

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

1807 13TH STREET, SUITE 103
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814
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**State of California
The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD
Minutes
May 18, 2001**

<u>ITEM NO.</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. <u>Roll Call</u>	1
2. <u>Funding Status B Informational</u>	3
3. <u>Special Project Planning Account B Informational</u>	6
4. <u>PROPOSED CONSENT CALENDAR (Items 5B19 and 21--28)</u>	7
*5. <u>Approval of Minutes B February 23, 2001 Meeting</u>	7
*6. <u>Recovery of Funds</u>	8
*7. <u>Lakeside Linkages, Expansion 5, San Diego County</u>	10
*8. <u>San Joaquin River Restoration Augmentation (Parkways Exotics Removal), Fresno and Madera Counties</u>	12
*9. <u>Wetland Habitat Restoration, South Grasslands (Britto Land Co., E.T.N., Inc. and Riverfield Cattle Co.), Merced County</u>	15
*10. <u>Suisun Marsh Waterfowl Production and Enhancement, Phase 2, Solano County</u>	17
*11. <u>Napa-Sonoma Wildlife Area, Solano County</u>	19
*12. <u>Leek Springs Valley Ecological Reserve, El Dorado County</u>	19
*13. <u>Wohler Bridge Public Access Improvements, Sonoma County</u>	21
*14. <u>Hudeman Slough Public Fishing Access Improvements, Sonoma County</u>	22
*15. <u>Bear River Fishing Access Improvements, Placer County</u>	24
*16. <u>Wetland Habitat Restoration, 2017 Ranch, Colusa County</u>	26
*17. <u>Sacramento Valley Refuge, Glenn County</u>	28
*18. <u>Wetland Habitat Restoration, Honcut Creek (McCorkle Ranch), Butte County</u>	29
*19. <u>RHR Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area, Howard Slough Unit, Glenn County</u>	31
20. <u>Big Chico Creek, Expansion 1, Butte County</u>	33
*21. <u>Wetland Conservation Easement Program, Cherokee Farms, Butte County</u>	37
*22. <u>Musty Buck Ridge Conservation Easement, Butte County</u>	39

*23.	<u>Sacramento River Conservation Area, Expansions 2 and 3, Butte County</u>	40
*24.	<u>Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area, Expansion 8, Yuba County</u>	42
*25.	<u>Woodson Bridge Fishing Access, Tehama County</u>	44
*26.	<u>Mill Creek Fishing Access Improvements, Tehama County</u>	46
*27.	<u>Hamilton Branch Fishing Access, Plumas County</u>	48
*28.	<u>Lassen Foothills, Expansion 1 (Eagle Canyon Ranch Conservation Easement), Shasta and Tehama Counties</u>	49
29.	<u>San Bernardino Mountains Wildlife Corridor, San Bernardino County</u>	51
30.	<u>San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Expansion 14, Riverside County</u>	53
31.	<u>San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Expansions 15 through 19, Riverside County</u>	55
32.	<u>Coachella Valley Ecological Reserve, Expansions 12 and 13, Riverside County</u>	58
33.	<u>French Valley Wildlife Area, Riverside County</u>	60
34.	<u>Mid-State Bank Donation, San Luis Obispo County</u>	63
35.	<u>San Joaquin River Parkway Interpretive Center, Fresno County</u>	65
36.	<u>Wetland Habitat Restoration, East Grasslands (Duck Slough), Merced County</u>	67
37.	<u>Wetland Habitat Restoration, North Grasslands Wildlife Area, Gadwall Unit, Merced County</u>	69
38.	<u>Riparian Habitat Restoration, Sacramento River Wildlife Area, Moulton Weir Unit, Colusa County</u>	71
39.	<u>Oroville Wildlife Area Ponds, Fishing Access Improvements, Butte County</u>	74
40.	<u>Mill Creek, Del Norte County</u>	76
41.	<u>Irish Hills, San Luis Obispo County</u>	81
42.	<u>East Merced Vernal Pool Grasslands Preserve and Expansion 1, Merced and Mariposa Counties</u>	83
43.	<u>Staff Report - Easement Transfers</u>	88
	<u>Program Statement</u>	90

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WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

May 18, 2001

The Wildlife Conservation Board met at the State Capitol, Room 112, Sacramento, California on May 18, 2001. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 A.M. by Mr. Michael Chrisman, President, Fish and Game Commission and Chairman of the Board. At this time he introduced Mr. Robert C. Hight, Director, Department of Fish and Game and Mr. Al Wright, Executive Director of the Board. Mr. Chrisman commented that the Board would be addressing a long agenda and thanked the audience for their attendance and input on the projects being considered today. Mr. Chrisman then turned over the meeting to Mr. Wright. Mr. Wright also welcomed the audience and expressed his appreciation for the audience=s participation in these Board meetings. He reported that since the last Board meeting in February, two new legislative advisory committee members were appointed to the Board, Senator Sheila Kuehl and Assembly Member Hannah-Beth Jackson.

1. Roll Call

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS

Michael Chrisman, Chairperson
President, Fish and Game Commission
Robert C. Hight, Member
Director, Department of Fish and Game

JOINT LEGISLATIVE INTERIM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Syrus Devers
Vice, Senator Sheila Kuehl

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Staff Present: Al Wright
Al Wright, Executive Director
Jim Sarro, Assistant Executive Director
Georgia Lipphardt, Assistant Executive Director

William Gallup, Senior Land Agent
Debra Townsend, Senior Land Agent
Frank Giordano, Senior Land Agent
W. John Schmidt, Retired Annuitant
Linda Drake, Senior Land Agent
Randy Nelson, Senior Land Agent
Ron Boeck, Senior Land Agent
Terri Muzik, Assistant Land Agent
Peter Perrine, Wetland Program Manager
Scott Clemons, Riparian Program Manager
Sean Woods, Public Land Management Specialist
Tony Chappelle, Public Land Management Specialist
Roxanne Woodward, Budget Officer
Gary Cantrell, Staff Services Analyst
Jenny Smith, Staff Services Analyst
Pat Butcher, Office Technician
Jan Beeding, Office Technician
Maureen Rivera, Executive Assistant

Others Present:

Leroy and Clarine Spickelmire
Dee Sudduth, Department of Fish and Game
Don Holtgrieve, CSU Chico Research Foundation
Suzanne Gibbs, Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance
Phil Wallin, River Conservancy
Jeff Carter, CSU Chico Research Foundation
Michael Jones, Bidwell Park Volunteers
J. Jasper Lament, Ducks Unlimited
Richard Lashbrook, Riverside County
Peter Jorris, San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust
Ken Derucher, CSU Chico Research Foundation
Pat Fitzmorris, California Waterfowl Association
Neil Havlik, City of San Luis Obispo
Bob Sharkey, Feather RiverPark District
Grant Werschkull, Smith River Alliance
Glen Williams, American Land Conservancy
Bud Thrapp, Department of Water Resources
Nancy Templeton, Department of Fish and Game
Deborah Dyer, Department of Fish and Game
Jennifer Johnson, The Nature Conservancy
Alan Ehrgott, American River Conservancy
Sam Edwards, ETN, Inc.

Others Present:
(continued)

Jake Jacobson, The Nature Conservancy
Richard Jackson, Department of Fish and Game
Kari Lewis, Department of Fish and Game
Tim Burton, Department of Fish and Game
Gerald Brownfield, Tehama County Public Works

Mike Lydon, Tehama County Public Works
Patty McCleary, Land Trust Alliance
Patricia Brantley, Department of Fish and Game
Liz Borowiec, Environmental Protection Agency
Ramon Vega, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bob Fredenburg, Senator Wesley Chesbro=s Office
Kyra Ross, Assembly Member Howard Wayne=s Office
Bill Thomas, Wood/Lacey Ranches
Kate Kramer, Department of Fish and Game
Lydia Miller, San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center
Kate Anderton, Save-the-Redwoods League
John Bechtel
Caryn Jones
Beth Van Valkenburger
Boyd Clark
Dave Emri
Greg Lowther
Kellie Smith, Senator Jack O=Connell=s Office
Dave Koehler, San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust
Bill Loudermilk, Department of Fish and Game
Chris Hildebrand, Ducks Unlimited
Jim Well, Ducks Unlimited
Dave Patterson, California Waterfowl Association
Banky Curtis, Department of Fish and Game
John Carlon, Sacramento River Partners

2. Funding Status as of May 18, 2001 (Informational)

(1) 2000-01 Wildlife Restoration Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Legislation, San Francisco Baylands Restoration Program Account...\$25,000,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations (50,000.00)
Unallocated Balance\$24,950,000.00

(2) 1999-00 Wildlife Restoration Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget - Land Acquisition.....\$200,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations (2,000.00)
Unallocated Balance\$198,000.00

(c) 1998-99 Wildlife Restoration Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget - Land Acquisition.....\$200,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations (187,937.77)
Unallocated Balance\$12,062.23

(4) 2000-01 Habitat Conservation Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget	\$20,005,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(1,811,425.44)
Unallocated Balance	\$18,193,574.56

(a) 1999-00 Habitat Conservation Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget	\$18,932,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(13,479,886.08)
Unallocated Balance	\$5,452,113.92

(f) 1998-99 Habitat Conservation Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget	\$17,960,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(17,950,020.53)
Unallocated Balance	\$9,979.47

(g) 2000-01 General Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget	\$115,000,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(8,365,000.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$106,635,000.00

(h) 1999-00 General Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget	\$33,100,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(20,238,219.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$12,861,781.00

(1) 1998-99 General Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget	\$4,850,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(4,566,320.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$283,680.00

(10) 1999-00 Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund

Governor=s Budget	\$1,050,000.00
Less Previous Board Allocations	(700,000.00)
Unallocated Balance	\$350,000.00

(11) 2000-01 Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Bond Fund (River Protection Subaccount)

Governor=s Budget\$24,000,000.00
 Less Previous Board Allocations(7,340,000.00)
 Unallocated Balance\$16,660,000.00

(l) 2000-01 Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund Capital Outlay Budget

Governor=s Budget\$216,125,000.00
 Less Previous Board Allocations(27,580,820.00)
 Unallocated Balance\$188,544,180.00

Governor=s Budget (San Joaquin River Conservancy Projects)\$14,562,000.00
 Less Previous Board Allocations(75,000.00)
 Unallocated Balance\$14,487,000.00

(m)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 Previous Board Allocations(7,163,770.00)
 Unallocated Balance\$30,836,230.00

RECAP OF FUND BALANCES

Wildlife Restoration Fund (a), (b) and (c)\$25,160,062.23
Habitat Conservation Fund (d), (e) and (f)\$21,950,667.95
General Fund (g), (h) and (i)\$123,369,441.00
Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund (j)\$350,000.00
Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Bond Fund (k)\$16,660,000.00
Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (l) and (m)\$233,861,410.00

RECAP OF NATURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT ACT OF 2000

Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000

Total Tax Credit Available, Chapter 113, Statutes of 2000.....	\$100,000,000.00
Less Previous Board Approved Tax Credit for Donated Property.....	<u>(0.00)</u>
Tax Credit Available.....	\$100,000,000.00

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 informational item at the next meeting.

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

General Fund.....	\$90,000.00
Habitat Conservation Fund	\$17,600.00
Wildlife Restoration Fund.....	\$12,000.00
Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund	\$40,000.00

Mr. Wright briefly explained the above informational items and asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

4. Proposed Consent Calendar (Items 5 - 19 and 21 - 28)

Mr. Wright reported that the Board received several letters of support for various projects on this consent calendar, including letters from the Endangered Habitat League in support of the Lakeside Linkages project and letters from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, California Native Plant Society, and Jeffery Mott, with the UC Davis Watershed Center and Project Director of Calfed Sponsored Cosumnes Research Group, in support of the Leek Springs project. He added that the Board received letters from Senator Johannessen and Assembly Member Dickerson supporting the public access projects at Woodson Bridge and Mill Creek, in addition to letters from the California Waterfowl Association and the

Sacramento River Preservation Trust in support of several wetland habitat restoration projects, public access projects along the Sacramento River, and the conservation easement which would result in restoration activities at Cherokee Farms in Butte County. Mr. Wright read from a letter by John Merz, Chair of the Board of Directors, Sacramento River Preservation Trust, wherein he commented that the Trust was encouraged by the number of projects along the various tributaries of the Sacramento River and complimented the staff for work well done.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve Consent Calendar items 5 through 19 and 21 through 28, as proposed.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve Consent Calendar items 5 through 19 and 21 through 28, as proposed in the individual agenda explanations, including funding as noted therein.

Motion carried.

*5. Approval of Minutes - February 23, 2001

Staff recommended that the minutes of the February 23, 2001 meeting of the Wildlife Conservation Board be approved as written.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the minutes of the February 23, 2001 Board meeting 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. It was recommended that the following totals be recovered and that the projects be closed.

\$740.00 to the General Fund
\$13,617.00 to the Habitat Conservation Fund
\$120.00 to the Wildlife Restoration Fund
\$26,728.00 to the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund

GENERAL FUND

Bayview Ecological Reserve, San Luis Obispo County

Allocated		\$5,715,000.00
Expended		<u>-5,715,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery		\$0.00

Goleta Fishing Pier Improvements, Santa Barbara County

Allocated		\$110,250.00
Expended		<u>-110,250.00</u>
Balance for Recovery		\$0.00

Carmel Mountain (Torrey Surf), San Diego County

Allocated		\$10,000.00
Expended		<u>-9,260.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$740.00	

Total General Fund Recoveries \$740.00

HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND

Blue Ridge-Berryessa Wildlife Area, Napa and Yolo Counties

Allocated		\$1,243,000.00
Expended	<u>-1,235,309.75</u>	
Balance for Recovery		\$7,690.25

Butte Valley Wildlife Area (Meiss Lake Conservation Easements), Siskiyou County

Allocated		\$95,000.00
Expended		<u>-89,353.25</u>
Balance for Recovery		\$5,646.75

Cache Creek Wildlife Area, Lake and Colusa Counties

Allocated		\$300,000.00
Expended		<u>-300,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00	

Colton Dunes Ecological Reserve, San Bernardino County

Allocated		\$801,000.00
Expended		<u>-800,720.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$280.00	

Total Habitat Conservation Fund Recoveries.....\$13,617.00

WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUND

Canebrake Ecological Reserve Public Access (So. Fork Kern River, Kern County)

Allocated		\$160,120.00
Expended		<u>-160,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$120.00	

Total Wildlife Restoration Fund Recoveries.....\$120.00

SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS, CLEAN WATER, CLEAN AIR & COASTAL PROTECTION BOND FUND

Carmel Mountain, Torrey Surf, San Diego County

Allocated		\$604,000.00
Expended		<u>-604,000.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$0.00	

Iron Mountain Wildlife Area (Boys and Girls Club), San Diego County

Allocated		\$3,830,000.00
Expended		<u>-3,808,272.00</u>
Balance for Recovery		\$21,728.00

Lakeside Linkages, Exp. # 4, San Diego County

Allocated		\$81,500.00
Expended		<u>-76,500.00</u>
Balance for Recovery	\$5,000.00	

Total Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and

Coastal Protection Bond Fund Recoveries\$26,728.00

OTHER

Cantara-Ney Springs Wildlife Area, Cantara Loop Exp. # 1, Siskiyou County

Allocated		\$290,000.00
Expended	<u>-290,000.00</u>	
Balance for Recovery		\$.00

At the August 10, 2000 meeting of the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Board approved the acceptance of Cantara Trustee Council funds into a designated escrow account for the purpose of land acquisition. This entry is to close the project for the Board.

*7. Lakeside Linkages, Expansion 5, San Diego County \$105,000.00

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the County of San Diego to be applied toward its acquisition of an 11.8" 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.

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 five properties previously acquired by the county and the Board, comprise the Lakeside Linkages. These properties wind through the community of Lakeside, extending in the north from Lake Jennings, to the DFG=s Crestridge Ecological Area lying south of Interstate 8. 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 can be accessed from the end of Bluestone Drive. Coastal sage scrub dominates the vegetation on the site which is suitable for gnatcatchers and other sensitive animal and plant species. The site is a moderately steep hillside, with the top of the property being one of the highest elevation points in the Lakeside linkage. Its elevation, habitat and location make it a particularly desirable parcel and quite important to the overall linkage. The eastern one-third of the property is zoned for residential use and a minor subdivision of the property is feasible.

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 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 development of foot trails to provide for passive recreational use 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.

The property owners have agreed to sell the subject 11.8" acre property to provide permanent corridor protection at the approved, appraised fair market value of \$200,000.00. The proposed grant to the county would provide \$100,000.00 to be applied toward the acquisition. In addition to the proposed \$100,000.00 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 \$105,000.00. 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 for the purchase of the property. 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 grant to the County of San Diego to be applied toward the acquisition of the 11.8" acres as proposed; allocate \$105,000.00 from the General Fund - NCCP to cover the grant amount 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the grant to the County of San Diego to be applied toward the acquisition of the 11.8" acres as proposed; allocate \$105,000.00 from the General Fund - NCCP to cover the grant amount 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.

- *8. San Joaquin River Restoration Augmentation \$150,000.00
(Parkway Exotics Removal), Fresno and Madera Counties

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Inc. (Trust), for a cooperative project to restore habitat values to the San Joaquin River Parkway (Parkway). The proposed grant would augment a prior grant to the Trust which was awarded by the Board in 1999. The augmentation would provide funds to continue the exotics removal work of the original grant and, in addition, would provide funds to conduct trash and debris removal on the entire 22-mile reach of the San Joaquin River Parkway. The 6,000-acre Parkway, nearly two-thirds of which is privately owned, is located on both sides of the San Joaquin River downstream from Friant Dam to Highway 99 in Fresno and Madera Counties.

The Board has been involved with this section of the San Joaquin River for more than 50 years. In 1949, the Board approved funds for the construction of a trout hatchery just below Friant Dam and a public fishing access site was completed in 1961. Beginning in 1988, the Board began an acquisition program in this reach of the river, using funds specifically designated for this purpose in Proposition 70, a voter-approved bond act. More than 1,500 acres have been approved for acquisition since then, and more than 340 acres of wetlands and riparian habitat have been restored.

In 1999, the Wildlife Conservation Board granted the Trust \$17,060.00 to begin an effort to remove three non-native invasive weeds, Arundo (*Arundo donax*), tamarisk (*Tamarisk* spp.) and scarlet wisteria (*Sesbania punicea*). This grant was matched by \$11,000.00 from the US Bureau of Reclamation and over 1,400 volunteer hours to date, valued at approximately \$11,200.00. The Trust coordinated with the PG&E Corporation to provide a \$25,000.00 grant to the California Conservation Corps to support the Trust's effort. A portion of the cost of biomass disposal was donated by waste management companies. The locations of the three target species were mapped and much of the plant materials removed. Even with these efforts, however, complete control of these three weed species is incomplete.

