction to \$614,000.00. The Board's proposed grant would also address the \$550,000.00 contribution by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to a Cooperative Agreement between the Service and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The proposed transaction has the strong support of the Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The City would assume ownership and all management responsibility for the site.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds in the amount of \$550,000.00, for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; approve the award of a grant to the City of San Diego to be applied to the acquisition as proposed; allocate \$614,000.00 for the grant and related expenses from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6); authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to enter into appropriate agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Ms. Annette Porini that the Board authorize acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds in the amount of \$550,000.00, for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; approve the award of a grant to the City of San Diego to be applied to the acquisition as proposed; allocate \$614,000.00 for the grant and related expenses from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act/P-12, Section 5096.350 (a)(6); authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to enter into appropriate agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

28. Bayview Ecological Reserve, San Luis Obispo County \$5,715,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider the acquisition of 205± acres of coastal dune habitat for the protection of several federal and state listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species. The subject property, locally known as the Morro Palisades property, is strategically located in the Los Osos coastal dunes complex immediately south of, and overlooking Morro Bay, in San Luis Obispo County. Due to the large number of sensitive species in the area, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has identified the Los Osos area for conservation efforts. Acquisition of the property would significantly enhance the ability of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the USFWS

and other agencies to establish a regional ecosystem-based habitat preserve system. Following Mr. Sarro's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project. Mr. Schmidt reported that the landowner, Mr. John Curci, was in the audience.

The property proposed for acquisition supports several key plant and animal species, including two wildlife species that are listed as endangered. The last known population of Morro Bay kangaroo rat, which is both state and federally listed as endangered, was trapped on this site in the mid 1980's. No trapping has occurred since that time and the current status of the species is unknown. The Morro shoulderband snail, a federally listed endangered species only known from the vicinity of Morro Bay, is known to exist on the northern third of the property, in the coastal sage scrub community along with the Morro blue butterfly, a federal species of special concern. The black legless lizard which is proposed for federal listing as endangered, and the coast horned lizard, a California species of special concern, also inhabit the stabilized sand dunes.

Maritime chaparral dominated by Morro manzanita is the primary vegetation of the upper slopes, while coastal sage scrub is the characteristic vegetation of the lower slopes, along the northern portion of the parcel. A small portion of a pygmy coast live oak woodland exists along the western border. Specific rare communities, recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), found on the site include central dune scrub, Venturan coastal sage scrub, central maritime chaparral, and the southern bishop pine forest. The CNDDDB lists central dune scrub and central maritime chaparral as rare and threatened at the state level and rare globally. Venturan coastal sage scrub is listed as a rare and endangered community at the state level and rare globally. Bishop pine forests are listed as endangered globally and at the state level.

The site is specifically listed as a critical site for protection in the recovery plans for the Morro Bay kangaroo rat, Morro manzanita, Indian Knob mountain balm and Morro shoulderband snail. All but one of the known populations of Indian Knob mountain balm occur either on or adjacent to the parcel.

In addition to the threatened, and endangered and sensitive species, the parcel supports a wide range of wildlife species associated with the maritime chaparral and coastal sage scrub communities. Based on the Wildlife Habitat Relationships model, a total of 103 bird, 48 mammal, 21 reptile and 6 amphibian species inhabit the property.

The property, which is located immediately west of the Montana de Oro State Park, is the key parcel in the multi-agency efforts to preserve the dune complex and to establish a green belt linking this park with the Morro Bay State Parks. Agencies and conservation groups actively engaged in the planning and acquisition efforts include the USFWS, DFG, California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance (MEGA). The parcel has also been deemed important by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (NEP) for preserving the long-term health and

biodiversity of the Morro Bay estuary. The project has received support from a variety of political entities from the local to the national levels. Ultimately, acquisition of the Bayview site would solidify linkage between currently protected areas and would aid in the conservation of numerous listed species.

The parcel is currently zoned for residential development but has remained undeveloped because of a state imposed building moratorium. The moratorium was instituted over 15 years ago due to high bacteria levels resulting from the lack of a sewer and associated water treatment facilities in Los Osos. The moratorium will be lifted upon completion of sewage treatment facilities, which are scheduled to be constructed over the next year. Without protection, considering the location and spectacular setting and view from this property, it would undoubtedly be developed to a degree that would significantly compromise local, regional and statewide efforts to conserve these remaining, critical habitat types.