In addition to the exotics removal, the Trust is involved in another Parkway-wide habitat improvement effort. In 1997 the San Joaquin River Conservancy (Conservancy) granted the Trust \$10,000.00 to coordinate river cleanups along the San Joaquin River Parkway. This grant has been leveraged with two grants from the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District and disposal service donations from the City of Fresno and Millerton State Park. River cleanups contribute to the ongoing activities of the Trust by improving the quality of wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities in the river bottom. The events are

tremendous vehicles for community involvement and educating volunteer participants about the importance of caring for our natural resources. These large events and more routine cleanups throughout the year continue to have a beneficial effect, as each year there is less trash and debris to clear.

Because both the river cleanup and the invasive weed removal projects include the need for significant volunteer coordination, the disposal of solid waste and involve the entire 22 mile Parkway reach, blending the projects under the grant augmentation will result in more efficient use of staff, volunteers and materials. The invasive exotic weed removal program will remain focused on the same three plant species identified in the previous Board action. The Trust will conduct additional landowner outreach and initiate a public education effort focused on wisteria. The Trust will continue to coordinate a spring and fall river cleanup event each year and, in addition to the semiannual events, there will be routine cleanups of Parkway properties. The grant augmentation will be used to cover disposal costs, both for plant material and debris. Native vegetation is expected to respond quickly and naturally after the removal of exotics and debris, though in some cases, cuttings of native willows and cottonwoods will be planted to speed recovery.

As with the original invasive exotics removal program, the Trust will notify all landowners, both public and private, for approval to enter the property prior to beginning any removal or cleanup program. Private landowners will also receive educational information that will describe the project, identify the species to be removed, explain the ecological problems associated with invasive exotics, recommend removal methods, and request permission to enter the property to perform the needed work. Where landowners refuse access, no removal will be initiated, but these sites will be documented in the final report. An outreach brochure on weeds known to be invasive in central valley riparian zones is being developed and will be distributed to local nurseries.

Control of exotic plants and debris removal will take place over the course of three growing seasons, with the goal of completely eliminating all three species from the Parkway by October of 2004. During that same time period, the Trust expects to bring the debris to a level that will require minimal annual maintenance. Trust led canoe trips, conducted on the Parkway every weekend throughout the summer, will be used to monitor the site over the next few years, and trash and individual non-native plants will be removed as they appear.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Cost Estimate</u>
Labor	\$67,000.00
Contracts for weed removal	35,000.00
Volunteers (In-kind)	80,000.00
Disposal expenses	40,000.00
Equipment	2,000.00

Outreach costs	5,000.00
Travel	1,000.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$230,000.00</u>

Proposed Funding Breakdown:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$150,000.00
River Parkway Trust (In-kind)	80,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$230,000.00</u>

The Wildlife Conservation Board's (Board) 1999/00 budget contains General Fund monies with control language directing that these funds be used for San Joaquin River Conservancy Projects and acquisitions. Consistent with the intent of the budget act, the Conservancy has requested that the Board grant \$150,000.00 of the funds provided, to the Trust to allow for the continuation of two Parkway-wide programs.

Staff recommended that the Board accept the recommendation of the San Joaquin River Conservancy Board and approve this project as proposed; allocate \$150,000.00 from the General Fund account established in the 1999/00 Wildlife Conservation Board budget for the San Joaquin River Conservancy Projects; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this work; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board accept the recommendation of the San Joaquin River Conservancy Board and approve this project as proposed; allocate \$150,000.00 from the General Fund account established in the 1999/00 Wildlife Conservation Board budget for the San Joaquin River Conservancy Projects; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this work; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *9. Wetlands Habitat Restoration, South Grasslands \$19,100.00
(Britto Land Company, E.T.N., Inc. and Riverfield Cattle Company), Merced County

This proposal was to consider an allocation of funds for a grant to Ducks Unlimited (DU) for a cooperative project to restore and manage 637" acres of seasonal wetland habitats on three private properties (Britto Land Company, E.T.N., Inc., and Riverfield Cattle Company) located in the Grasslands Ecological Area of the San Joaquin Valley, approximately six miles southeast of the town of Los Banos in Merced County. The project will enhance 200 acres of wetlands within a 648-acre property owned by the Britto Land Company, 95" acres of wetlands on property owned by E.T.N., Inc., and 342" acres of wetlands on property owned by the Riverfield Cattle Company. All three of these properties are operated as private duck

hunting clubs, and the projects will be managed by the landowners after construction is completed. Each landowner has agreed to manage and maintain the project improvements on their lands for 25 years.

The Central Valley and associated wetlands are host to over 60 percent of wintering and migrating Pacific Flyway waterfowl. Private duck clubs of the San Joaquin Valley are an important component of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV). The Board, acting through the partnerships in the CVHJV, has participated in funding many successful wetland habitat protection and restoration projects on public and private lands in the Grasslands Ecological Area. The Grasslands Ecological Area has recently received two North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants, which were partially sponsored by the Board, and which have provided funding to enhance and restore approximately 50,000 acres of wetlands.

The proposed project builds on these prior restoration and enhancement efforts in the Grassland area and involves similar activities on all three properties, primarily improving water management capabilities to facilitate better moist soil management. Planned improvements include constructing swales, loafing islands and submerged islands, replacing dilapidated water control structures, cleaning out water delivery ditches, and raising existing levees. These activities will result in more diverse habitats and food production for migrating and wintering waterfowl, especially northern pintails, green-winged teal, mallards and gadwall, as well as a large number of resident waterfowl and shore-birds.

This project will help achieve the wetland habitat restoration goals of the Department of Fish and Game, the CVHJV, and the Inland Wetlands Conservation Program. The project sites are part of an extensive complex of state and federal habitat areas in the Grasslands Ecological Area, including the state's Los Banos and Volta State Wildlife Areas, and all three of the properties are protected by permanent conservation easements held by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Cost estimates for this proposal which have been developed by Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and reviewed by staff are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>	<u>WCB Share</u>
Survey, Design and Project Management	\$5,040.00	\$2,632.00
Water Control Structures (3) and Installation	4,415.00	2,703.00
Earthwork	21,970.00	9,840.00
Discing	2,000.00	740.00
Contingency	6,685.00	3,185.00

<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$40,110.00</u>	<u>\$19,100.00</u>
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Proposed Funding Breakdown:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$19,100.00
Landowner Contributions	11,010.00
US Fish and Wildlife Service/ US Bureau of Reclamation	10,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$40,110.00</u>

The Department has reviewed the proposed project and has recommended Board approval.

Consistent with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, this project is categorically exempt under Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration to land to benefit fish and wildlife and the appropriate notice has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the grant as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$19,100.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetland Conservation Program); 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 Mr. Robert C. Hight that the Board approve the grant as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$19,100.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetland Conservation Program); and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *10. Suisun Marsh Waterfowl Production and Enhancement, Phase 2 \$160,000.00
Solano County

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU), for a cooperative project to restore managed wetlands and associated upland nesting habitat in the Suisun Marsh, with a specific goal of improving habitats for breeding waterfowl. The Suisun Marsh is 116,000 contiguous acres of seasonal wetlands, uplands, bays, sloughs and tidal brackish marsh located generally south of Suisun City and north of the Sacramento River in southern Solano County. The partners in this proposal include the Suisun Resource Conservation District (SRCD), DU, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Dean Witter Foundation, the Harvey L. and Maud C. Sorensen Foundation, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and the Board. More than 15,000 acres of the Marsh is owned and managed by the DFG, most of the rest being privately-owned uplands and managed wetlands or publicly-owned bays and slough channels.

The Suisun Marsh is a jewel of still-natural habitat in the generally degraded condition of California's once magnificent landscapes. The total 116,000 acres includes 52,000 acres of managed wetlands, 6,000 acres of unmanaged wetlands, 30,000 acres of bays and sloughs and 28,000 acres of uplands, all protected under the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act of 1977, which ensures that wetland uses will be perpetuated. Comprising nearly 12 percent of California's remaining natural wetlands, the Marsh provides critical habitat for more than 200 species of birds, 43 species of mammals and at least seven state or federal listed species.

In addition, the Marsh is home to a free ranging herd of tule elk and provides for a wide variety of recreational activities, including some of the best hunting and fishing in the state.

The Marsh is known for its numbers of wintering waterfowl, including tule geese, mallards, pintails and shovelers. However, nesting waterfowl populations in the Marsh have declined over the years. With a specific goal of increasing these numbers, the Board approved a proposal to enter into a partnership to restore waterfowl nesting and brood habitat in May of 1998. DU and the SRCD, in cooperation with the DFG, designed a cost share program where DU, the Board, the landowners, and the two foundations each would supply a percentage of the cost of restoration. Each landowner interested in participating in the program submits a description of the proposed work to be done on his or her land. DU, DFG and SRCD jointly evaluates each proposal and approves those that most closely matched the specific goals of the program. During the first year, 35 projects were approved to restore more than 4,000 acres of wetlands; the second year those numbers grew to 42 private landowners restoring more than 7,600 acres.

The goals of the program are quite specific. Normal, year-to-year maintenance is not eligible for funding under this program; instead, only those activities that clearly provide improvements over the existing conditions are accepted. These activities include creation of brood ponds, the construction of new water circulation or drainage, providing additional water conveyance, installation of new water control structures and seeding of upland habitats to provide additional nesting cover. Management plans are prepared for each participating club and the landowners agree to maintain the sites, with oversight from the DU, SRCD and DFG.

The proposed \$160,000.00 state grant to continue these restoration projects will leverage an additional \$400,000.00 from the landowners and the other partners over a two-year period. This partnership, with the long-term commitment of the landowners to maintain these improvements, will provide cost effective and vital restoration of this important area. Proposed funding breakdown is as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$160,000.00
California Coastal Conservancy	160,000.00
Landowners	120,000.00
Dean Witter Foundation	60,000.00

Harvey L. and Maud C. Sorensen Foundation	60,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$560,000.00</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 for each project, and all projects will comply with the SRCD Regional Permit for the Suisun Marsh, approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Each landowner will sign a site specific agreement to manage and maintain the property for 25 years. If at any time during the life of any specific project, the landowner is unable to manage and maintain the project improvements, he or she will refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$160,000.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetlands Conservation Program); authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$160,000.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetlands Conservation Program); authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *11. Napa-Sonoma Wildlife Area, Solano County \$ -0-

This proposal was to consider the transfer of control and possession of 1.2" acres of land within Department of Fish and Game=s Napa-Sonoma Wildlife Area (White Slough Unit) to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the widening of Highway 37 (also known as Marine World Parkway) in Vallejo, California. The parcel is located adjacent to Highway 37 on the north side just east of Sacramento Street.

The approved fair market value of the property is \$4,300.00. This value is based on an appraisal submitted by Caltrans. There are no Department of Fish and Game costs associated with this transaction. 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 transfer of the property as proposed; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve transfer of the property as proposed; 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.

- *12. Leek Springs Valley Ecological Reserve, El Dorado County \$175,000.00

This proposal was to consider a cooperatively funded project with the Packard Foundation for the acquisition of 160.59 acres of private land in the Leek Springs Valley area in El Dorado County for the protection of habitat for threatened and endangered species and montane wet meadow habitat. The property is located at the headwaters of the North Fork Cosumnes River, more specifically, 66 miles due east of Sacramento in El Dorado County at 7200 feet in elevation. The property is one-tenth mile southwest of Iron Mountain Road and approximately two miles west of the junction of Iron Mountain Road and Highway 88.

The property contains the largest montane wet meadow in the Upper Cosumnes River Basin. Additionally, the property is probable habitat for Moonwarts and sub-alpine fireweed and sightings of the hidden-petal campeon have been made in the vicinity. Protected areas for the California Spotted Owl and the Northern Goshawk are within a one-mile radius of the property. The property is also suitable habitat for the Willow flycatcher, Great grey owl, marten and Sierra Nevada red fox.

The property, if acquired, will be managed by the Department of Fish and Game and will offer an opportunity for expanded research and educational opportunities. The Cosumnes Research Group, a multi-disciplinary coalition of university and agency researchers has found the meadows= hydrologic and biologic value is Aunmatched anywhere else in the basin.@ The group has indicated that the subject property would be an ideal location for study in the hydrogeomorphic and water quality monitoring program and have requested access to the property for purposes of providing a site for field studies course work and expanded research.

The American River Conservancy (ARC) has purchased the property and has agreed to sell the property to the state at below the Department of General Services= approved appraised value of \$388,000.00. The total sales price is \$325,000.00. The WCB will contribute \$162,500.00 toward this purchase and the Packard Foundation will provide \$162,500.00 in matching funds. It is estimated that an additional \$12,500.00 will be needed for Department of General Services= review charges, title and escrow company fees. The project is exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of the subject property as

proposed; allocate \$175,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund [Section 2786 (e/f)] to cover acquisition costs and to pay for project expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to complete 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the acquisition of the subject property as proposed; allocate \$175,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund [Section 2786 (e/f)] to cover acquisition costs and to pay for project expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to complete this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *13. Wohler Bridge Public Access Improvements, Sonoma County \$17,270.00

This proposal was to consider a cooperative project with the County of Sonoma (county) to improve public access at the Wohler Bridge Public Access site, located on the Russian River approximately eight miles upstream of the City of Guerneville in Sonoma County.

The Wohler Bridge Public Access site is a 9-acre parcel located on the right bank of the Russian River immediately upstream of the Wohler Bridge. It is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency and is a popular destination for boaters fishing for steelhead. The site has extensive riparian habitat as well as a redwood grove and is also used by bank anglers, nature enthusiasts, and picnickers, with an estimated 42,000 visitor use days tabulated here in 1999.

In 1988, the Board approved funding for development of the site, including construction of a parking area, a fence around the parking area, an access road and a small boat ramp for launching smaller boats. The Board also entered into a 25-year License and Operating Agreement with the county to operate and maintain the site.

The proposed project will enhance public access at the site by making several improvements. The existing parking lot has both a footpath to the river and a roadway for boaters wishing to launch small boats in the river. The road is locked year round and users must first obtain a key from the county to use the road access. Currently, a portion of the access road has been paved with an asphalt concrete mix, however, a significant section is unpaved and becomes rutted and erosive in the rainy months. Project improvements include paving the road and turnaround area, and replacing the existing gate, which is difficult to open, with a new gate. Further improvements include paving and widening the existing footpath to allow for year round wheelchair access to the river, without having to use the road, and relocation of the barrier-free parking area to satisfy the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. In addition, the boat launching area is extremely rutted and muddy and will be compacted with small rocks to improve the launching surface.

Cost estimates for this proposal which have been developed by the county and reviewed by staff are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Design/Project Management	\$ 1,435.00
Mobilization	1,500.00
Disabled parking space: striping and sign	500.00
Path from parking lot to access road	7,500.00
Gate	250.00
Pave access road and boat turn around area	1,920.00
Gravel for boat ramp	480.00
Sign	2,000.00
Contingencies	1,415.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$17,000.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the allocation by the Board for the project to \$17,270.00.

The Department has reviewed the proposal and supports the proposed improvements. The county has agreed to extend the existing Operating Agreement with the state to 2023. Consistent with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, this project is categorically exempt under Section 15301(c) and (d), as maintenance and minor upgrades to existing facilities and an appropriate notice has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$17,270.00 from the General Fund for project costs and General Services review costs; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$17,270.00 from the General Fund for project costs and General Services review costs; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *14. Hudeman Slough Public Fishing Access Improvements, Sonoma County \$21,870.00

This proposal was to consider a cooperative project with County of Sonoma (County) to improve public access at the Department of Fish and Game=s Hudeman Slough Public Fishing Access site, located on Hudeman Slough approximately four miles southeast of the City of Sonoma.

The Hudeman Slough Public Fishing Access site is a 4.44 acre area located on the north side of Hudeman Slough just west of Scaggs Island Road in Sonoma County. The site is a popular boat launching facility for anglers with an estimated 16,500 visitor use days

accumulated in 1999. In 1961 and 1962, the Board approved funding for acquisition and development of the site. Development included construction of a parking area, boat ramp, boarding float and restroom. In 1986, the Board approved funding to upgrade the facilities, which included renovating the ramp, constructing a new float, gangway and access pier, paving the entrance road and parking lot and constructing a restroom facility. The Board also entered into a 25-year Operating Agreement with the county to operate and maintain the site.

The proposed project will enhance public access at the site by making several improvements. Currently, there is a significant vertical gap between the existing gangway and the boarding float which prevents access to the boarding float for people in wheelchairs. In order to close this gap, the gangway will be replaced with one which joins more closely with the boarding float. To further assist handicapped users of the boarding float, a safety curb and a transfer module will be installed. In addition, a portion of the paved approach to the gangway, which has eroded away, will be repaired and repaved. Additional improvements include delineation of handicapped parking spaces in the parking area.

Cost estimates for this proposal, which have been developed by the county and reviewed by staff, are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Design/Project Management	\$ 1,816.00
Mobilization	1,600.00
Disabled parking space: striping and sign	750.00
Aluminum gangway	8,500.00
Retaining wall	400.00
AC patch and overlay	234.00
Transfer module	3,000.00
Safety curb with cleats	1,500.00
Sign	2,000.00
Contingencies	1,800.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$21,600.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the allocation by the Board for the project to \$21,870.00.

The Department has reviewed the proposal and supports the proposed improvements. The County of Sonoma will handle the contract administration for the construction of the improvements and has agreed to extend the Operating Agreement to 2022. Consistent with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, this project is categorically exempt under Section 15301(d) and 15302(c), as maintenance and minor upgrades to existing facilities and an appropriate notice has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter

into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$21,870.00 from the General Fund for project costs and General Services= review costs; 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 Mr. Robert C. Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$21,870.00 from the General Fund for project costs and General Services= review costs; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *15. Bear River Fishing Access Improvements, Placer County \$80,070.00

This proposal was to consider a cooperative project with County of Placer (County) to construct barrier-free restroom facilities at the Department of Fish and Game=s (Department=s) Bear River Fishing Access site located on the left bank of the Bear River approximately three miles southwest of the city of Colfax in Placer County.

The Bear River Fishing Access site consists of approximately 264 acres on both sides of the Bear River in Placer and Nevada counties, with about 4.5 miles of river frontage. The access area is a very popular spot for campers and fishermen with an estimated 70,000 visitor use days accumulated in 1999. In 1966, the Board approved funding to acquire and develop the fishing access area with an access road and a parking area. The Board entered into a 30-year Operating Agreement with the county to operate and maintain the site and the county subsequently made further improvements by installing chemical toilets and other day-use facilities. In 1982 and 1983, the Board allocated a total of \$31,500.00 to repair and stabilize eroding banks at the site. In 1997, the Board and the county renewed and extended the Operating Agreement to 2017.

The proposed project will improve public access at the site by replacing three restrooms which have been in use since 1968. Not only are these facilities more than 30 years old, they are not accessible to people in wheelchairs. The new restrooms will be constructed according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines and will be accessible for a greater number of visitors. The project will also delineate a handicapped parking stall adjacent to the day-use area restroom further benefitting public access. In addition, the county has agreed to extend the existing Operating Agreement to 2022. The proposed project will further the goals of the Department=s ADA Facilities Modification Program.

Cost estimates for this proposal which have been developed by the County and reviewed by staff are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Demolition	\$ 12,000.00
Debris Disposal	3,000.00
Precast Vault Restrooms	88,500.00
Handicapped Parking Sign	100.00
Concrete Slab in front of restrooms	1,500.00
Administration/Project Management	7,500.00
Contingencies	7,200.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$119,800.00</u>
<u>Proposed Funding Breakdown</u>	
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$79,800.00
County of Placer	\$40,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$119,800.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the allocation necessary for the Board=s portion of the project to \$80,070.00. The Department has reviewed the proposal and supports the proposed improvements. Consistent with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, this project is categorically exempt under Article 19, Section 15302(b), as a replacement of existing structures and an appropriate notice has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$80,070.00 from the General Fund for project costs and General Services review costs; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$80,070.00 from the General Fund for project costs and General Services= review costs; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

*16. Wetland Habitat Restoration, 2017 Ranch, Colusa County \$198,000.00

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the California Waterfowl Association (CWA), a nonprofit conservation organization, for a cooperative project to restore approximately 350 acres of seasonal wetlands, 158 acres of upland nesting habitat, 50 acres of waterfowl brood habitat, and 50 acres of riparian forest habitat, located on private property located approximately two miles southeast of College City and approximately two miles north of the intersection of Grieve Road and White Road, extending for approximately two miles along the west side of the Colusa Basin Drainage Canal in Colusa County.

The 2017 Ranch is currently operated as a commercial safflower farm and hunting club, and the ground has been leveled and farmed traditionally as commercial rice. The property is protected by a perpetual conservation easement under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Wetlands Reserve Program. The WCB grant requires the site be managed pursuant to a 30-year habitat management plan that includes spring and fall monitoring review by Department of Fish and Game (Department) staff. Project partners include the landowners, NRCS, the Department, and the Wildlife Conservation Board (Board).

Previous Board actions in the area surrounding this property have included a grant to CWA in 1997 to restore approximately 80 acres of wetland habitat, approximately 206 acres of upland and riparian habitat, and to prepare approximately 100 acres of commercial crop ground for rice and other cereal grains. That property, known as the Wilmarth property, is located on the west side of the Colusa Basin Drainage Canal, approximately three miles north of the subject property.

The 2017 Ranch is located in the heart of the Colusa Basin, and area recently identified by members of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture as a focal point for wetland restoration. The property borders a complex of 1,280 acres of extremely productive wetland and associated upland habitat to the south, which is permanently protected under the Wetland Reserve Program. The restoration of the 2017 Ranch would result in the protection, restoration and long-term management of nearly 1,900 acres of contiguous wetland habitat that includes a five-mile corridor of riparian habitat along the Colusa Basin Drainage Canal. The two adjacent wetland properties, White Road Ranch and Border Tule-Kalfsbeek Ranch, are both enrolled in the Department's Waterfowl Habitat Program. The subject project will include construction and refurbishing of wetland unit levees, ditches, flashboard riser water control structures, channels or swales that meander through the restored wetland units, and planting of tules, willows and cottonwoods throughout the restored wetlands. The designated upland habitat areas will be established and maintained through periodic discing, re-planting, irrigation and mowing. Water will be supplied from an existing well and from the Colusa

Basin Drainage Canal. Long-term management of the wetland areas will be accomplished by the landowners, with technical assistance and monitoring provided by the NRCS and the Department.

This project will provide year-round benefits to wildlife, including breeding ducks, neotropical migrant landbirds, and ground-nesting resident game and non-game birds, and will provide suitable loafing areas for wintering waterfowl. The project contributes to the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Implementation Plan by restoring and permanently protecting 604 acres of seasonal wetlands, permanent wetlands, riparian habitat and upland nesting habitat.

Estimated costs for the proposed project have been reviewed by staff and the Department, and are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Earthwork (122,350 cu.yds.)	\$152,936.00
Materials-Water Control Structures	4,700.00
Materials - Discharge Pipes	9,000.00
Installation of screwgate, culvert and flashboard risers and sign	6,062.00
Vegetation Restoration	43,160.00
Project Management	20,372.00
Contingencies	20,000.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$256,230.00</u>
 <u>Proposed Funding Partners:</u>	
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$198,000.00
Landowner	53,980.00
NRCS	4,250.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$256,230.00</u>

Contributions also include NRCS paying \$1,108,369.00 and CWA paying \$99,631.00 for the permanent conservation easement under the Wetlands Reserve Program. In addition, the landowners are contributing funding for materials and vegetation restoration, and NRCS is contributing to the project management cost.

The Department's Comprehensive Wetland Habitat Program has developed the management plan for this project, and the Department recommends approval of the funding for the project. This project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, under Class 4, Section 15304 (minor alteration of land that will benefit fish and wildlife), and the appropriate notice has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$198,000.00

from the General Fund, Inland Wetland Conservation Program; 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.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$198,000.00 from the General Fund, Inland Wetland Conservation Program; 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.

- *17. Sacramento Valley Refuge, Glenn County \$2,500.00

This proposal was to consider the acceptance of a Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) Grant, and the subsequent assignment of the grant to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to assist in a cooperative project to acquire 36" acres of land for protection and expansion of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge.

The property is located in Glenn County, at the northeast quadrant of Interstate 5 and Norman Road, approximately 10 miles south of Willows. Located east and adjacent to the property is the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, with its main headquarters located just north of the Interstate 5/Norman Road interchange.

The property is 36" acres in size and unimproved. Wildlife supported by the property includes alkali vernal pools, meadows, annual grasses, native plant species and habitat for migrating waterfowl. The property has commercial zoning and due to its proximity between the the Refuge and Interstate 5, could be developed with improvements and lighting, having an adverse impact on wildlife in the refuge. Acquisition of the property will help maintain a buffer and view shed between the Refuge and Interstate 5.

The proposed TEA grant is for \$111,000.00 and will be deposited directly into escrow. The fair market value of the property, as approved by the Department of General Services (DGS), is \$125,000.00. The difference of \$14,000.00 will be donated by the current owner, The Nature Conservancy, representing the non-federal match required by the TEA grant program.

An additional \$2,500.00 will be needed for DGS review fees. Title will be conveyed to USFWS at the close of escrow. The California Department of Transportation, managing the TEA program, has obtained approval and authorization to fund the grant from the California Transportation Commission, as an agenda item at their March 29, 2001 meeting . The USFWS and the Department of Fish and Game are highly supportive of the project.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acceptance of the TEA grant as proposed; authorize the assignment of the TEA grant to USFWS for its purchase of 36" acres; allocate \$2,500.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act, Section 5096.350 (a)(2), to pay for DGS review costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to complete this project; and authorize staff to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the acceptance of the TEA grant as proposed; authorize the assignment of the TEA grant to USFWS for its purchase of 36" acres; allocate \$2,500.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act, Section 5096.350 (a)(2), to pay for DGS review costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to complete this project; and authorize staff to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *18. Wetland Habitat Restoration, Honcut Creek (McCorkle Ranch), \$110,000.00
Butte County

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the California Waterfowl Association (CWA) for a cooperative project to restore wetlands on approximately 311 acres of privately-owned land. The partners include the CWA, landowner, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Department of Fish and Game (Department) and the Board. The project is located approximately fifteen miles north of the City of Marysville, twelve miles east of the Department=s Gray Lodge Wildlife Area and approximately five air miles from the southern end of the Oroville Wildlife Area.

Honcut Creek area has been of particular interest to the Board and the Department in recent years. The varied topography of the area and the mixture of high quality riparian, wetlands and wildlife friendly farming practices make this area one of the most productive areas for a variety of wildlife in the State. Since 1991, the Wildlife Conservation Board has acquired a number of conservation easements in this area, protecting nearly 2,000 acres of this valuable habitat in perpetuity.

In November 1998, the Wildlife Conservation Board acquired a conservation easement on the subject parcel. The acquisition resulted in the elimination of commercial agricultural uses and provided that the property be maintained for wildlife habitat in perpetuity. Based on these requirements, Department staff have developed a management plan for the property. The CWA, in consultation with the Department, the NRCS and the landowner, developed a restoration plan for restoring the old rice fields to seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands and enhancing upland areas for nesting waterfowl and other birds.

The proposed project will restore approximately 311 acres of wetlands and adjacent uplands.

Specifically, the work plan calls for the replacement or repair of four wells, the removal of existing straight rice levees, the creation of a more natural appearing system of levees and swales, and the planting of tules and upland grasslands. After the restoration is complete, the area should support a suite of species, with waterfowl and shorebirds being the most numerous and obvious beneficiaries. Species benefitting from this project will include migrating populations of northern pintail, American avocets, northern shovelers and a variety of shorebirds and breeding populations of sora rails, mallards, cinnamon teal and gadwall. Uplands will be improved, with the intent of providing nesting habitat for waterfowl and other birds such as pheasants and meadowlarks. The project lies within the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture=s (CVHJV) American Basin. The CVHJV Implementation Plan calls for the protection and restoration of 10,000 acres of restorable lands within the American Basin, and this project will contribute towards the restoration objective.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Site preparation and earthmoving	\$36,000.00
Water control structures	6,400.00
Water supply pipes	15,000.00
Replace four well pumps	72,000.00
Test wells	8,400.00
Lift pump, sprinklers, pipes and valves	19,500.00
Fees and permits	2,600.00
Diesel pump cover	4,300.00
Upland and tule seeding/planting	11,600.00
Project design and management	10,000.00
Contingencies	13,000.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$198,800.00</u>
 <u>Proposed Funding Breakdown</u>	
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$110,000.00
Natural Resources Conservation Service	40,500.00
Landowner	48,300.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$198,800.00</u>

The Department of Fish Game has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the Board. This project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15304, as it is a minor alteration of land for wildlife benefit. The landowner has agreed to manage and maintain the improvements on the property for 25 years, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Habitat Management Plan. If, at any time during the life of the project, the landowners are unable to manage and maintain the project improvements, they will refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$110,000.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetland Conservation Program); authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$110,000.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetland Conservation Program); authorize staff 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.

- *19. Riparian Habitat Restoration Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area, \$329,000.00
Howard Slough Unit, Glenn County

This proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the California Waterfowl Association (CWA) for a cooperative agreement with CWA and the Department of Fish and Game (Department) to restore approximately 51 acres of riparian habitat and 69 acres of upland habitat in the Department-owned Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area, Howard Slough Unit. The project is located adjacent to Butte Creek, approximately 5 miles east of Butte City in Glenn County.

The Wildlife Area and is managed by the Department to provide critical wetland, upland, and riparian habitat for a wide array of species. It also provides many recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, hiking and bird watching. The Wildlife Conservation Board has been involved in the acquisition and restoration of property within the Wildlife Area for many years. In 1988, the Board authorized the purchase of 2,255 acres of land lying within the Butte Sink for preservation of interior wetlands for waterfowl habitat and other game and non-game species. Between 1989 and 1994, the Board acquired an additional 2,062 acres of land and, in 1991, the Board embarked upon a cooperative project with the North American Wetlands Conservation Council and Ducks Unlimited to restore wetland habitat on 3,100 acres of property within the Wildlife Area. In providing funding for acquisition and restoration of wetland, upland, and riparian habitat within the Butte Sink region, the Board has taken into consideration the critical nature of California=s inland wetlands and the pressure of development on these resources.

The Wildlife Area was traditionally farmed for commercial rice and grazed as cattle pasture. As a result of these activities many of the historic riparian habitats and associated seasonal wetlands along Butte Creek have been lost. The goal of this project is to restore 120 acres of riparian and upland habitat along Butte Creek thereby providing a continuous riparian corridor from the southern boundary to the north boundary of the wildlife area. This habitat is limited in the Sacramento Valley and should, with time, provide appropriate habitat for

numerous threatened and endangered species including valley elderberry longhorn beetle, western yellow-billed cuckoo, and willow flycatcher. These species have all been documented on the Howard Slough Unit and it is anticipated that they will utilize the proposed riparian habitat as it matures.

The project consists of converting 51 acres of fallow rice ground to riparian habitat. A 4,000 foot swale will be constructed through the center of the property and an open-discharge well will be installed to provide irrigation to outlying wetland and upland areas. The spoil from the swale construction will be used to construct islands, loafing berms, and increase the slope on the adjacent levees. A low-flow/pressure will also be installed and T-tape lines will be used to irrigate the newly planted riparian zone. The riparian area will be planted with a variety of species of trees and shrubs including plantings of Valley Oak, Box Elder, Elderberry, various species of willow and cottonwoods and other riparian species. In addition, the project also includes restoring over 69 acres of upland habitat with native grass plantings. The Department is contributing staff time to the project and will also be responsible for weed control. The California Waterfowl Association is providing engineering support, will manage the construction activities and is responsible for restoration maintenance and monitoring for 3 years.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Site Assessment, Survey & Restoration Plan	\$ 8,020.00
Swale Construction (15,500 cyds)	23,250.00
Open discharge flood Irrigation Well	44,000.00
12" PVC Pipe and Valves (600 ft)	10,050.00
PTO Gearhead, Bowl, Driveline	17,550.00
Installation of Pump and Pipeline	10,500.00
Low flow/pressure - irrigation system, well & filter	51,867.00
Flashboard and Riser/24" Pipe	1,500.00
Installation of Riser	450.00
Riparian Habitat Planting	98,683.00
Weed Control 10,500.00	
Restoration Management, Monitoring & Report	35,430.00
Survey and Project Design	4,500.00
Construction Supervision	9,500.00
Contingencies 13,700.00	
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$339,500.00</u>
<u>Partnerships/Matching Funds</u>	
Department of Fish and Game (in-kind)	\$ 10,500.00
Wildlife Conservation Board (grant)	329,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$339,500.00</u>

The Department has reviewed the proposal and supports the proposed improvements.

The

Department is preparing the appropriate documents and will obtain all permits that may be necessary to complete the proposed work.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$329,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Prop 12), Section 5096.350(a)(2) for the project costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreement 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$329,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Prop 12), Section 5096.350(a)(2) for the project costs; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreement necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

20. Big Chico Creek, Expansion 1, Butte County \$1,750,000.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider a grant to the California State University, Chico Research Foundation (Foundation) to assist, in a cooperative project with the River Network (a non-profit conservation organization), the Packard Foundation, the Department of Fish and Game (Department), other private non-profit organizations and the Board, to acquire 1,226" acres of property. Also, to consider the acceptance of a Conservation Easement over the property as a condition of the Grant, for the protection and enhancement of sensitive habitats located along Big Chico Creek. Mr. Jim Sarro described the project and its location.

The subject property is located in Butte County, approximately 10 miles upstream from the City of Chico. The downstream end of the property adjoins 2,724" acres of land which is owned by the Foundation and held under conservation easement by the Department. The subject property contains over 2 miles of Big Chico Creek frontage extending through the entire Big Chico Creek Canyon from Musty Buck Ridge on the west to the Highway 32 ridge on the east. Access to the property is by a dirt road that leads from Highway 32, entering the property on its eastern boundary.

The Board approved the award of a grant to the Foundation and authorized acceptance of a conservation easement by the Department over the first phase during its meeting of May 24, 2000. The overall management responsibility of the first phase, as well as Expansion 1 described herein, will be undertaken by the Foundation in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department. They will act in partnership with the Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance, a consortium of watershed stakeholders, including landowners and local government. The group is currently working on developing and implementing the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve Use Guidelines and Specific Regulations (Guidelines), and were not completed prior to this Agenda going to print. As recommended by the Department, and acknowledged by the Board at the May 24, 2000, meeting, management of the entire area is to focus on objectives that include protecting and preserving the various ecosystems on the property, provide opportunities for educational research and training, and provide controlled public access for hunting, fishing and other compatible recreational uses. It is expected that the Department review and concur with the Guidelines to ensure that the above-mentioned recommendations are implemented.

The property lies in a transition zone between oak woodland and pine/fir forests. The wide range of habitat types, together with the richness of a healthy riparian zone, contributes to exceptional biological diversity. The area encompasses four broad habitat types including blue oak woodland, oak/pine forest, scrub oak/Ceanothus chaparral and riparian areas. Where canopy cover allows, foothill grasslands are present throughout the blue oak forest. The grassland, unlike nearby drainages, is not inundated with exotic grasses like medusahead or Yellow star thistle. The area hosts a wealth of bird species associated with the stream, meadows, forest and cliffs, many of them with special status.

Recent surveys of the property found that over 140 different wildlife species utilize the property, 13 percent of which are listed species, including Species of Special Concern. Some

of these special status animal species include Pacific lamprey, foothill yellow-legged frog, western pond turtle, California whiptail, riparian brush rabbit, golden eagle, Swainson=s hawk, American peregrine falcon and yellow warbler. In addition, Big Chico Creek is crucial to the survival of populations of steelhead trout and spring-run chinook salmon, with the section of the creek located on the subject property serving as spawning and rearing habitat for both species. This section of the stream provides particularly good rearing habitat for anadromous fish since other large fish predators are prevented from invading the area by difficult passage through Iron Canyon located downstream in Bidwell Park . Anadromous populations in Big Chico Creek declined severely during the 1970's, but relocation of an irrigation diversion near the mouth in 1996 may have solved the major problem since runs of spring chinook in the last two years have exceeded recorded runs since the 1960's.

The property is also considered significant winter range for the East Tehama deer herd which is the largest migratory herd in California with current numbers reaching 45,000. The deer migrate over 100 miles and use the property as a wintering area during the months of October through March. Mountain lions consistently use the subject property and are drawn to the rock outcroppings and cliffs, vegetated ridgetops and brush thickets that provide cover for hunting. Black bear, coyotes, gray fox, bobcats, ringtails and river otter are some of the additional predators found on the property. Its relative isolation from human habitation, abundant cover and prey populations make it ideal predator habitat.