The Bayview site has been of interest to the DFG, and has been the subject of Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) discussions with the landowner, for more than 25 years. Price wise, however, it has remained out of reach due to budget constraints. However, the 1999/2000 Budget Act provided \$4 million in General Fund monies specifically appropriated for this acquisition. The Board's 2000/2001 budget contains \$54 million of General Fund monies to be used as direct AChallenge Grants@, requiring a dollar-for-dollar, non-state matching funds. And, finally, with the assistance of MEGA and TPL, the Board applied for and received preliminary approval of an Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) grant through the California Transportation Commission (CTC), in the amount of \$500,000.00 for the acquisition of the Bayview/Morro Palisades property.

A current appraisal, as approved by the Department of General Services, indicates the value of the 205± acre property to be \$7,900,000.00. Under an agreement reached with the landowner, the purchase would be structured as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board (General FundBSpecific)	\$4,000,000.00
Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program Grant (CTC)	500,000.00
Wildlife Conservation Board (Challenge Grant Funds)	1,700,000.00
Landowner Donation (Challenge Grant Match)	1,700,000.00

TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING **\$7,900,000.00**

While the EEMP grant has received preliminary CTC approval, staff is recommending a contingency allocation of funds to cover the possibility of disapproval. The CTC meets in late July to consider approval, and staff will advise the Board of the outcome.

It is estimated that administrative expenses, including appraisal costs, Department of General Services' review fees and escrow costs, will be an additional \$15,000.00. The generous offer

of a donation by the landowner is, incidentally, the very first match under WCB's new Challenge Grant program.

The DFG, while assuming responsibility for the site, anticipates minimal costs to them for management. Discussions have commenced with Department of Parks and Recreation for consideration of management of the site along with its nearby Montana de Oro State Park and Los Osos Oaks State Preserve. Local interests, such as MEGA and Cal Poly, have also expressed interest in cooperative management of the site. In any event, management and use of the site would be passive, directed toward protection of sensitive plant and animal species on site and scientific studies. Restoration and enhancement of habitat could be conducted, but the vast majority of the 205± acre site is relatively undisturbed.

This acquisition is categorically exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife habitat conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed accordingly.

Mr. Schmidt reported that the Board received letters of support from Assembly Member Abel Maldonado, Senator Jack O'Connell, Congresswoman Lois Capps, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Plant Society, Shirley Bianci, San Luis Obispo Supervisor, U.S. EPA, the Morrow Estuary Greenbelt Alliance, the Bureau of Land Management and the Audubon Society. No letters of opposition were received.

Based on the above project description, staff recommended that the Board approve this acquisition as proposed; authorize acceptance of the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program grant of \$500,000.00 to be paid directly into escrow for the acquisition; allocate \$5,715,000.00 from General Fund allocations (\$4,000,000.00 as specifically budgeted in the 1999/00 budget for this project, \$1,700,000.00 from the Challenge Grant program, \$15,000.00 for administration expenses), authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this acquisition as proposed; authorize acceptance of the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program grant of \$500,000.00 to be paid directly into escrow for the acquisition; allocate \$5,715,000.00 from General Fund allocations (\$4,000,000.00 as specifically budgeted in the 1999/00 budget for this project, \$1,700,000.00 from the Challenge Grant program, \$15,000.00 for administration expenses); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

After the motion passed, Mr. Sarro introduced Mr. Curci, one of the three owners of the partnership involved in this property. Mr. Curci reflected on the 25-year effort, beginning with Mr. Schmidt as the land agent, to bring this transaction to the Board, and expressed appreciation to the Board and Mr. Sarro, acknowledging his professionalism and guidance. Mr. Curci also acknowledged the Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance for their work in

providing the leadership of preservation of habitat in the Morro Bay area, in particular, their efforts in assisting the Board in making the purchase of the Morro Palisades property possible. In closing, Mr. Curci stated that he and his partners, Mr. Al Switzer and the Giumarra Family, at the close of escrow, would make a \$100,000 contribution to the Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance to help continue their efforts in the preservation of habitat in the Morro Bay area. He additionally acknowledged The Trust for Public Land for their efforts, in particular Margaret Eadington, for her assistance in this acquisition. Mr. Curci added that at the close of escrow, he and his partners would also provide a \$100,000 donation to the Trust for Public Land to help continue their activities in preserving other Morro Bay properties. Mr. Chrisman expressed his pleasure at the partnerships developed in this project and congratulated all parties involved in completing this acquisition.