The River Network has secured an exclusive purchase option over the property and has arranged for the property to be transferred to the Foundation upon close of escrow. The property has been appraised and the value has been approved by the Department of General Services (DGS) at \$3,460,000.00. In addition to WCB=s funding participation at \$1,730,000.00, the amount equal to the proposed grant, other funding will be provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$630,000.00) and other funds, including private funds (\$1,100,000.00).

As a condition of grant funding, the Foundation will be required to grant the state a conservation easement over the property. Acceptance of the easement will not only protect the state=s financial interests in the property, but will also insure long-term protection of the property, while at the same time preserving public recreational opportunities into the future. It is estimated that \$20,000.00 will be needed for project costs associated with accepting the conservation easement, which include DGS costs for appraisal and project review, title insurance and WCB=s share of the escrow fees. The project is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes.

Mr. Sarro reported that the Board received a letter of support from the Butte County Board of Supervisors, which recommended public access be a provision of the management plan, and that a similar letter of recommendation was received from the City of Chico.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. Ms. Caryn Jones, a citizen of Butte County, requested to speak. She stated that the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve is contiguous with Chico's Bidwell Park. She went on to explain that her family has been working with the Bidwell Park Commission as volunteers building foot trails for Bidwell Park. As a contribution to the Chico Creek Nature Center, she stated that they are also writing a series of illustrated booklets on the flora and fauna of Big Chico Creek Canyon. She expressed concern that the grant agreement did not require educational and recreational access, which they would like to see in that area. She felt that, based on statements and actions by some members of the Preserve's management team, public access would be severely restricted. She stated that her concerns were shared by their local newspaper, the Chico Enterprise Record, the Butte County Board of Supervisors and the Chico City Council. She added that they strongly endorse the purpose and goals of the Preserve as outlined in the grant agreement, but requested the wording in the grant agreement be strengthened, not changed in intent, so that the public's interests in educational and compatible recreational access be guaranteed before these lands are deeded in perpetuity to a private nonprofit organization.

Mr. Chrisman and Mr. Wright thanked Ms. Jones for attending the meeting and for her previous letter expressing her concerns. Mr. Wright stated that the Department of Fish and Game and the Board were also concerned about future access to the area. Mr. Wright introduced Mr. Banky Curtis, Regional Manager for the Department of Fish and Game, and stated that he and Mr. Curtis discussed the need for the Department to remain actively involved through the planning process for this project, providing as much public access as possible while protecting the wildlife values of the land. Mr. Wright stated that he felt the proposed grant agreement contained adequate language that would provide the public with an opportunity to suitably access the area.

Mr. Jeff Carter, representing the CSU Chico Research Foundation, stated that he confirmed Mr. Wright's comments that the Foundation is committed to providing public access, as much as possible, as long as it is compatible with the primary purposes of the Preserve. He stated that the Foundation is working with the Department of Fish and Game in the development of the management plan, which they feel will provide adequate access to the premises. He added that the Foundation should be circulating the management plan for public comment as soon as it is drafted in final form, hopefully getting more comments about access from everyone concerned.

Mr. Wright requested that the Foundation ensure the process remain open, so that all interested parties feel they have an opportunity to participate in the development of the management plan. Mr. Carter stated the Foundation has every intent to make it as open as possible and that the Foundation will be forming a community advisory committee which will be broadly representative of all persons interested in finalizing the plan.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any further comments. There were none.

Mr. Hight stated that the Department of Fish and Game staff will be involved in the process to make sure that it complies with existing habitat needs in the area, looking very closely at the public access issue.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the grant to the Foundation to be applied toward the purchase of the 1,226" acres as proposed; authorize acceptance of the conservation easement; allocate \$1,750,000.00 for the grant amount and project expenses [\$1,380,000.00 from the General Fund - Challenge Grant Fund and \$370,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a)(3)]; 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 grant to the Foundation to be applied toward the purchase of the 1,226" acres as proposed; authorize acceptance of the conservation easement; allocate \$1,750,000.00 for the grant amount and project expenses [\$1,380,000.00 from the General Fund - Challenge Grant Fund and \$370,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a)(3)]; 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.

At this time, Mr. Chrisman welcomed Mr. Syrus Devers representing Senator Sheila Kuehl, and commented that he looked forward to Mr Devers= involvement with the Board.

- *21. Wetland Conservation Easement Program, Cherokee Farms, \$1,477,000.00
Butte County

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of a conservation easement over 476" acres of seasonal wetlands, related riparian habitat, and agricultural lands for the preservation and enhancement of existing habitat. The subject property is located approximately 6 miles west of Biggs in Butte County and is accessed via a private road running from Afton Road to the northwest corner of the subject property.

Cherokee Farms is adjacent to the Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area (UBBWA) and is currently used predominately for agricultural production. Implementation of the Management Plan associated with this project would convert the property to a diverse mosaic of seasonal wetlands, semi-permanent wetlands, upland nesting habitat, and riparian habitat.

Acquisition of the conservation easement and subsequent restoration of the land will complement the adjacent 3,736-acre Little Dry Creek Unit of the UBBWA as well as the 228-acre Mom=s Farm Permanent Wetland Easement acquisition less than one mile to the west and a 38-acre easement about 22 miles to the south. Gray Lodge Wildlife area lies three miles to the south. In addition to these State fee and easement interests in the vicinity, the federal government has easements preserving over 2,700 acres, all within about four miles of the subject property.

In the fall of 1991, the DFG initiated a program of purchasing permanent conservation easements, which contain specific private management requirements on private Central Valley wetlands. The program is intended to ensure the preservation and enhancement of existing and restored marshes critical to the welfare of waterfowl wintering in California with a long-term goal of placing at least 75,000" acres of wetland habitat under permanent easements.

The easement purchase price is derived from a formal appraisal, as approved by the Department of General Services (DGS). Due to the variations in continuing operation and management requirements being placed on the owners, the purchase prices of these wetland conservation easements have generally ranged from between 20 percent and 80 percent of fee value. Of course, the benefit to the State is the protection of wetland habitat in perpetuity, with future operation and maintenance costs being absorbed by the underlying fee owners.

The terms and conditions of the easement agreements developed under this program permit full and exclusive use of the property by the landowner, except those uses which would result in the loss of wetland habitat or the degradation of the property=s waterfowl habitat values. In addition, the DFG, in cooperation with landowner, develops a marsh management plan for each property to be encumbered by an easement. The plan is intended to assure development and maintenance of high quality waterfowl habitat throughout the property with the landowner being responsible, at their cost, for the maintenance and water supply for their property. The term of each easement, which does not provide for public access, extends in perpetuity and runs with the land regardless of changes in ownership.

This proposed project furthers the objectives of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV) and complements previous work the WCB has approved in the vicinity. To date, WCB and the CVHJV partners have protected, restored and/or enhanced 5,669" acres of wetland habitat. This project will bring the total to 6,145" acres.

This acquisition, protection, and restoration project will help to provide a mosaic of diverse and moist soil habitat and provide quality vegetation for wintering waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. In addition, the project will provide nesting areas and brood ponds for breeding waterfowl and other resident wetland related wildlife. 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 owner has agreed to sell a conservation easement over this parcel for the approved appraised value of \$1,465,000.00. This acquisition is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Section 15313 as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed. Management of the property would be in accordance with the Management Plan that is incorporated into the easement. Restoration funding will be provided through Natural Resources Conservation Services= Wetland Reserve Program Restoration Agreement Program, the US Fish and Wildlife Service=s Partners for Wildlife Program and California Waterfowl Association.

In addition, an estimated \$12,000.00 will be needed for escrow fees, Department of General Services= fees, appraisal costs and other related costs.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,477,000.00 for the purchase price and related expenses [\$1,266,549.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d) - Inland Wetlands Conservation Program and \$210,451.00 from the General Fund - Inland Wetlands Conservation Program]; authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,477,000.00 for the purchase price and related expenses [\$1,266,549.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (d) - Inland Wetlands Conservation Program and \$210,451.00 from the General Fund - Inland Wetlands Conservation Program]; authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *22. Musty Buck Ridge Conservation Easement, Butte County \$1,765,000.00

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of a conservation easement over 3,884" acres of land for the protection of oak woodlands, threatened and endangered species habitat, and deer and mountain lion habitat, located immediately northeast of the City of Chico in Butte County. More specifically, the property is located adjacent to the City of Chico=s northeastern city limit boundary and lies directly east of Chico Municipal Airport.

The Board allocated funding and authorized a grant to the California State University, Chico Research Foundation (Foundation) in May of 2000 to acquire 2,724" acres of wildlife habitat immediately adjacent to the subject property=s eastern boundary. The Board is also considering a grant to the Foundation to acquire an additional 1,226" acres, and details of which are described under Agenda Item No. 20, herein. If approved, this project, along with

that which is discussed in Agenda Item No. 20, and the 2,724" acres already protected, will bring the total contiguous acreage protected to approximately 7,834" acres.

The key habitat types benefitting from this proposed conservation easement include blue oak woodlands, mix oak/pine forest, scrub oak/Ceanothus chaparral and grassland. There are a number of springs that supply permanent water throughout the year and are of critical importance to wildlife because they represent the only sources of permanent water for many wildlife species.

Because of the quality of habitat found on site, the property supports strong populations of black-tailed deer and is considered a critically important migration and wintering area for the Eastern Tehama deer herd. Other wildlife species found on site include mountain lions, black bear, coyote and a number of species of raptors. In addition, the springs and wet areas support a diversity of amphibians and the California red-legged frog is known to exist in the area.

The landowner has agreed to sell a conservation easement over his property and has agreed to sell at the Department of General Services= (DGS) approved appraised value of \$1,748,000.00. An additional \$17,000.00 is estimated to be required for related acquisition costs, including title insurance, escrow and DGS review charges. The proposed acquisition is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as an acquisition of land for fish and wildlife conservation purposes and the proper documentation has been filed.

Staff recommended the Board approve the acquisition of this conservation easement as proposed; allocate \$1,765,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a) to cover the acquisition and related project costs; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the acquisition of this conservation easement as proposed; allocate \$1,765,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a) to cover the acquisition and related project costs; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *23. Sacramento River Conservation Area, Expansions 2 and 3, Butte County \$5,000.00

This proposal was to consider the acceptance and subsequent assignment of two Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) Grants to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to assist in a cooperative project to acquire 214" acres of land for the protection, restoration and enhancement of riparian habitat along the Sacramento River. The property will be added to the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge, currently managed by the

USFWS.

The property is located in Butte County, adjacent to and south of State Route 32. The property lies west of Chico and east of Hamilton City, between the confluence of the Sacramento River and Pine Creek. Other publically-owned properties in the area include USFWS= Pine Creek Unit, located adjacent to and south of the subject properties, and Department of Fish and Game (DFG) owned property south of the Pine Creek Unit and on the opposite side of the Sacramento River. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) also owns property in the immediate area with riparian restoration projects underway. In addition, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) approved the first Sacramento River Conservation Area project and subsequently Expansion 1, during its meeting of February 23, 2001, which provided two grants to TNC to acquire 191" acres on the west side of the Sacramento River.

The subject properties have historically been farmed as orchards, but are subject to frequent flooding, making them suitable for riparian habitat restoration. Restoration of the subject sites will provide an important seasonal habitat and contribute to the recovery of several groups of species including neotropical migratory birds, waterfowl and native amphibians. The project will also provide travelers along State Highway 32 with a unique view shed of a native riparian habitat outside the confines of the Sacramento River levees.

The California Department of Transportation has obtained approval and authorization to fund the grants from the California Transportation Commission as an agenda item at their March 29, 2001 meeting. If authorized by the Board, the TEA grant funds will be deposited directly into an escrow account for use by the USFWS to acquire the subject property. Upon close of escrow, TNC through a Cooperative Land Management Agreement with USFWS will manage the property with the ultimate goal of restoring and preserving riparian habitat.

The DFG and USFWS are both highly supportive of the project, and endorses the cooperative attainment of shared wildlife and habitat goals which furthers the goals of restoring riparian habitat along the Sacramento River.

The two proposed projects are more specifically described as follows:

<u>Sacramento River Conservation Area, Expansion 2</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
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The property is 103" acres in size, with the majority of the property lying fallow. The remainder of the property (2" acres) includes a small plot of walnut trees, a residence and barn. The TEA grant is \$443,000.00. The fair market value of the property, as approved by the Department of General Services (DGS), is \$490,000.00. The difference of \$47,000.00 will be donated by TNC, the current owner, representing the non-federal match required by the TEA grant program. An additional \$2,500.00 will be needed for DGS services and review fees.

<u>Sacramento River Conservation Area, Expansion 3</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
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The property is 111" acres in size, planted with prune and walnut trees. The TEA grant is \$562,000.00. The fair market value of the property, as approved by DGS, is \$640,000.00. The difference of \$78,000.00 will be donated by TNC, the current owner, representing the non-federal match required by the TEA grant program. An additional \$2,500.00 will be needed for DGS services and review fees.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acceptance of the Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) grants as proposed; authorize the assignments of the TEA grants to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for its purchase of 214" acres; allocate \$5,000.00 to pay for Department of General Services= review costs from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a)(2); authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to complete this project; and authorize staff and 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the acceptance of the Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) grants as proposed; authorize the assignments of the TEA grants to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for its purchase of 214" acres; allocate \$5,000.00 to pay for Department of General Services= review costs from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a)(2); authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to complete this project; and authorize staff and Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *24. Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area, Expansion 8, Yuba County \$60,000.00

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of 20.45" acres of privately-owned land as an addition to the Department of Fish and Game=s (DFG) Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area (previously known as Collins Lake Wildlife Area). The subject property is located approximately 20 miles northeast of the City of Marysville, and is accessible from both a public road and from the adjacent wildlife area. Acquisition of the property will provide for the protection of deer winter range, bald eagle winter range, and mountain lion and upland game habitat.

In six previous Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) meetings between 1989 and 2000, the Board approved the acquisition of a total of 6,418" acres in both fee and easement for the wildlife area. If approved, this property will enhance wildlife habitat protection goals while at the same time increase opportunities for public recreation.

Deer herd composition counts have been conducted on the adjacent wildlife area where it is common to count more than 150 deer in a two-hour evening count. The natural plant 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 parcel proposed for acquisition is threatened with development. The owner has agreed to sell the property to the state at the approved appraised value of \$55,000.00. Management of the property would be undertaken by the DFG as a part of the existing wildlife area, at minimal additional cost. In addition to the \$55,000.00 purchase price, an estimated \$5,000.00 will be needed for escrow fees, Department of General Services= fees and other related costs.

This acquisition is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Section 15313 as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption was filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$60,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a), for the purchase price and related expenses; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$60,000.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (a), for the purchase price and related expenses; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *25. Woodson Bridge Fishing Access Improvements, Tehama County
\$326,270.00

This project was a cooperative agreement with the County of Tehama Department of Public Works and the California Department of Boating and Waterways to upgrade and restore

boating access at the Woodson Bridge Boat Launching facilities located on the east bank of the Sacramento River, about 50 miles south of Redding in Tehama County.

The existing boat ramp at the Tehama County River Park, also known as Woodson Bridge, was originally built in 1957 as a joint venture between the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and the County of Tehama. Other boat launching facilities in the area include two ramps in Red Bluff located about 20 miles upstream from Woodson Bridge, and the Mill Creek Park Launching Facility, a WCB-funded ramp located approximately 10 miles upstream.

The project site is a gentle sloping area with many mature trees. A portion of the northern end of the site is covered with riparian vegetation and the remainder of the site is well developed and consists of the boat launching ramp and parking areas which are located immediately adjacent to and under Woodson Bridge. The facilities also include two large picnics areas with 18 picnic tables, small barbeques, a large play area and two restrooms. Fishing at Woodson Bridge is popular for such sportfish species as American shad, rainbow trout, steelhead trout and chinook salmon.

Despite the popularity of the Woodson Bridge Launching Facilities, the boat ramp is too narrow for current usage and is in need of replacement. River siltation has also rendered the area shallow and difficult for boat launching. The parking area is now worn, deteriorated and has many potholes and cracks. The proposed project includes the construction of a two-lane concrete boat ramp, which will be re-angled and lengthened to access a deeper channel of the river and a boat walkway which will be built parallel to the new launching ramp. The unpaved and paved parking areas will be regraded, paved, striped and the riverbank slopes will be covered with rock slope protection (Arip-rap®). The existing park maintenance building will be demolished to expand the parking area. A new barrier-free restroom building will be constructed along with concrete walks, a drinking fountain, benches and American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant parking. Ancillary items consist of overhead lighting at the boat ramp and maneuvering area, irrigation, landscaping, concrete walks, seating benches and project signs.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Costs</u>
Site Work - Grading and Clearing	\$ 55,000.00
Concrete Boat Ramp - 30' wide	134,100.00

Boat Boarding Walk	13,500.00
Access Road and Parking Area (including striping)	224,000.00
Concrete Curbs and Drainage Control	15,000.00
Restroom and Septic System	98,000.00
Electrical (underground)	5,000.00
Lighting	5,000.00
Irrigation & Landscaping	5,300.00
Boat Ramp and Building demolition	5,000.00
Rip-Rap	17,000.00
Engineering and Design	24,310.00
Contract Administration	44,420.00
Contingencies	57,890.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS</u>	<u>\$ 703,520.00</u>

Additional funding for the project is being provided to the County of Tehama by a grant from the Department of Boating and Waterways. The proposed funding breakdown is as follows:

Department of Boating and Waterways	\$ 377,520.00
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$ 326,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$ 703,520.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the allocation necessary for the Board=s portion of the project to \$326,270.00. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has approved a Sport Fish Restoration Act (SFRA) grant for reimbursement of 75 percent of the project costs, which will result in a net cost to the state for the project of \$175,880.00.

The Department of Fish and Game has reviewed this proposal and supports the proposed improvements. The Tehama County Department of Public Works has filed a Negative Declaration for the project and will handle contract administration for the construction of the improvements and has agreed to enter into a 25-year Operating Agreement for the site.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$326,270.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Act (Prop. 12) Section (a)(5); authorize the receipt of federal reimbursements from the SFRA; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$326,270.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Act (Prop. 12) Section (a)(5); authorize the receipt of federal reimbursements from the SFRA;

and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *26. Mill Creek Fishing Access Improvements, Tehama County \$205,270.00

This project was to consider a cooperative project with the Tehama County Department of Public Works and the California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) to upgrade and restore boating access at the Mill Creek Park Launching Facility located on the east bank of the Sacramento River, about 40 miles south of Redding in Tehama County.

In 1968, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) authorized the construction of a timber-pile supported single lane boat ramp, a parking area, access road and restroom on the County of Tehama's 50-acre riverfront Mill Creek Park Launching Facility. In 1983, the boat ramp was partially destroyed by high flood waters and floating debris and the WCB authorized funds for the removal of debris and the reconstruction of the ramp.