At this time, Mr. Chrisman introduced Senator Byron Sher, who then presented Mr. Schmidt with a resolution on behalf of the Board's Legislative Advisory Committee members, congratulating him upon his upcoming retirement, applauding Mr. Schmidt's many accomplishments and dedication as a public servant to the State of California.

29. Colton Dunes Ecological Reserve, San Bernardino County \$801,000.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider a grant to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to be applied toward its acquisition of an 8.5± acre parcel of vacant land in Ontario, San Bernardino County, as part of the joint federal/state and Riverside/San Bernardino Counties' Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Planning (MSHCP) efforts. In all, four key sites, totaling 55 acres, have been identified for acquisition by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as Aintegral to the regional preserve planning area for the Ontario subarea portion of the San Bernardino County Valley-Wide MSHCP.@ This proposal is also to consider the acceptance of FWS Section 6 funds, in the amount of \$500,000.00, to be deposited directly into an escrow by the FWS pursuant to a Cooperative Agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board. Following Mr. Sarro's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

The properties are strategically located within southwestern San Bernardino and northwestern Riverside Counties, such that acquisition would significantly enhance the ability of the DFG, the City of Ontario, other local cities, the Counties of San Bernardino and Riverside, the FWS and other agencies to establish a regional ecosystem-based habitat preserve system as contemplated in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Valley-Wide MSHCP. These sites contain important sensitive habitat known as the Colton Dunes ecosystem that was once the largest inland cismontane sand dune formation in southern California. They support species proposed to be covered under the MSHCP including, but not limited to, the Los Angeles pocket mouse, burrowing owl, black-tail jackrabbit, loggerhead shrike and the federally endangered Delhi Sands flower-loving fly. The area also

provides important raptor foraging areas. Through ecosystem preservation, the MSHCP seeks to preserve rare, sensitive, threatened and endangered species in perpetuity.

The purpose of the proposed acquisition is to contribute toward the building of a subarea reserve system that would protect and ensure the long-term viability of sensitive habitat known as the Colton Dunes ecosystem. The Colton Dunes of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties once covered over 40 square miles and composed the largest inland cismontane sand dune formation in southern California. While over 98 percent of this dune system has been converted to other uses, the remnant dune habitat still represents a hot spot of biodiversity. The proposed reserve system, would be incorporated into the San Bernardino Valley-Wide MSHCP, and would protect the endemic species that inhabit or use this area for foraging.

The subject property and the remaining three sites have been identified as a core area for the Colton Dunes ecosystem. The physical properties of the Colton Dunes ecosystem consist of a series of dynamic windblown (aeolian) dunes, subject to constant ground surface changes during periodic high winds. High winds occur annually in the Colton Dunes habitats. These ASanta Ana@ winds normally occur during autumn and winter and facilitate transportation of sand. Sand blown from the canyons of the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains into the San Bernardino Valley was deposited and shaped into dynamic dune systems. The acquisition of these properties would preserve the listed and sensitive species and the rare Colton Dunes habitat discussed above, prevent further habitat fragmentation of this ecologically significant block of undeveloped natural habitat within the proposed core subarea preserve system, and sustain habitat linkages between core habitat areas.

Title to the 8.5± acres would be acquired by the NFWF on an interim basis, with long-term management likely by the FWS. The focus of the management of this site (and the other identified sites) would be protection of the Colton Dunes habitat and the dependent species of wildlife. The acquisition and this grant have the strong support of the DFG as being key to the successful implementation of Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) for the San Bernardino/Riverside County areas.

The fair market value of the subject property, as approved by the Department of General Services, is \$1,481,000.00. However, the landowner has agreed to sell the property for \$1,300,000.00 resulting in a \$181,000.00 land value donation to the state. Payment of the purchase price is proposed to be made in the form of a grant to the NFWF; \$500,000.00 from the FWS pursuant to a Cooperative Agreement with the Board, and \$800,000.00 from the Board. In addition, an allocation of \$1,000.00 will be necessary to cover administrative expenses, specifically the costs of the state Department of General Services' appraisal review.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Section 6 funds in the amount of \$500,000.00 for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; approve the award of a grant to the Wildlife Foundation to be applied toward its purchase of the property as proposed; allocate \$801,000.00 for the grant amount and related expenses from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (b/c); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any comments or questions. There were none.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board authorize acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds in the amount of \$500,000.00 for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; approve the award of a grant to the Wildlife Foundation to be applied toward its purchase of the property as proposed; allocate \$801,000.00 for the grant amount and related expenses from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (b/c); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements as necessary to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

30. Wetland Habitat Restoration, San Pablo Bay, Napa and Sonoma Counties \$837,300.00

Mr. Schmidt reported that this proposal was to consider the acceptance of a federal reimbursable grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC) for \$837,300.00 and, secondly, to allocate funds in the same amount for a grant to Ducks Unlimited to restore and enhance 5,233± acres of seasonal and tidal wetlands at six separate locations near San Pablo Bay, in Napa and Sonoma Counties. Four of the six restoration projects are located on the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Napa Sonoma Marsh Wildlife Area, one on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and the final site is on property owned by the Sonoma Land Trust. Mr. Perrine reported that Mr. Jasper Lament, representing Ducks Unlimited, was in the audience should there be any questions. Following Mr. Perrine's explanation of the project's location, Mr. Schmidt summarized the project.

This project was initiated with a proposal to the NAWCC, for much needed restoration projects in the San Pablo Bay. The proposal is designed to restore 165± acres of seasonal wetlands and 305± acres of associated uplands, and restore 72± acres of tidal marsh as well as enhance nearly 4700 acres of seasonal wetland on the Napa Marsh Wildlife Area. Most of these sites are former diked farmlands, all of which are of marginal value for agriculture

production, but can now be enhanced or restored to provide outstanding wildlife benefits. The need for enhancement is truly extraordinary. Due to the sheer numbers of species that inhabit this area, an estimated 380 species of birds and mammals, the San Francisco Bay estuary is recognized as a site of hemispheric importance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and is accepted as a Globally Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy. Such recognition is shared by only three other areas on the west coast of the Western Hemisphere. Many of these wildlife species are dependent on seasonal and tidal wetlands. In the Bay Area, more than 90 percent of these habitats have been destroyed in the last 150 years and much of the remaining marsh is degraded or fragmented to some extent. At least 61 wildlife species dependent on these wetland areas are designated by federal or state agencies as being in need of special attention. In spite of the drastic changes that have occurred over the last two centuries, this area remains one of the most important areas to migrating, breeding and wintering waterfowl and shorebirds in the Pacific Flyway.

Fortunately, much of the remaining open lands in the San Pablo Bay is owned by public agencies. All in all, these agencies manage a matrix of diked freshwater, brackish and saline wetlands, tidal wetlands, associated uplands, mudflats and open water. All six of the proposed enhancement and restoration projects are found on property that is currently protected. The six projects, when completed, will restore and enhance 5,233± as follows:

Napa Marsh Wildlife Area/Ringstrom Bay Unit: This project will enhance 313± acres of seasonal wetlands. Upland areas and degraded wetlands will be excavated and the material will be used to enhance approximately 10,000 linear feet of degraded levee. Four collapsed water control structures will also be replaced to better manage water on the site.

Napa Marsh Wildlife Area/Camp Two Unit: This project will enhance 608± acres of seasonal wetland and associated uplands. Soil will be excavated to create a mosaic of wetlands and upland nesting habitats and a pump will be installed to provide water to the site for migrating and breeding waterfowl and other water birds.

Napa Marsh Wildlife Area/Salt Pond Unit: This project will provide two water control structures on Pond 8, in the Salt Pond Unit. One will provide freshwater to this 154±-acre very saline pond while the second will allow for improved management of the entire 3,700± acre Salt Pond Unit.

Napa Marsh Wildlife Area/Huichica Creek Unit: This project will enhance existing seasonal wetlands on this 70± acre site. A new water control structure and enhanced levee will allow for improved management of the site for water birds, while providing flood protection to adjacent private property.