The confluence of Mill Creek nearby makes this facility one of the most popular fishing spots along the Upper Sacramento River, and this access is considered to be the most important and strategically located places in the county to launch a boat. Fishing on the Sacramento River in Tehama County is popular for such sportfish species as American shad, rainbow trout, steelhead trout and chinook salmon. Other boat launching facilities in the area include two ramps in Red Bluff about 10 miles upstream from Mill Creek Park and a WCB-funded launching facility at Woodson Bridge approximately 10 miles downstream.

Despite the popularity of the Mill Creek Park Launching Facility, the 12-foot long boat ramp is too narrow for current usage and is in need of replacement. The existing restroom to the eastside of the parking lot has fallen into disrepair and does not provide access pursuant to the American Disabilities Act (ADA). The proposed project consists of removing the existing launching ramp and replacing it with a new two-lane reinforced concrete ramp and a 6-foot wide, 18 inch high concrete walkway, which will be built parallel to the new launching ramp. The parking area will be regraded, paved and slightly expanded to accommodate approximately 52 vehicle/trailer spaces. All spaces will be striped to ensure safe maneuvering and circulation of vehicle traffic. A new four-unit flush type restroom will be constructed and will be designed to withstand occasional flooding. All facilities will be built to ADA specifications. Other project features include landscaping, lighting, trash receptacles and signs.

Cost estimates for this project, which has been reviewed and approved by staff, are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Engineering	\$48,912.00
Site Preparation	60,000.00

Two-Lane Concrete Ramp	62,020.00
Paved Parking	109,900.00
Boat Boarding Walkway	9,500.00
Restroom and Septic System	88,000.00
Irrigation and Landscaping	5,300.00
Lighting and Utilities	21,000.00
Construction Inspection	27,390.00
Contingencies	35,978.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$468,000.00</u>

<u>Partnerships/Matching Funds</u>	
Department of Boating and Waterways	\$263,000.00
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$205,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$468,000.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the allocation necessary for the Board=s portion of the project to \$205,270.00. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has approved a Sport Fish Restoration Act (SFRA) grant for reimbursement of 75 percent of the project costs, which will result in a net cost of \$117,000.00 to the state for the project.

The Department of Fish and Game has reviewed this proposal and supports the proposed improvements. The Tehama County Department of Public Works has filed a Negative Declaration for the project and will handle contract administration for the construction of the improvements and has agreed to extend the operating agreement to May 18, 2026.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$205,270.00 from the General Fund; authorize the receipt of federal reimbursements under SFRA; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$205,270.00 from the General Fund; authorize the receipt of federal reimbursements under SFRA; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *27. Hamilton Branch Fishing Access, Plumas County \$310,000.00

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of 3.5" acres of land for the purpose of providing access for fishing and other recreational opportunities associated with Hamilton Branch, a tributary to the North Fork Feather River and Lake Almanor. Specifically, the property is located on the corner of State Highway 147 (East Shore Highway) and County

Road A13 on the east shore of Lake Almanor in Plumas County, approximately 8 miles east of the town of Chester.

Acquisition of the property would maintain, enhance and expand angler access to the Hamilton Branch and would provide a parking area for anglers as well as access trails to the river and lake. The Hamilton Branch and Lake Almanor is one of the top trophy trout fishing areas in California and this area is especially popular with junior anglers. The number of anglers annually using this area for fishing access is estimated at 133,200 and as many as 50 angler vehicles have been counted parked along county road A13 and in front of the commercial establishments located near the subject property. Acquisition of the subject site will eliminate frustrations by local business owners by providing a safe parking area and removing the parking problem from in front of their establishments. Additionally, enforcement of fish and game laws would be facilitated with having vehicles centrally located allowing wardens to check anglers on the main trail or at their vehicles with greater ease and safety.

The property has a sparse stand of mixed conifers, including incense cedar, white fir and Ponderosa pine, some of which is considered old growth timber. Most of the site is generally level or moderately sloping and the elevation of the property runs from 4,500' to 4,580'.

The property has been appraised and the landowners have agreed to sell the property to state at the Department of General Services= (DGS) approved appraised value of \$300,000.00. An additional \$10,000.00 is estimated to be required for related acquisition costs, including appraisal, title insurance, escrow and DGS review charges. The proposed acquisition is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions and the necessary documentation has been filed.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition as proposed; allocate \$310,000.00 from the General Fund, to pay for the acquisition costs and related project expenses; 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the acquisition as proposed; allocate \$310,000.00 from the General Fund, to pay for the acquisition costs and related project expenses; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

- *28. Lassen Foothills, Expansion 1, Shasta and Tehama Counties \$170,000.00
(Eagle Canyon Ranch Conservation Easement)

This proposal was to consider the allocation of a grant to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to assist in its purchase of a conservation easement over 990" acres of land for the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, located east of the City of Red Bluff, near the community of Manton in Shasta and Tehama Counties. The property is situated between Manton Road to the south and Battle Creek on the north with elevations ranging from about 1,650 feet to 1,850 feet above mean sea level.

The subject conservation easement project is part of a larger conservation strategy by TNC and the Department of Fish and Game to link together public and private lands to create a landscape-scale reserve that will protect extensive wildlife corridors and prevent habitat fragmentation. The Lassen Foothills area in Shasta and Tehama Counties is strategically located within a larger 800,000-acre region of blue oak woodlands, riparian and aquatic habitat, vernal pools and grasslands that support numerous sensitive species and significant populations of native fish and wildlife. This region includes 290,000" acres of protected public lands and 55,000" acres of privately-owned lands which are protected through conservation easements.

The Board approved a grant to TNC during its meeting of November 2000, and TNC has completed the acquisition of a conservation easement over 9,500" acres of land under the Lassen Foothills conservation strategy. The 9,500" acre conservation easement already acquired is located south of the subject property and is managed as part of the Vina Plains Preserve. The conservation easement being considered in this transaction is focused on project priorities established within the Lassen Foothills strategy for Battle Creek and accomplishes rangeland conservation objectives including protection of blue oak woodland that support cavity nesting birds, Central Valley mixed riparian forest and protects portions of the migration corridor and winter range for the East Tehama deer herd, the largest migratory deer herd in California. Other wildlife present include mountain lions, coyotes, California quail and numerous bird species, including raptors.

The property includes nearly 2 miles of frontage on the North Fork of Battle Creek and includes over 2 miles of frontage on Digger Creek, a tributary to the North Fork of Battle Creek. The riparian habitat along both of these water courses is relatively undisturbed and currently provides high resource value. Additionally, Battle Creek is unique in that it is the only Sacramento Valley tributary still capable of supporting all four runs of Chinook salmon and portions of Battle Creek located on the subject property offer quality spawning and holding habitat for winter and spring run salmon, and steelhead.

The property is currently managed for cattle grazing and it is intended that the conservation easement would prohibit subdivision of the property while permitting one additional homesite in a low-impact area set back from sensitive habitat areas. Timber and rock harvesting, and mining will be prohibited under the conservation easement, while cattle

grazing will continue to be allowed along with other wildlife compatible uses.

The Nature Conservancy has entered into an option agreement with the landowner and the owner has agreed to sell a conservation easement over the 990" acres to TNC at \$545,000.00, a value which has been approved by the Department of General Services (DGS). It is proposed that the Wildlife Conservation Board provide \$165,000.00 towards the purchase price, with the balance of the purchase price being supplied by the US Fish and Wildlife Service under its CVIPA Anadromous Fish Restoration Program. It is estimated that an additional \$5,000.00 will be needed for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the total allocation for this proposal to \$170,000.00. The project is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as participating in an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the award of a grant to The Nature Conservancy to be applied to the acquisition of a conservation easement over 990" acres of habitat as proposed; allocate \$170,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a) (3) for the grant amount and related 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the award of a grant to The Nature Conservancy to be applied to the acquisition of a conservation easement over 990" acres of habitat as proposed; allocate \$170,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a) (3) for the grant amount and related 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.

29. San Bernardino Mountains Wildlife Corridor, San Bernardino County \$1,820,000.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider the purchase of 120" acres of vacant land near Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mountains. Mr. Jim Sarro described the project and its location.

The state Budget Act of 1999 provided \$2,000,000.00 to the Wildlife Conservation Board for the acquisition and preservation of wildlife habitat and corridor lands in the San Bernardino Mountains. Proponents of the funding and acquisition initially identified a 182 acre property known locally as the ABlue Jay@ or the AGrass Valley@ site. When discussions were initiated with the owner of that site, it became apparent to staff that the chances of success were minimal. Staff then requested and obtained biological evaluations of additional local sites for habitat and wildlife corridor protection. Of the five sites identified, including ABlue

Jay@, the subject 120 acres ranked #1 in significant wildlife resources and corridor capabilities.

The subject property, known locally as the ASawmill@ site, contains the headwaters of the Miller Canyon arm of the Mojave River, and Dart Creek, a tributary of the East Fork of the West Fork of the Mojave. It is located northwest of the community of Twin Peaks. No major highways occur in the immediate vicinity of the property. However, it is bounded to the east by Grandview Road. Private developed lands are found on the east edge of the property, while largely undeveloped private lands are found to the south. US Forest Service, San Bernardino National Forest, lands border the property to the north and east. Although portions of this parcel contain steep slopes, it is largely made up of gentle slopes with only moderate elevation gradients.

Seven major criteria were used to evaluate all properties involved in this analysis. California Wildlife Habitat Relationships models, significant natural resources, wildlife corridor capability, current site impacts, management needs and potential, and number of acres. These criteria are typically used in any land acquisition process proposed by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Absent any specific flora or fauna surveys, habitat values and capability were substituted for specific presence or absence of species on site.

This parcel is 120 acres in size. It is made up largely of a Mixed Hardwood Conifer habitat type and is very divergent in both structure and age class. Numerous old growth pines and oaks occur on this site. There is also a significant evergreen oak component which is not found on the other evaluated sites. This adds considerable value to the habitat quality. The parcel contains both a large pond and at least one spring. During the site visit, both exhibited damp soil and wetland plant indicators. No surface water was observed, although an enclosed spring area contained water. Rock outcrops and numerous downed logs, which could support southern rubber boa, were observed on the site. The gentle slope of the property could also contribute to the habitat value for this species. California spotted owl and San Bernardino Mountain flying squirrel are identified by the US Forest Service (USFS) as utilizing this site. The habitat types and quality of this site would also be critical to the survival of other Species of Special Concern. Additionally, the site reportedly contains a nest and/or roosting site for bald eagle. Numerous other species of wildlife, outside of the major focus of the comparison of sites, were observed either directly or indirectly during the site visit.

The parcel is included in San Bernardino County Wildlife Corridor #16. There are obstacles to movement only on the eastern side. The major drainages to the north and west are unimpeded to wildlife movement and provide an important link to the Mojave River. Purchase of this land would also protect the headwaters of this drainage.

Site impacts are considered to be minimal. An old sawmill on site contains various debris which is largely organic. Some use of the existing roads occurs by utility companies. There

are no immediate management needs.

A pond on the property could be the subject of habitat restoration activities. The San Bernardino Mountains Wildlife Society (Wildhaven), a local nonprofit involved in the care and eventual release of injured wildlife, has been instrumental in securing the purchase of the site and has offered to assist in restoration efforts. In addition, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and USFS have indicated that the location of the property could very well make it suitable for a much-needed release location (with appropriate oversight) of animals following their rehabilitation by Wildhaven.

The USFS has also indicated a willingness, in concept, to assume management of the site through a Memorandum of Understanding with DFG, thus minimizing DFG's operational expenses.

Acquisition of this property would be exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife habitat conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has been filed.

The fair market value of the property, as approved by the Department of General Services (DGS), is \$1,800,000.00 and the owner has agreed to sell it to the state for this amount. An additional sum of \$20,000.00 would be required to cover appraisals, closing expenses and review charges of DGS.

Mr. Sarro reported that representatives from the San Bernardino Land Trust and Wildhaven, the San Bernardino Mountains Wildlife Society, were in the audience and supportive of this acquisition. He reported that the Board received letters of support from three local citizens, in addition to letters from the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society, Wildhaven and the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of the Sawmill 120-acre property as proposed; allocate \$1,820,000.00 from the General Fund (specified for this project) to cover the purchase price and related administrative expenses; authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game 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 acquisition of the Sawmill 120-acre property as proposed; allocate \$1,820,000.00 from the General Fund (specified for this project) to cover the purchase price and related administrative expenses; authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game 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.

30. San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Expansion 14, Riverside County \$1,707,500.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider the acquisition of 274" acres of private land as an addition to the Department of Fish and Game=s San Jacinto Wildlife Area (SJWA), for the expansion of and protection to, the wetland areas surrounding Mystic Lake. The subject property is located in the San Jacinto Valley, approximately 18 miles southeast of downtown Riverside, just north of the community of Lakeview. To the northwest is the City of Moreno Valley, whose current authorized sphere of influence wraps around the northern and northeastern borders of the wildlife area. The western boundary of the SJWA is contiguous with the Lake Perris State Recreation Area and when combined with the SJWA, provides approximately 15,000 acres of land under public ownership and protection. Mr. Wright reported that he recently visited this site and found it to be a very beautiful and well-managed wetlands area, which is a focal point for students, providing a place for families to visit on the weekends and learn about wildlife and wetlands. Mr. Ronald E. Boeck described the project and its location.

Initial land acquisitions for the SJWA occurred between 1981-82 as part of a mitigation package to compensate for wildlife habitat losses resulting from the construction of the State Water Project. As opportunity and circumstances allowed, the Board acquired additional properties including 921" acres of the Mystic Lake property in 1995.

The property is in an area reclaimed from Mystic Lake, and has been converted to agricultural ground and used for farming. Acquisition of the property would facilitate restoration of historic water flows back into the lake bed and allow for reversion back to wetlands during wet years, and areas of low vegetation cover during dry years, all providing significant habitat for species using the SJWA, including a number of state and federally listed species.

The appraised fair market value of the property, as approved by the Department of General Services is \$2,214,000.00. However, the owner has agreed to sell the property for \$1,700,000.00, thereby providing a \$514,000.00 donation to the state. It is estimated that an additional \$7,000.00 will be needed for project expenses, including escrow and title company costs, and Department of General Services= review charges. An additional \$500.00 is requested for start-up costs to purchase signs to post on the property, bringing the total allocation requested for this project to \$1,707,500.00.

The Department of Fish and Game supports the acquisition of the property. The acquisition is exempt from CEQA under Section 15313 as an acquisition of land for wildlife purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed.

Mr. Boeck reported that the Board received letters of support from the Native Plant Society, the Sierra Club and the Riverside Land Conservancy. Mr. Wright added that the Board also received support letters from the Endangered Habitat League and the San Bernardino Audubon Society.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments.

Mr. Hight commented that he also visited this site and that it is surprising there is so much land available in the area. He recommended we add this property to the wildlife area.

Staff recommended the Board approve the acquisition as proposed; allocate \$1,707,500.00 [\$1,193,500.00 from Safe Neighborhood and Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a)(1)(B) and \$514,000.00 from the General Fund-Challenge Grant Fund] to cover the balance of the acquisition value and to pay for related project expenses; 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 the acquisition as proposed; allocate \$1,707,500.00 [\$1,193,500.00 from Safe Neighborhood and Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Prop 12), Section 5096.350 (a)(1)(B) and \$514,000.00 from the General Fund-Challenge Grant Fund] to cover the balance of the acquisition value and to pay for related project expenses; 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.

31. San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Expansions 15 through 19, \$15,100,000.00
Riverside County

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal is to consider the acquisition of five separate ownerships consisting of approximately 1,000 acres of land as expansions of the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) San Jacinto Wildlife Area (WLA), located in western Riverside County. Specifically, the project area is located in the San Jacinto Valley of southern California, approximately 18 miles southeast of downtown Riverside and just north of the community of Lakeview. To the northwest is the City of Moreno Valley, whose current authorized sphere of influence includes the proposed Expansions 15 through 19 as described herein. Mr. Bill Gallup described the project and its location.

Initial land acquisitions for the WLA were completed during 1981 - 82 as part of a mitigation package developed to compensate for wildlife habitat losses resulting from the construction of the State Water Project. Since 1995, the Board has acquired 1,283" acres bringing the total acreage under Department ownership to 7,784" acres. The Lake Perris State Recreation Area lies adjacent to the western boundary of the WLA and if this project is approved as

proposed, 16,000" acres will be protected under public ownership.

Acquisition of the proposed expansions will allow for the protection of a portion of Mystic Lake and its associated upland habitat which is important to a number of sensitive plant and animal species. The upland areas and hills surrounding the lowland flood plain of Mystic Lake are dominated by Riversidian sage scrub and patches of grasslands are found on the uplands and alkali flats. Numerous sensitive plants endemic to the Mystic Lake area, including the thread-leaved brodiaea (state listed endangered and federally proposed threatened), San Jacinto saltbush (federally proposed endangered) and spreading navarretia (federally proposed threatened) are found on site. The WLA and adjoining lands support 38 species of amphibians and reptiles. Mammals species are well represented and range from the desert shrew to the southern mule deer. The Stephens= kangaroo rat (state listed threatened and federally listed endangered) is a resident mammal of the WLA.

Since 1982, over 240 species of birds have been recorded on, or adjacent to, the WLA. Twenty-two over-wintering raptor species are known to utilize the San Jacinto Valley, including osprey, ferruginous hawk, golden eagle and short-eared owl. The San Jacinto Valley consistently ranks in the top one to two percent in species diversity for the North American Christmas bird counts. Historically, the San Jacinto Valley has consistently proved to be an important southern California wintering and nesting area for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. Three federally or state listed endangered birds have been documented on the WLA, including bald eagle, Peregrine falcon and the California brown pelican.

The DFG has identified the subject properties as being within a Significant Natural Area and has recommended the purchase of the property as an addition to the existing WLA. The acquisition of the subject properties are important to the wildlife area as they will serve as a buffer from development north of the WLA and add significant wildlife benefits to the WLA. It is anticipated that the addition of these properties will enhance public recreational opportunities, as the upland habitat and wetland areas are restored. Therefore, consistent with long-range planning purposes, staff of the Board present the following five proposals for Board consideration:

Expansion 15 \$935,365.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 60" acres of land lying adjacent to the San Jacinto WLA on the north. The property has no improvements. The approved appraised value is \$927,365.00 and the owner has agreed to sell to the state for that amount. An additional \$8,000.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and Department of General Services= (DGS) review costs.

Expansion 16 \$1,907,100.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 126 " acres of land lying adjacent to the San Jacinto WLA on the north. The property has no improvements. The approved appraised value is \$1,895,100.00 and the owner has agreed to sell to the state for that amount. An additional \$12,000.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and DGS review costs.

Expansion 17 \$9,209,735.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 613" acres of land lying adjacent to the San Jacinto WLA on the north. The property has no improvements. The approved appraised value is \$9,176,400.00 and the owner has agreed to sell to the state for that amount. An additional \$33,335.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and DGS review costs.

Expansion 18 \$589,400.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 39" acres of land lying adjacent to the San Jacinto WLA on the north. The property has no improvements. The approved appraised value is \$581,400.00 and the owner has agreed to sell to the state for that amount. An additional \$8,000.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and DGS review costs.

Expansion 19 \$2,440,250.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 162" acres of land lying adjacent to the San Jacinto WLA on the north. The property has no improvements. The approved appraised value is \$2,426,250.00 and the owner has agreed to sell to the state for that amount. An additional \$14,000.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and DGS review costs.

The acquisition of the subject expansions are exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed. There are no claims of sovereign state land ownership within the proposed expansions.

The Board received letters of support for these expansions from the California Native Plant Society, Sierra Club, Endangered Habitats League, Wildlands Conservancy, Riverside Land Conservancy, California State Park Rangers Association and the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society. Mr. Gallup introduced Mr. Boyd Clark, one of the property owners, Mr. Dave Emri and Mr. Greg Lowther, owner representatives, and Dee Sudduth, Senior Biologist from the Department of Fish and Game Eastern Sierra Inland Deserts Region.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve acquisition of San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Expansions 15 through 19, as proposed; allocate \$15,100,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Prop 12), Sec. 5096.350 (a) (3) T&E, for the purchase price and associated costs; 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.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve acquisition of San Jacinto Wildlife Area, Expansions 15 through 19, as proposed; allocate \$15,100,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Prop 12), Sec. 5096.350 (a) (3) T&E, for the purchase price and associated costs; 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.

32. Coachella Valley Ecological Reserve, Expansions 12 and 13, \$1,250,000.00
Riverside County

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider the acquisition of two separate properties totaling 107± acres of vacant land as expansions to the Department of Fish and Game=s (DFG) Coachella Valley Ecological Reserve near Thousand Palms in eastern Riverside County. These acquisitions will allow further protection of the Ablow sand wind corridor@ and ensure the viability of the sand dependent species within the Reserve. Mr. Bill Gallup described the project and its location.

The project area is located in the Coachella Valley approximately one mile north of Interstate 10 near the community of Thousand Palms. The DFG owns a total of 528 acres and when combined with the properties owned by Center for Natural Lands Management, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, State Parks and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the total protected area is approximately 17,200± acres.

Initial acquisition for the Reserve began in 1982 and has grown through public and private acquisitions and exchanges to its current size. Development has been sporadic over the past 20 years with a number of homes built within the corridor. Additional construction and development within the acquisition area is considered to be detrimental to the corridor as the sand transport would be blocked and the dune habitat would not be maintained. Historically, the blow sand was thought to originate from northerly of the Reserve through Thousand

Palms Canyon. More recent studies indicate that the sand source is from five smaller canyons to the northwest of the Reserve.

The Department has identified Expansions 12 and 13 as being critical to the protection of the Reserve and has recommended the purchase of these proposed expansions. When acquired, the acreage will be incorporated into, and managed in conjunction with, the existing Reserve. It is anticipated that the area will offer passive recreational uses, as the habitat is maintained and developed in conjunction with the Reserve. Both of the properties are currently vacant.

Preservation of the properties identified within the sand source area (blow sand corridor) will ensure the continued success of the Reserve and enhance the habitat for the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard. The Reserve also provides habitat for several other species that are currently being considered in the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, including the flat-tailed horned lizard, Coachella Valley milk vetch, Palm Springs pocket mouse, Palm Springs ground squirrel and the Coachella giant sand treader cricket. Therefore, consistent with long-range planning purposes, staff of the Board present the following two proposals for Board consideration:

Expansion 12 \$425,000.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 34± acres of unimproved desert land. The Grantor has agreed to sell for the approved appraised value of \$415,000.00. An additional \$10,000.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and Department of General Services= review costs.

Expansion 13 \$825,000.00

This proposal is to consider the acquisition of 73" acres of unimproved desert land. The Grantor has agreed to sell for the approved appraised value of \$810,000.00. An additional \$15,000.00 will be needed for appraisal, escrow, title insurance and Department of General Services= review costs.

The proposals are exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as acquisitions of land for wildlife conservation purposes and a Notice of Exemption has been filed.

Mr. Gallup reported that this project is supported by the Center for Natural Lands Management, Friends of the Coachella Valley Mountains, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy. He also reported that Dee Sudduth, representing the Department of Fish and Game, was in the audience, should there be any questions.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or concerns. Mr. Hight commented that the acquisition of these parcels is extremely important to the overall area and the HCP/NCCP process.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of Expansions 12 and 13 as proposed; allocate \$1,250,000.00 from Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (b/c), for acquisition costs and related expenses; authorize staff to enter into agreements as necessary to carry out these acquisitions as described; 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 acquisition of Expansions 12 and 13 as proposed; allocate \$1,250,000.00 from Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (b/c), for acquisition costs and related expenses; authorize staff to enter into agreements as necessary to carry out these acquisitions as described; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

33. French Valley Wildlife Area, Riverside County \$10,950,000.00

Mr. Wright reported that this was a proposal to consider the acquisition of 702" acres of land, and the acceptance of a grant from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the amount of \$2,000,000.00 to be applied toward the purchase, for the permanent protection of state and federally listed species and to maintain regional wildlife corridor linkages with other habitat reserved areas in southwestern Riverside County. Ms. Debra Townsend described the project and its location.

The property is located in the geographical area known as French Valley, approximately five miles northeast of the City of Temecula, and one mile southwest of Lake Skinner. The property can be accessed by taking Interstate 15 to Winchester Road (Highway 79) north, and turning east on Nicholas Road to access the southern portion of the property. To access the northern portion, take Winchester Road (Highway 79) north, turning east on Benton Road, south on Washington, east on Borel Road or southeast on Buck Road.

The site has a history of being used for dryland farming of barley and occasional discing and sheep grazing. The property is leased for dry-land farming which would extend one year after acquisition by the Wildlife Conservation Board. The property consists of rolling hills with elevations ranging from 1,300 to nearly 1,600 feet. No improvements besides county roads, wells and fences have been observed on the property.

The property contains a mix of Coastal Sage scrub, southern willow scrub, native and non-native grasslands, eucalyptus woodlands and agricultural lands that provide important habitat for a host of sensitive species including the Orange-throated whiptail, Coastal western

whiptail, San Diego horned lizard, Rufous-crowned sparrow, Bell=s sage sparrow, Coastal California gnatcatcher, Stephen=s kangaroo rat and Quino checkerspot butterfly.

The property is located within the boundaries of three inter-related regional biological planning efforts in western Riverside County, as follows: 1) the Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP); 2) the habitat conservation plan for the Stephen=s kangaroo rat; and 3) a sub-regional habitat conservation plan for Assessment District 161. Acquisition of the proposed property would ensure connectivity between areas set aside in surrounding developments, including the existing multi-species reserve and Skunk Hollow (the only remaining vernal pool of its type). The proposed property is also a crucial building block for the area of the county encompassing the Department of Fish and Game=s (DFG) Lake Mathews Ecological Reserve, and the County=s and DFG=s Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (SWRCMSR), and would substantially benefit the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan now being prepared for the western portion of Riverside County.

Ongoing management of the proposed property and its protected resources would be funded and provided through DFG, together with the opportunity to work with the County of Riverside and the USFWS. Management objectives for the property include providing habitat connectivity and a secure wildlife corridor between the SWRCMSR, the Skunk Hollow vernal pool mitigation bank and Assessment District 161 protected lands, and providing for the protection and enhancement of state and federally listed species, and species of special concern. The proposed property would offer recreational use amenities to the public such as hiking, interpretation and bird watching.

The entire area, consisting of 1,376" acres, has been identified as Specific Plan No. 307 in Riverside County. Specific Plan No. 307, as approved, is intended for 3,500 dwelling units, small area for commercial, school sites, and parks, open space, corridor and right of way. The property was formally offered to developers in 1999, and at the invitation of Riverside County, the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) contracted for the acquisition and pre-purchased the property. Subsequently, the Riverside County Public Financing Authority acquired the property from TPL, and was able to convey 550" acres to the Assessment District 161 and 124" acres to the County of Riverside. The Financing Authority, in order to sell off the interior of the property and refinance its two-year debt obligation, has invited the Wildlife Conservation Board, together with assistance from the USFWS, to acquire the remaining 702" acres.

The appraised fair market value of the 702" acre property, as approved by the Department of General Services, is \$19,532,448.00, which the Financing Authority has agreed to sell to the Board for \$12,903,291.00. The USFWS has agreed to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board to contribute \$2,000,000.00 in Section 6 funds to be deposited directly into an escrow established for the purchase of the property, leaving a balance of \$10,903,291.00. It is estimated that an additional \$46,709.00 will be needed for

expenses which include appraisal costs, title, escrow and Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the total allocation necessary to \$10,950,000.00. The project is exempt from CEQA as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and the appropriate Notice of Exemption has filed.

Ms. Townsend reported that this project is supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the County of Riverside, and that the Board received a letter of support from the Endangered Habitats League. She also reported that Dee Sudduth and Kate Kramer, representing the Department of Fish and Game, and Mr. Richard Lashbrook, Director for Transportation and Land Management Agency with the County of Riverside, were in the audience should there be any questions.

Mr. Lashbrook, speaking on behalf of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, stated that the County viewed today=s potential action as a milestone in conservation planning for western Riverside County. He added that this property has tremendous values for a variety of reasons and that it is an expansion of a multi-species reserve system that has been jointly created by Riverside County and the Metropolitan Water District. Mr. Lashbrook commented that this property is also a part of a larger acquisition that was critical in creating a sub-regional habitat conservation plan which conserved about 1,500 acres in total and contributed about \$12 million towards the acquisition of the total parcel. He stated that, most importantly, this action and some previous actions clearly demonstrate that the County has a viable working and strong partnership with the state, federal and local level agencies, which is the cornerstone of habitat conservation planning in western Riverside County. He expressed appreciation for the Board=s consideration of this item and for the Board=s support and that of the Department of Fish and Game.

Mr. Chrisman asked when the multi-species planning effort began. Mr. Lashbrook stated that the plan began just over two years ago and that the County is on schedule to have the plan adopted around the middle of next year.

Mr. Hight expressed his appreciation to the County of Riverside for their support and hard work and for their contribution to the habitat conservation plan in that area.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the acquisition of the property as proposed; allocate \$10,950,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act/Prop 12, Section 5096.350 (a)(5) T&E Matching, to cover acquisition costs and to pay for project expenses; authorize the acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds in the amount of \$2,000,000.00, for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to complete 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 acquisition of the

property as proposed; allocate \$10,950,000.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act/Prop 12, Section 5096.350 (a)(5) T&E Matching, to cover acquisition costs and to pay for project expenses; authorize the acceptance of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 funds in the amount of \$2,000,000.00, for placement directly into escrow for purposes of acquiring the subject property as proposed; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to complete this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

34. Mid-State Bank Donation, San Luis Obispo County \$1,000.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider a donation from Mid-State Bank of approximately 20.75 acres to the Cambria Community Services District, and approve a tax credit in the amount of \$1,284,250.00 in favor of Mid-State Bank. This proposal represents the first donation of land to qualify under the Board's new Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000. Ms. Marilyn Cundiff described the proposal and the location of the property.

The donated property is located in Cambria, adjacent to Main Street and Highway 1. The donation has statewide significance in its strategic location along Scenic Highway 1 on the Big Sur coast and its proximity to Hearst Castle. The donation qualifies for the program pursuant to Section 37015 (e). Specifically, the donation will protect significant open space, provide access to the coast and will provide a direct link to State and County Park holdings such as the Santa Rosa Creek Natural Preserve, Moonstone Beach and Shamel Park.

For years, community activists have expressed the desire to keep the meadow on the donated property as open space. While Mid-State Bank had planned a 36,000 sq. ft. shopping center on the property, the donation will prohibit such a complex and retire all development rights thus protecting, in perpetuity, the donated property.

In addition, the donated land will provide a critical link and public access to the recently acquired East-West Ranch. The East-West Ranch, formerly known as the Fiscalini Town Ranch is part of the historic Rancho Santa Rosa Spanish Land Grant and is one of the many ranches in the area settled by Italian-Swiss immigrants in the second half of the 19th Century. For years the ranch has been enjoyed by thousands who have walked the historic trails linking the Park Hill and Lodge Hill communities of Cambria. Over the years, the town has expanded and grown in a horseshoe fashion around the 417-acre ranch, creating a mosaic of open space in the heart of the Cambria community. Residents and tourists alike have

historically used the ranch for hiking, beach access, fishing, picnicking and biking.

Now in public ownership, the 417-acre East-West Ranch provides a mosaic of habitat types including more than a mile of coastline, a lush riparian corridor that runs along Santa Rosa Creek, a coastal ridgeline forested by 70 acres of Monterey Pine, and seasonal freshwater marsh and wetlands. A number of endangered or threatened species and species of special concern are residents or migratory to the site. These species include the tidewater goby, California red-legged frog, California steelhead, Cooper's hawk, long-eared owl, great blue herons, southwestern pond turtle, burrowing owl, Monarch butterfly, Monterey pine, and the compact cobweb thistle.

The Cambria Community Services District is the fee title holder of the East-West Ranch and the donated parcel will become a part of the overall East-West Ranch. The District, working in cooperation with local nonprofit organizations, the community and the State Coastal Conservancy, is preparing a Resource Management Plan for the entire East-West Ranch. The plan will incorporate public access to the California coastline and protect the natural resources of the ranch.

The Cambria Parks, Recreation and Open Space Committee is currently revising their Master Plan to take into account the recently acquired East-West Ranch as well as the donated Mid-State Bank property. It is expected that this Master Plan, in addition to the Resource Management Planning process for the entire East-West Ranch, will produce the final concept for a new Cross-Town Trail, as well as other access trails. Through the Cross-Town Trail, it is envisioned that the public will have access to the entire East-West Ranch via footpaths accessed from Main Street and the donated Mid-State Bank property.

This proposal was to approve the donation of 20.75 acres of land from Mid-State Bank and pursuant to the provisions of the Act, award tax credits valued at 55 percent of the appraised fair market value of the donation. As such, the donation has an approved appraised value of \$2,335,000.00, which entitles the landowner (Mid-State Bank) to receive tax credits worth \$1,284,250.00.

Ms. Cundiff reported that Ms. Kellie Smith from Senator Jack O'Connell's office and Mr. Glen Williams from the American Land Conservancy, were in the audience should there be any questions or concerns.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Wright expressed his appreciation to Ms. Smith for her assistance in the development of the guidelines and to Senator O'Connell for his help in the passage of this legislation. Mr. Wright also thanked Mid-State Bank for the donation.

Mr. Hight also expressed his appreciation for Senator O'Connell's and the Governor's support of this legislation. Mr. Chrisman noted that the Board's allocation of \$1,000.00 would be used to cover the appraisal review costs and other administrative costs related to

the acceptance of this donation.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the donation and related tax credits; allocate \$1,000.00 from the General Fund, to cover the related appraisal review costs from the Department of General Services; authorize staff to enter appropriate agreements 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 the donation and related tax credits; allocate \$1,000.00 from the General Fund, to cover the related appraisal review costs from the Department of General Services; authorize staff to enter appropriate agreements necessary to carry out this project and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

35. San Joaquin River Parkway Interpretive Center, Fresno County \$500,000.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Inc. (Trust), a non-profit conservation organization, for a cooperative project to assist in funding the restoration of a historic 1890 ranch house, which includes reconstruction of the original adjacent water tank house and smokehouse, construction of landscaping features associated with the structures and construction of a trail staging area and connection to the Lewis S. Eaton Trail. These activities will occur on a twenty acre property known as Riverview Ranch, located on Old Friant Road, approximately one mile south of the San Joaquin River, and approximately three miles north of downtown Fresno. The property is owned and managed by the Trust, and the new facility will be operated as the Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies. Mr. Scott Clemons described the project and its location.

Established in 1988, the Trust has completed many partnership projects with the Wildlife Conservation Board (Board) as well as some three-way partnerships with the Board and the San Joaquin River Conservancy (SJRC). Some examples of land acquisition partnership projects include Rank Island, Camp Pashayan, Wildwood, Jensen River Ranch and Hansen Farm. Riparian restoration partnership projects have included Camp Pashayan/Willow Unit, the Riverside site, and the current San Joaquin River Exotic Species Removal project, which is the subject of another item on this agenda.

Riverview Ranch, built in 1890, is listed on the Fresno County Register of Historical Places. The historic ranch is being restored as an interpretive center with a focus on its history within a regional context in the Central Valley. The Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies

will provide a balanced, long-term perspective for understanding the Valley's people in relation to the river. Interpretive displays, exhibits, art, and public programs will focus on the San Joaquin River's natural and cultural landscape. The San Joaquin River has played an important role in the development of the surrounding communities and sustains an extraordinary agricultural garden and flourishing wildlife. The location provides excellent views of the river corridor and offers many possibilities for interpretive programs as well as staging for river field trips. It is anticipated that the primary use during the week will be visiting school groups, with a wide variety of parkway visitors expected on the weekends. It is planned to have docents assist the Trust with visitors to the interpretive center. The proposed project has strong support from the community. The ownership of the 20-acre site and building was transferred as a donation from Vulcan Materials Company to the Trust in April 2001. In addition, the East Fresno Rotary adopted the project in the early planning stages and provided a critical boost of funds, volunteer labor and professional contacts to begin restoration and design work.

Estimated costs for this project have been reviewed by staff, and are as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Land acquisition	\$ 370,000.00
House restoration (includes main house, tankhouse and smokehouse)	917,509.00
Welcome Center construction	364,851.00
Landscaping	165,000.00
Eaton Trail Connection	95,200.00
Programs and Interior Design	444,880.00
Project Management/Maintenance	67,500.00
Contingency	75,060.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$2,500,000.00</u>
 <u>Funding Distribution:</u>	
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$ 500,000.00
San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Inc.	\$2,000,000.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$2,500,000.00</u>

Of the \$2.5 million construction total, the Trust has spent approximately \$790,000.00 on design, restoration and project development work. Additionally, the organization has \$769,992.00 in existing funds dedicated for this project and has received \$408,667.00 in donation and funding commitments, leaving a shortfall of approximately \$532,000.00. More than 90% of the funds raised to date have come from donations made by individuals and local private foundations. A \$500,000.00 grant from the Board, combined with additional funds to be raised by the Trust will allow completion of the interpretive center project. It is anticipated that the remaining \$32,000 needed to complete the work will be raised by the

Trust prior to awarding the construction contract. In addition to the construction costs, the Trust is committed to raising an additional \$1million to establish a significant stewardship endowment and provide initial operating start-up costs.