Sonoma Land Trust/Leonard Ranch: This project will restore 470± acres of marginal farmland to 165± acres of seasonal wetland and 305± acres of associated uplands. Restoration activities will include installing water control structures and recontouring the essentially flat field to provide seasonal wetlands and upland nesting habitat.

San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge/Lower Tubbs Island Setback Levee: This project will provide for the return of 72± acres of former agricultural fields to full tidal action. A levee will be constructed with a water side bench that will provide high marsh and upland transition, complementing the lower marsh that will dominate the remainder of the site.

Cost estimates for this project, which have been reviewed by staff, are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Materials	\$169,000.00
Contracts for actual onsite work	638,300.00
Project management	30,000.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$837,300.00</u>

As previously mentioned, this project is to be funded entirely from federal funds awarded by the NAWCC. This proposal was the highest ranked NAWCC proposal in 1999, in part due to the biological merits of the proposal but also due to the number and variety of funding partners associated with it. To secure this or any grant, NAWCC requires matching funds. To qualify as a matching fund, similar projects must have been completed within the last two years. The following partners provided documentation on completed, eligible projects and supported this application for federal funds:

Partners by Matching Project Amount:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$1,463,935.00
Shell Oil Spill Litigation Settlement Trust	1,048,570.00
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	635,000.00
CALFED	581,500.00
California Department of Fish and Game	493,000.00
Ducks Unlimited	475,000.00
United Heckathorn Trustee Council	365,000.00
Sonoma Land Trust	293,934.00
Marin Audubon Society	139,000.00
Save the Bay	75,000.00
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	35,000.00
Marin/Sonoma Mosquito Abatement District	25,000.00
Pacific Gas and Electric	10,000.00
Natural Resources Conservation District	10,000.00
Sonoma Community Foundation	5,000.00

Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Board

5,000.00

TOTAL MATCHING FUNDING

\$5,659,939.00

The DFG has reviewed the individual proposals and recommends them for funding. All CEQA and NEPA requirements have been completed and all required permits have been obtained. As the proposed grant is a reimbursable grant, it will be necessary that funds be expended before they are received. Therefore, it will be necessary that the Board make an allocation of existing funds to complete the above-described work. Upon completion of the work, staff will submit bills to receive the reimbursement.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize the acceptance of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council grant of \$837,300.00; allocate \$837,300.00 from the General Fund/Wetlands; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize the acceptance of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council grant of \$837,300.00; allocate \$837,300.00 from the General Fund/Wetlands; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

31. Staff Report/Easement Transfers

Informational

At the February 24, 1998 Wildlife Conservation Board meeting, the Board authorized the Executive Director to transfer less-than-fee interests (easements, rights of ways, etc.) In Department of Fish and Game or Wildlife Conservation Board controlled lands, where the value of the interests is less than \$50,000.00. This was done to improve service to the public and to reduce the cost of processing these transfers.

In addition, the Board placed two conditions on this delegation of authority, the first of which is that in all cases the grant of a less-than-fee interest would be made at the request or with the recommendation of the Department of Fish and Game to assure adequate consideration of impacts on habitat and programs. Secondly, any grant made under this authority would be reported as an informational item at the next available meeting of the Board.

Pursuant to the above described process, the following easement transfers have been completed by staff:

PROJECT TITLE	TRANSFER TYPE	GRANTEE	SIZE	CONSIDERATION
Elk Creek Wetlands, Kern County	Easement for the installation of a temporary ground water monitoring well.	Tosco Refining Company	100 sf.	\$100.00
Mattole River Ecological Reserve, Mendocino County	Easement for overhead phone line.	GTE	2± acres	\$100.00
Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area, Yuba County	Utility easement for transport of water.	Brownsvalley Irrigation District	6± acres	District will supply water to wildlife area. No \$ other consideration

OTHER BUSINESS

At this time, Mr. Chrisman complimented Mr. Schmidt and the staff of the Board that worked on this agenda and the projects presented at this meeting for a job well done.

Mr. Chrisman, on behalf of the Board, presented Mr. Schmidt with a resolution and congratulated Mr. Schmidt for his efforts over the past 25 years, recognizing his accomplishments, commitment and leadership. Mr. Chrisman reminded everyone of the retirement party scheduled for August 18, 2000 in Sacramento.

Mr. Hight expressed his appreciation to Mr. Schmidt for his dedication throughout the years, noting that Mr. Schmidt was involved in over 531 acquisitions totaling approximately 342,000 acres, which contain 87 habitat restoration projects and 183 public access projects, including launching ramps at lakes, rivers and streams. He also noted that during Mr. Schmidt's tenure as Executive Director, the Board spent over \$635,000,000 on public projects.

Mr. Bill Gaines, on behalf of the California Waterfowl Association, presented Mr. Schmidt with a beautiful duck decoy, and expressed appreciation for Mr. Schmidt's efforts over the past 25 years, noting the Board's key role in restoring wetlands throughout the State of California.

Mr. Schmidt expressed his pleasure for having had the opportunity to work with so many outstanding

Board members and credited his staff for their hard work and dedication over the years. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

James V. Sarro
Interim Executive Director

PROGRAM STATEMENT

At the close of the meeting on August 10, 2000, the amount allocated to projects since the Wildlife Conservation Board's inception in 1947 totaled \$710,296,887.31*. This total includes funds reimbursed by the Federal Government under the Accelerated Public Works Program completed in 1966, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program, the Anadromous Fish Act Program, the Sport Fish Restoration Act Program, the Pittman-Robertson Program, and the Estuarine Sanctuary Program.

The statement includes projects completed under the 1964 State Beach, Park, Recreational and Historical Facilities Bond Act, the 1970 Recreation and Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Bond Fund, the Bagley Conservation Fund, the State Beach, Park, Recreational and Historical Facilities Bond Act of 1974, the General Fund, the Energy Resources Fund, the Environmental License Plate Fund, the State, Urban and Coastal Park Bond Act of 1976, the 1984 Park Lands Bond Act, the 1984 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Bond Act, the California Wildlife Coastal and Park Land Conservation Act of 1988, Cigarette and Tobacco Products Surtax Fund of 1988, California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990, the Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Supply Act of 1996, the Natural Resources Infrastructure Fund, the Harbors and WaterCraft Revolving Fund, Forest Resources Improvement Fund, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund of 2000 and the Wildlife Restoration Fund.

1. Fish Hatchery and Stocking Projects.....	\$16,006,219.06
2. Fish Habitat Preservation, Development & Improvement	23,434,082.29
Reservoir Construction or Improvement.....	\$ 5,527,032.41
Stream Clearance and Improvement	14,788,961.69
Stream Flow Maintenance Dams	547,719.86
Marine Habitat	646,619.07
Fish Screens, Ladders and Weir Projects	1,923,749.26
3. Fishing Access Projects.....	38,617,176.60
Coastal and Bay	\$ 2,992,860.08
River and Aqueduct Access	10,311,658.28
Lake and Reservoir Access	7,037,197.98
Piers	18,275,460.26
4. Game Farm Projects	146,894.49
5. Wildlife Habitat Acq., Development & Improvement	615,597,126.55
Wildlife Areas (General).....	\$203,718,732.31
Miscellaneous Wildlife Habitat Dev.....	5,469,933.74
Wildlife Areas/Eco Reserves, (Threatened, Endangered or Unique Habitat)	223,164,742.57
Land Conservation Area	1,669,057.18

	Inland Wetlands Conser. Grants & Easements	7,307,632.57
	Riparian Habitat Conser. Grants & Easements	5,778,657.64
	Other Wildlife Habitat Grants.....	168,488,370.54
6.	Hunting Access Projects.....	484,898.57
7.	Miscellaneous Projects (including leases).....	10,653,879.29
8.	Special Project Allocations	1,116,464.79
9.	Miscellaneous Public Access Projects.....	3,688,725.63
	State Owned	\$960,365.63
	Grants	2,728,360.00
10.	Sales and/or exchanges.....	<u>551,420.04</u>
	Total Allocated to Projects	\$710,296,887.31*

*This total includes allocations in the sum of \$230,500,000.00 for grants to acquire the Headwaters and Grizzly Creek Forests and the acquisition of Owl Creek Forest.

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