The WCB's 1999/00 Budget contained \$5,000,000.00 in funding from the General Fund with control language directing that these funds be used for ASan Joaquin River Conservancy Projects and Acquisitions. After an April 2001 public meeting of the SJRC Board, where this proposed project was discussed, and consistent with the intent of the budget act, the SJRC Board voted to recommend that the WCB use \$500,000.00 of these funds to fund the proposed interpretive center project described in this agenda item. All necessary permits will be obtained by the Trust and the Fresno County Planning Commission has approved a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

Mr. Clemons reported that this project has the strong support of the community and that the Board received a letter of support from Assembly Member Sarah Reyes. He stated that Mr. Dave Koehler, representing the San Joaquin Parkway Trust, and Mr. Bill Loudermilk, Regional Manager for the Department of Fish and Game, were in the audience should there be any questions.

Mr. Chrisman acknowledged the efforts of the Parkway Trust in making this project possible. Mr. Koehler expressed his appreciation to the Board for their prior and continuing support of projects along the San Joaquin River, which has enabled the Parkway Trust to be successful in their work.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$500,000.00 from the General Fund for San Joaquin River Conservancy Projects; 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; allocate \$500,000.00 from the General Fund for San Joaquin River Conservancy Projects; 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.

36. Wetland Habitat Restoration, East Grasslands (Duck Slough), \$324,000.00
Merced County

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU), for a cooperative project to enhance approximately 2,000 acres of

seasonal wetland and adjacent uplands and restore more than four miles of slough channels. The partners include DU, the landowners, the Department of Fish and Game and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The site is located approximately fifteen air miles southwest of the City of Merced on three adjacent privately-owned properties. The project is located within a half mile of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Merced National Wildlife Area and is less than ten miles east of the Department's Los Banos Wildlife Area. Mr. Peter Perrine described the project and its location.

The East Grasslands is a unique area in California in that it has extensive areas of undeveloped agricultural and grazing lands that are flooded in most years. These areas provide tremendous wildlife benefits during these wet periods for large numbers of waterfowl and other wetland dependent species. The Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture's (CVHJV) Implementation Plan calls for the protection and enhancement of 20,000 acres of restorable lands within the San Joaquin Basin, which includes the East Grasslands. The CVHJV Plan also specifies those areas just north and south of the Merced National Wildlife Refuge that offer significant opportunities for wetland restoration. Lying less than a mile north of the Refuge, the enhanced site will provide a large boost to wetland dependent wildlife.

The three properties to be enhanced have been operated as cattle ranches and used for duck hunting for generations. Historically, the area was open grasslands with small channels bordered by narrow strips of riparian vegetation. Duck Slough, one of those channels, runs across the properties from east to west and flows into the Eastside Bypass before eventually emptying into the San Joaquin River. Heavy, uncontrolled grazing over many years has damaged the already limited riparian habitat, but the grasslands remain relatively intact. Each winter, heavy rains traditionally flooded the entire area, and the process continues to this day, though flows are more limited due to upstream diversions and downstream channelization and levees.

The proposal calls for the installation of wells and water control structures, the removal of old cross levees that were used for irrigating pastures, the removal of sediment in some of the smaller sloughs and the planting of riparian vegetation. Grazing will be controlled in areas of riparian restoration to allow for the development of a healthy forest. The goal of the project is to promote a more natural flood regime across this area. The structures will be used to slow the rate of runoff through the area, mimicking the historical flows through the site. Levees will be removed or altered to allow water to flow more naturally across the floodplains. Finally, the wells will be used to provide additional water during drier than average years to provide additional benefits during these especially critical times. While the properties are adjacent to one another, the proposed improvement can be operated independently and are not dependent on one another to improve more natural flows in the area.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Site preparation and earthmoving	\$137,800.00
Water control structures	49,200.00
Wells	159,000.00
Riparian restoration	6,000.00
Grantee project design and management	29,700.00
Contingency (10%), excluding in-kind	38,500.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$420,200.00</u>
<u>Proposed Funding Breakdown:</u>	
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$324,000.00
Landowner (Cash)	\$ 96,200.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$420,200.00</u>

The Department of Fish Game has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the Board. This project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15304, as it is a minor alteration of land for wildlife benefit. The three landowners have agreed to manage and maintain the property for 25 years, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Habitat Management Plan. If at any time during the life of the project, the landowners are unable to manage and maintain the project improvements, they will refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

Mr. Perrine noted that Mr. Bill Loudermilk, Regional Manager of the Department of Fish and Game, and Mr. Chris Hildebrand and Mr. Jim Well, representing Ducks Unlimited, were in the audience should there be any questions.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$324,000.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetland Conservation Program); authorize staff 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$324,000.00 from the General Fund (Inland Wetland Conservation Program); authorize staff 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.

37. Wetland Habitat Restoration, North Grasslands Wildlife Area, \$242,000.00
Gadwall Unit, Merced County

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for a grant to the California Waterfowl Association (CWA) for a cooperative project to restore approximately

305 acres of wetlands on the Department of Fish and Game=s North Grasslands Wildlife Area, Gadwall Unit. The partners to this proposal include the CWA, the Department and the Board. The project is located on the southeastern portion of the Gadwall Unit, which is located approximately two miles east of the City of Los Banos. Mr. Peter Perrine described the project and its location.

The Gadwall Unit of the North Grasslands Wildlife Area, formerly called the Mud Slough Wildlife Area, consists of approximately 1,500 acres, of which approximately half has been restored. The initial purchase of 780 acres was approved in August 1992 to provide a much needed corridor between the extensive wetlands of the North and South Grasslands. In addition, located within two miles of the City of Los Banos, the site was highly susceptible to development. In May 1993, the Board assisted with the restoration of the parcel by providing high quality water to the site. Once a leveled and over-grazed pasture, the area is now high functioning wetlands. Additional Board actions in November 1994, May 1995 and May 1999 completed the acquisition process, developing the area to its present size.

The proposed project will restore approximately 282 acres of seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands and enhance 23 acres of adjacent upland nesting habitat. Specifically, approximately 49,000 cubic yards of earth will be moved and twelve water control structures installed to create a system of swales and islands that will provide a mosaic of open water, seasonal wetlands and uplands. Unneeded and abandoned fencing, concrete ditches and old pipes will be excavated and removed.

Wildlife values are expected to expand dramatically after restoration, mirroring earlier work on the Unit. Currently, the site provides some limited habitat for a few species of animals that use abandoned agricultural fields, such as voles, ground squirrels, coyotes and red-tailed hawks. After the restoration is complete, the area should support a suite of species, with waterfowl and shorebirds being the most numerous and obvious beneficiaries. In addition, the freshwater marsh should provide habitat for the threatened giant garter snake and other special status species including the bald eagle, western pond turtle, white faced ibis and least bittern. Waterfowl benefitting from this project will include wintering populations of northern pintail, American wigeon, and northern shovelers and breeding populations of mallards, cinnamon teal and gadwall. Uplands will be improved and should provide nesting habitat for waterfowl and other birds such as pheasants and meadowlarks.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Site preparation and earthmoving	\$134,600.00
Water control structures	13,250.00
Removal of fencing and ditches	47,000.00
Sign	1,000.00
Grantee project design and management	35,250.00
Contingencies	20,400.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$251,500.00</u>

<u>Proposed Funding Breakdown:</u>	
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$242,000.00
Department of Fish and Game	8,000.00
California Waterfowl Association	1,500.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$251,500.00</u>

The Department of Fish Game has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the Board. The Department of Fish and Game will complete the appropriate notice to satisfy CEQA requirements.

Mr. Perrine reported that Mr. Pat Fitzmorris and Mr. Dave Patterson, representing the California Waterfowl Association, and Mr. Bill Loudermilk, Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Game, were in the audience should there be any questions.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$242,000.00 from the General Fund (Wetlands); authorize staff to enter into the 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 Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$242,000.00 from the General Fund (Wetlands); authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

38. Riparian Habitat Restoration, Sacramento River Wildlife Area, \$248,420.00
Moulton Weir Unit, Colusa County

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation of funds for a grant to Sacramento River Partners (SRP), a nonprofit conservation organization, for a cooperative project with the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to restore 46± acres of riparian habitat on the Moulton Weir Unit of the Sacramento River Wildlife Area. The Moulton Weir Unit is located on the left bank of the Sacramento River in Colusa County at River Mile 157, approximately eight miles north of the City of Colusa. The property lies on the river side of the federal flood control levee, and may be accessed via River Road. In the last two years the Board has approved funding for similar restoration work at four other units of the Sacramento Wildlife Area. Mr. Tony Chappelle described the project and its location.

The Moulton Weir Unit totals 106± acres, and was acquired by the Board in 1991. Historically riparian habitat, a 41 acre portion of the parcel was in walnut production at the time of acquisition. After the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) began managing the property the farming operation ceased and in 1993 the walnut orchard was cleared. Since that time some of the stumps have subsequently re-sprouted.

The dominant vegetation in the area proposed for restoration is mostly exotic annuals such as mustard, fennel, Johnson grass and yellow star thistle. A handful of young riparian trees and shrubs have colonized the site, including scattered valley oak seedlings, coyote brush, and elderberry. The area to be restored is adjacent to the river and other lands including riparian forest and riparian scrub-shrub habitat, ruderal vegetation and an agricultural field. The proposed restoration work will involve removing remaining walnut stumps and planting a minimum of 46 acres of low-terrace mixed riparian forest. The native species will include valley oak, sycamore, cottonwood, California blackberry, coyote bush, California wild rose, box elder, and willow. SRP will monitor the survival of the woody species for two years after they are planted. The Department will continue to manage the property after the project is completed. It is anticipated that the restored riparian forest will be self-sustaining after a three year establishment period.

The proposed project will increase the value of the Moulton Weir Unit for resident and migratory fish and wildlife by closing the gap in the surrounding forest. A variety of species will benefit including the red-legged frog, western pond turtle, black-tailed deer, long-eared owl, sharp-shinned hawk, white-tailed kite, Swainson=s hawk, Cooper=s hawk, wild turkey, California quail, western yellow-billed cuckoo, neotropical migratory birds, wading birds and waterfowl. In addition, several fish species benefit from improved riparian habitat including Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, Sacramento perch, Sacramento blackfish and Sacramento splittail.

SRP is a local group and will hire local farmers and workers to implement the project, promoting local stewardship of the future riparian forest and helping to cement relations between government land managers and the neighboring farm community. The proposed project will further the goals of the Sacramento River Wildlife Area Management Plan, DFG=s Riparian Habitat Program, DFG=s Lands Stewardship Program, the California Riparian Habitat Conservation Program, the SB 1086 Sacramento River Conservation Area program and the California Partners in Flight Riparian Habitat Joint Venture.

Cost estimates for this proposal have been developed by Sacramento River Partners and have

been reviewed and approved by staff as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Hydrologic Study	\$ 10,580.00
Site Assessment	3,154.00
Restoration Plan	2,550.00
Plant Propagation	22,904.00
Field Survey/Layout	2,642.00
Well/Irrigation	30,693.00
Equipment Rental/Mileage	15,801.00
Field Planting	25,235.00
Restoration Maintenance	53,500.00
Restoration Report	3,446.00
Project Management	26,354.00
Project Signs	1,882.00
Administrative Costs	36,310.00
Contingencies	19,869.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$254,920.00</u>

Proposed Funding Breakdown:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$248,420.00
Sacramento River Partners (in-kind contribution)	\$ 6,500.00
<u>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</u>	<u>\$254,920.00</u>

Consistent with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, this project is categorically exempt under Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration of land to benefit fish and wildlife and an appropriate notice has been filed.

Mr. Chappelle reported that Mr. Banky Curtis, Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Game, and Mr. John Carlon, representing the Sacramento River Partners, were in the audience should there be any questions.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve the grant as proposed, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, allocate \$248,420.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (e/f), and authorize staff and Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the grant as proposed, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this

project, allocate \$248,420.00 from the Habitat Conservation Fund, Section 2786 (e/f), and authorize staff and Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

39. Oroville Wildlife Area Ponds, Fishing Access Improvements, \$250,270.00
Butte County

Mr. Wright reported that this project was to consider an allocation to the Feather River Park and Recreation District to upgrade and restore public access to the Oroville Wildlife Area Ponds, which are located on the easterly side of the Feather River at the northeast end of the Oroville Wildlife Area in the City of Oroville. Mr. Sean Woods described the project and its location.

In 1985, the Wildlife Conservation Board, on behalf of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), acquired gravel rights over a 28.57" acre parcel of land located within the Oroville Wildlife Area on the west bank of the Feather River in the City of Oroville. These rights were then exchanged for a 100" acre parcel of riparian habitat along the east side of Feather River. This area is now known as the Oroville Wildlife Area Ponds and is currently managed by DFG. The property has more than one mile of river frontage and adjoins City of Oroville-owned land to the north. The area also contains two fishing ponds that have formed as a result of prior gravel mining operations on-site. The ponds, which are popular with the local residents, support significant populations of bass and catfish and are regularly stocked with trout in the winter months. In 1988, the Board authorized the construction of two fishing piers in the riparian ponds as well as the construction of a 10-car paved parking area and a pathway to each pier. Due to higher than anticipated costs, the project was eventually scaled back to one pier and the parking area. The project was primarily designed to provide American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant parking and access to the ponds. Over the years, the site has fallen into disrepair, with vandalism and illegal dumping becoming a common occurrence.

Currently, the facilities at the Oroville Wildlife Area Ponds area are dilapidated and in need of repair. The parking surface is crumbling, and the site lacks adequate trail access around the perimeter of the pond. The site also does not provide ADA restroom facilities for handicapped anglers. The proposed project, which intends to address these needs, includes installing two ADA restroom facilities, a water well pump and piping for irrigation and fire suppression, paving of existing parking areas and construction of bollard fencing for security purposes. The fencing will also act as a deterrent to illegal dumping on the property. Additional improvements include the construction of fishing and hiking trails to access the Wildlife Area Ponds and the Feather River and the installation of trash receptacles throughout the Wildlife Area to improve trash collection and to discourage debris dumping into this scenic aquatic corridor.

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

<u>Description</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Bollard Fencing and Gate	\$25,000.00
Irrigation Well, Pump, Irrigation Pipe	40,000.00
ADA Restroom (Two Vault)	50,000.00
Concrete Trash Receptacles (40)	21,600.00
Access trail around pond	4,000.00
Basalt Rock and Gravel (500 tons)	15,000.00
Decomposed Granite (300 tons)	9,000.00
Site Clearing and preparation for planting	4,400.00
Native Meadow Seed	3,000.00
Signage	1,000.00
Construction	40,000.00
Administration and Engineering Costs	12,000.00
Contingencies	25,000.00
<u>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>\$250,000.00</u>

An additional \$270.00 will be required for Department of General Services= review costs, bringing the allocation necessary for the Board=s portion of the project to \$250,270.00.

The Feather River Recreation and Park District has filed a Negative Declaration for the project, will handle the contract administration for the construction of the improvements and has agreed to enter into a 25-year Operating Agreement to operate and maintain the site. The Department of Fish and Game has reviewed this proposal and supports the proposed improvements and management agreement.

Mr. Woods reported that Mr. Bob Sharkey, Park Superintendent, Feather River Recreation and Park District, and Mr. Banky Curtis, Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Game, were in the audience should there be any questions.

Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Wright stated that he recently visited this site and that the improvements are definitely needed. Mr. Hight commented that this project is another example of how working through partnerships much can be accomplished to improve wildlife habitat and, in this case, fishing access.

Staff recommended that the Board approve this project as proposed; authorize staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$250,270.00 from the General Fund, 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 staff to enter into the appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; allocate \$250,270.00 from the General Fund, and authorize staff and the Department of Fish and Game to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

40. Mill Creek, Del Norte County \$15,000,000.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider the cooperatively funded public acquisition of 24,772 acres of watershed and timber lands for fisheries and wildlife habitat protection and improvement and for compatible public recreational uses. Mr. Jim Sarro described the project and its location.

The Mill Creek property is located three miles east and south of Crescent City in Del Norte County. A locked gate at the intersection of Hamilton Road and US Highway 101 controls the only vehicular access. Redwood National and State Parks (Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park and Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park) border the property to the west and north, with the Smith River National Recreation Area, a part of Six Rivers National Forest, adjoining to the east. A single private industrial timber company owns vast acreage to the south.

Mill Creek and Rock Creek are the defining features of the property. The main stem of Mill Creek and the lower reaches of the West Branch and East Fork occupy broad, flat valley bottoms. After leaving the property, Mill Creek flows north through the ancient redwood forest of Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park before joining the main stem of the Smith River. Rock Creek flows east, then north through a deep, narrow canyon for most of its length, then through the Smith River National Recreation to its confluence with the South Fork Smith River. Smaller tributaries to both Mill Creek and Rock Creek occupy narrow, deeply incised, V-shaped valleys with limited floodplain development.

The project area is strategically located to expand the connection of the 22,300 acres of the northern coastal and inland forest units of Redwood National and State Park, to the 300,000 acres of the Smith River National Recreation Area. Redwood National and State Park includes 44% of the remaining ancient redwood forest in the world. The Smith River National Recreation Area is part of 1,000,000 acres of public land that stretches more than 200 miles from the Mendocino National Forest in the south to the Siskiyou National Forest in the north.

Surveys for amphibians, fish, birds and mammals of special concern were conducted by the current owner in support of a proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). In total, the HCP identified 23 threatened, endangered, or species of special concern known to be present on the property. Among these are chinook, chum and coho salmon as well as steelhead and

coastal cutthroat trout. Numerous amphibians, including the Del Norte salamander, Southern Torrent salamander, foothill yellow-legged frog, tailed frog and Northern red-legged frog are also found on site. Bird species include, among others, golden and bald eagles, marbled murrelet (breeding) and Northern spotted owl (breeding).

The anadromous fish runs of Mill Creek are believed to be some of the most exceptional in the state. The current property owner has conducted a juvenile outmigrant monitoring program for the past six years. This effort documented the occurrence of five salmonid species within the watershed along with estimates of the amount of suitable spawning habitat on the property where known. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has concluded that a healthy, viable salmonid population appears to exist within the Mill Creek watershed.

Despite a history of intensive logging on the property, salmonid runs remain relatively healthy. A primary reason for this is the stable and forgiving geology: most of the Mill Creek basin is underlain by competent sandstone of the Franciscan Assemblage. Abundant low-lying terraces along Mill Creek further protect the base of hillslopes from erosion, resulting in fewer streamside landslides and less associated sediment input than in adjacent basins. In addition, the road system developed for timber harvest is one of the more stable and well-maintained road networks in California and Oregon.

Acquisition of the property would build on this solid foundation and further improve fish habitat. Increased forest age and stand complexity will further shade the streams, moderating extreme summer temperatures, and continuing the addition of the large woody debris that enriches aquatic habitat. Mill Creek, managed for conservation values, has the potential to become the premiere nursery for salmonids in the State, and one of the most important salmonid sites across the Pacific Northwest.

The entire property falls within the breeding range of the marbled murrelet. The Mill Creek area lies in Marbled Murrelet Recovery Plan Zone 4 (Siskiyou Coast Range Zone). This zone has large blocks of suitable habitat critical to the three-state (California, Oregon and Washington) marbled murrelet population recovery. Despite this, the amount of habitat existing in parks is considered insufficient to guarantee survival. When the US Fish and Wildlife Service designated critical habitat for the recovery of the species in 1996, they recognized that habitat protected in parks and national forests alone would not guarantee its long-term survival.

The primary management objectives for the Mill Creek properties would be to:

- § conserve existing late seral-stage forest stands and promote accelerated development of late seral-stage characteristics in young even-aged stands;
- § restore and enhance habitat for listed and candidate fish and wildlife species on the local

- and regional levels;
- § allow re-growth of forest stands, prevent further habitat fragmentation, and maintain wildlife travel and migration corridors between coastal habitats and inland forest;
- § stabilize existing road system and upgrade or eliminate stream crossings to prevent sediment loads entering the creeks;
- § protect rare natural communities, especially the serpentine series and fen series;
- § promote full functioning of all natural forest processes; and
- § provide greatly expanded opportunities for public recreational uses.

The General Plan for Redwood National and State Parks examined regional trail use, including the possibility of a trail connecting the Pacific Crest Trail to the California Coastal Trail (A Coast to Crest Trail@). Currently, existing trails stop at the property boundary. Public use of the proposed acquisition is key to connecting trails between Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area, hence ultimately establishing the Coast to Crest Trail. Trails could make use of portions of the existing road networks. Trails would be developed as part of a long-term trails plan, carefully sited to avoid disruption of the property=s threatened and endangered species, particularly sensitive marbled murrelet nesting habitat. Trails would provide access for wildlife and bird viewing, and for scientific research. Expansion of appropriate recreational use in conjunction with the Mill Creek campground in Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park, immediately west of the property, would further expand public benefits of acquisition.

The Save-the-Redwoods League (SRL) has an opportunity to obtain an option for the purchase of the Mill Creek property from the Stimson Lumber Company. Discussions among SRL, the state Departments of Fish and Game (DFG), Parks and Recreation (DPR), Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), Coastal Conservancy (SCC) and Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) staff have led to a decision to use their best efforts to put together sufficient funding (public and private) to place the property under public ownership and management that would maximize fisheries and wildlife habitat protection and improvement while affording significant opportunities for public recreation within this area.

The property has been appraised and has a state-approved fair market value of \$63,000,000.00. The purchase price for the property would be \$60,000,000.00, if the option is exercised within one year, with provision for escalation if the option is exercised in succeeding option years. SRL proposes to pay \$3,000,000.00 for the option, applicable to the purchase price if the property is acquired. SRL has also pledged an additional \$12,000,000.00 in private funds toward the purchase of the property on behalf of the public. SRL seeks a matching grant of WCB funds, \$15,000,000.00, thus providing a significant start on its fund-raising efforts for the purchase.

The current year WCB budget includes a Challenge Grant Fund, recommended by Governor Davis for the precise purpose of encouraging private donations, on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis, for preservation of the state=s natural resources, open spaces, parks and

wildlife habitat. Staff proposes that the Board accept the SRL Challenge Grant proposal.

The Board's action would be an important first step in the process of carrying out this acquisition. Over the coming year, the affected federal and state agencies would need to work out appropriate acquisition and management strategies. It remains undetermined whether one public entity should hold the property or whether jurisdiction should be divided in some manner. In any event, it seems most likely that the general management plan for the property would be developed cooperatively, with input from interested local parties, the community, sport and commercial fishing interests and the County of Del Norte.

Also over the coming year, there is the task of identifying the additional public and/or private funds that would be needed to acquire this property, another \$30,000,000.00. In the meantime, the \$15,000,000.00 that would be allocated by WCB would be held by the state and be deposited to SRL's purchase escrow only if and when all funding is secured and deposited and the management issues discussed above have been addressed.

Mr. Sarro reported that this project has the support of the Department of Fish and Game, State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, National Parks Service, U.S. Forest Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. He added that the Board received a letter from the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors recognizing the importance of this project and that they are supportive of the acquisition, but the County has three concerns that they would like to see addressed during the acquisition process. One of those concerns is that the County would like to be compensated for the potential loss of revenue that they might experience by this property going into public ownership, including timber yield and real property taxes. The County would also like to participate in the development of the transaction, which they are already doing. Mr. Sarro stated that he and Mr. Wright have previously met with and toured the site with members of the Board of Supervisors and it is the intent of the Wildlife Conservation Board to continue that contact. Thirdly, the County would like to see an assurance of public access, which is also one of the Department's interests, particularly for public fishing. He added that the property has tremendous potential for a park element, as it is surrounded by parks, and for public access that would normally attend it. He added that hopefully during the next year a collective effort will be made to resolve the revenue loss issue. Mr. Sarro introduced Ms. Kate Anderton, representing Save-the-Redwoods League. Ms. Anderton thanked the staff of the Wildlife Conservation Board for their engagement and embrace of this project and also the staff of the Department of Fish and Game and a number of other public agencies in making a careful evaluation of the opportunities that are present on this property which provided a lot of the momentum for clarifying the importance of this project for a fully functioning forest to take place. She stated that the presence of healthy fish populations really indicate that there is huge promise to rebuild these populations and to be available as a nursery for the wild and scenic Smith River and its reaches. She added that the League is very pleased to be a key partner in this project and they look forward to the Board's action and continued work over the course of the next year in building support for

the project.

Mr. Chrisman expressed his appreciation for the League's interest and support for the project. He asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Grant Werschull, representing the Smith River Alliance, thanked the staff of the Wildlife Conservation Board and Department of Fish and Game for their efforts in this project.

Mr. Chrisman requested clarification regarding the disposition of the Board's \$15 million if the League fails to raise \$30 million. Mr. Sarro stated that the \$15 million will not be deposited into escrow until all other funds are in place. If that does not occur, it would be recovered by the Board for reallocation.

Mr. Wright read from a postcard he received from Mr. Ed Henke, which included a beautiful photo of fly fishermen that he took on the Smith River. Mr. Henke wrote that he spent many wonderful hours on the Smith River as long ago as 1949 and applauded the Board's participation in the Mill Creek acquisition.

Mr. Wright expressed his appreciation to Ms. Anderton and the League for their efforts in the acquisition of this significant fisheries resource and forest area. He also expressed appreciation to the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors for their constructive comments and said he looked forward to working with the County in this acquisition.

Mr. Hight complimented the large number of state and federal agencies working with private partners to make this project a success.

Staff recommended the Board approve the allocation of \$15,000,000.00 in General Fund Challenge Grant funding for deposit to the Save-the-Redwoods League's escrow for public purchase of the 24,772-acre Mill Creek property, to be available for deposit if the property is acquired for the price of \$60,000,000.00 or less; authorize acceptance of interests in or title to such portions of the property as may be determined should be held by the Department of Fish and Game; authorize staff and the Department to enter into appropriate agreements to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department to proceed substantially as planned.

It was moved by Mr. Robert Hight that the Board approve the allocation of \$15,000,000.00 in General Fund Challenge Grant funding for deposit to the Save-the-Redwoods League's escrow for public purchase of the 24,772-acre Mill Creek property, to be available for deposit if the property is acquired for the price of \$60,000,000.00 or less; authorize acceptance of interests in or title to such portions of the property as may be determined should be held by the Department of Fish and Game; authorize staff and the Department to enter into appropriate agreements to carry out this project; and authorize staff and the Department to proceed substantially as planned.

Motion carried.

41. Irish Hills Conservation Area, San Luis Obispo County \$301,500.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider a grant to the City of San Luis Obispo (City) to assist in a cooperative project with The Nature Conservancy, Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and others to acquire 154" acres of land for the protection and enhancement of threatened and endangered species habitat and to enhance public access to the Irish Hills Conservation Area, immediately west of the City of San Luis Obispo. Mr. Ronald E. Boeck described the project and its location.

The Irish Hills are a major coastal open space which occupy over 120 square miles and extend from the City of San Luis Obispo and Highway 101 to the Pacific Ocean. The property being considered in this transaction is situated in Froom Creek Canyon, located in the hills above the ALaguna Lake@ area and adjacent to the southwestern line of the San Luis Obispo city limits. The property is accessed off Royal Way, south of Los Osos Valley Road.

The property lies in a transition zone between mixed serpentine chaparral and coast oak woodlands. The wide range of habitat types, from the ridge line at 700 feet to the richness of a healthy riparian zone along Froom Creek, a tributary to San Luis Obispo Creek, contribute to the area=s exceptional biological diversity. The area encompasses four broad habitat types including serpentine chaparral, coast oak woodland, scrub oak/leather oak woodlands and riparian. The property has a diversity of plant species and includes a number of sensitive plants, such as the San Luis Obispo mariposa lily, Brewer spineflower, San Luis Obispo sedge, Chorro Creek bog thistle, San Luis Obispo dudleya, and Blochman=s dudleya.

Recent surveys of the property found that a multitude of different wildlife species utilize the property, some of which are special status animal species, including the California red-legged frog, southwestern pond turtle and golden eagle. The area supports significant deer and mountain lion populations and a wealth of bird species are found within the riparian areas and on the uplands found on site. Froom Creek, a tributary within the San Luis Obispo Creek drainage, provides habitat for five species of native fish, including southern steelhead, prickly sculpin, speckled dace, three-spined stickleback, and Pacific lamprey.

The overall management responsibility of the property will be undertaken by the City of San Luis Obispo and the City anticipates that the public benefits realized by the acquisition of the subject site will offset an increase in management and operational costs. Management will focus on objectives that include protecting and preserving the various ecosystems on the property, providing opportunities for educational research and training, and providing controlled public access for hiking, bicycling and equestrian and other compatible recreational uses.

The City of San Luis Obispo has secured an exclusive purchase option and will hold title upon completion of the transaction. The property has been appraised and the value has been

approved by the Department of General Services (DGS) at \$1,245,000.00. In addition to WCB=s proposed funding participation at \$300,000.00, the remainder of the purchase price will be provided by the City, The Nature Conservancy of California and other grant funds secured by the City. It is estimated that an additional \$1,500.00 will be needed for project expenses, including DGS review charges. The project is exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and the City has filed the appropriate documentation.

Mr. Boeck reported that this project is supported by The Nature Conservancy, the Coastal Resource Grant Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Mr. Neil Havlik, representing the City of San Luis Obispo, thanked the staff of the Wildlife Conservation Board and Department of Fish and Game for their support for this transaction. He noted that this project has been a partnership including federal, state, local and private funding and that this proposal will assist in the consolidation of properties into a single 700-acre preserve. Mr. Havlik provided photos of the property to the Board members. Mr. Chrisman thanked Mr. Havlik for his assistance on the project.

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

Staff recommended that the Board approve the award of a grant to the City of San Luis Obispo to be applied toward the purchase of 154" acres as proposed; allocate \$301,500.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000, Section 5096.350 (a)(5) T&E Matching to cover the grant amount and pay for project expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the DFG 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 Luis Obispo to be applied toward the purchase of 154" acres as proposed; allocate \$301,500.00 from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000, Section 5096.350 (a)(5) T&E Matching to cover the grant amount and pay for project expenses; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and the DFG to proceed substantially as planned.**

Motion carried.

42. East Merced Vernal Pool Grassland Preserve and Expansion 1, Merced and Mariposa Counties \$4,379,700.00

Mr. Wright reported that this proposal was to consider an allocation for two grants, one to the California Rangeland Trust, and one to The Nature Conservancy, both non-profit organizations, for a cooperative project to acquire conservation easements over two separate ownerships, totaling 7,526" acres of vernal pool and grassland habitat. One of the subject

properties is located approximately 10 miles easterly of the City of Merced, four miles northerly of LeGrand and two miles easterly of Planada, near the southeast juncture of Highway 140 and Cunningham Road. The second parcel (Expansion 1) is located on the west side of Snelling Road, about seven miles northerly of Merced. The subject ownerships are located predominantly within Merced County, with a small portion of the first parcel lying within Mariposa County. Mr. John Schmidt described the project and its location.

The East Merced Vernal Pool Grasslands Conceptual Area, as described in the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) generated Conceptual Area Protection Plan, is defined by the distribution of vernal pools, which are found from the Tuolumne River (in Stanislaus County) to the north, to the Chowchilla River (in Madera County) to the south. The plan identifies a larger planned project to protect 60,000 acres of critical habitat, including vernal pools and adjacent grasslands. This area contains the largest area of vernal pool grasslands in the state, including some of the most dense and most diverse vernal pool habitats known to exist. They extend westerly, in an irregular fashion, toward the City of Merced, and slightly into Mariposa County to the east. Plants and wildlife found in and around the vernal pools are abundant, many of which are listed species, are species of special concern or are candidates for listing. This is due in large part to the heavy loss of vernal pool habitat in California, with over 90% of the state's original, vast vernal pool habitat having been converted to urban use, or cultivated to agricultural uses.

The subject area is considered critically important to a number of listed plants and animals and is considered a significant wintering habitat for waterbirds and raptors. Its preservation is considered by many to be essential to the conservation of vernal pool ecosystems. The conservation easement acquisitions proposed herein are included within the previously referenced DFG generated East Merced Vernal Pool Grasslands Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP). The east Merced vernal pool grasslands complex is contiguous to the Sierra Nevada foothills to the east. While wildlife corridors currently exist through foothill and Sierran canyons to Stanislaus National Forest, Sierra National Forest and Yosemite National Park, the acquisition of the properties described in this CAAP is considered as a necessary step to preserve a significant linkage of wildlife habitats and corridors between the San Joaquin Valley and the high Sierras.

As noted above, plants and wildlife found on these properties are abundant. The annual inundation and subsequent thorough drying of vernal pools effectively excludes many upland plants and widespread wetland plants. Thus the flora of the vernal pools is predominantly native species, although surrounded by grasslands in which Mediterranean grasses are dominant. The fauna of vernal pools is highly specialized. The absence of fish and non-native predators makes vernal pools ideal rearing habitat for amphibians such as tiger salamanders and spadefoot toads. Vernal pool crustacea are uniquely adapted to the extremes of inundation and drying, where their eggs can remain viable in the dry soil for decades. Vernal pool inhabitants in this area include, but are not limited to, the Conservancy fairy shrimp (federally endangered), the vernal pool fairy shrimp (federally threatened), the

Midvalley fairy shrimp, the vernal pool tadpole shrimp (federally endangered), the California tiger salamander and the Western spadefoot toad.

Vernal pools and grassland form one single ecological unit. The flowers of many vernal pool plants have specialized native pollinators that carry out most of their life cycles in burrows in upland soils. Vernal pool amphibians require adjacent upland habitat to survive through the dry season. Grasses found in these uplands include succulent owl= s clover, Colusa grass, San Joaquin Valley orcutt grass, Greenes tuctoria, pincushion navarretia and others. Birds that use vernal pools for foraging, resting or nesting also use the adjacent uplands.

Waterbirds are heavy users of these vernal pools and adjacent uplands, with users including Aleutian Canada geese, Pacific white-fronted geese, Ross= geese, cackling Canada geese, northern pintail, shoveler, gadwall, American widgeon, ring-necked duck, common goldeneye, bufflehead, common merganser, ruddy duck, long-billed curlew and others associated with this habitat type. In short, the vernal pool grasslands of eastern Merced County represent one of the most biologically significant regions remaining within the Central Valley of California.

Threats to this habitat vary greatly depending on the individual property=s potential for conversion and, of course, by individual desires and goals of the owners. Overall though, this still unfragmented habitat faces the very real threat of subdivision and development, or conversion to a more intense agricultural use. The Central Valley is experiencing tremendous growth pressure, but in this part of the valley it might become even greater with the potential impending construction of a new campus of the University of California. Unless a carefully defined plan of conservation is implemented, such as the acquisition of conservation easements or fee purchases, a pattern of sprawl may develop along the highways and major roads, encircling pristine habitat with development. Currently, even without a new campus, the vernal pool habitat is facing threats including the primary threat from development for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. A secondary, and very real threat, is conversion to a higher agricultural use which, in most cases, would destroy the properties= habitat values. The area=s relative flatness, coupled with recent advances in deep ripping and irrigation technologies, have resulted in the conversion of vernal pool habitat in other areas to orchards, vineyards and row crops. This has already been noted in northeastern Merced County (along Keyes Road) where, in just the past five years, thousands of acres of rangeland have been converted to almond orchards. Without adequate protection, such as the acquisition of conservation easements, this unique habitat will continue to be fragmented and/or lost to agriculture or development. Conserving these habitats and their associated species requires conserving the vernal pools and uplands in an intact ecosystem.

Management objectives include maintaining cattle ranching as the primary land use through the acquisition of compatible conservation easements, maintaining healthy populations of special status species, and improving the ecological health of the area by encouraging modifications to ranching practices such as fencing riparian areas to allow seasonal grazing,

as well as encouraging other practices conducive to the improvement of habitat.

The conservation easements being considered for acquisition with grant funds made available in the 2000-2001 Budget Act for the acquisition of sensitive habitat related to the University of California Merced Grasslands Project and more specifically described as follows:

East Grasslands Vernal Pool Grassland Preserve \$1,834,700.00
(Nelson)

A grant in the amount of \$1,829,700.00 to the California Rangeland Trust is proposed for this 3,931" acre parcel which is located approximately 3 miles easterly of Planada, south of Highway 140, and north of Deadman Creek, within Merced and Mariposa Counties. Legal access is provided to the subject via a gravel road easement extending southward from the highway and paralleling the eastern property boundary for about four miles. Its topography is mostly gently rolling to steep terrain, ranging from 315" to 400" feet above sea level. Water for the property is provided for livestock use by two creeks, three windmills and four stock ponds. Domestic water is provided by a pump and well system located on the farmstead site. Improvements include a foreman=s residence, a line shack, a tack barn and a small set of pipe corrals, in addition to the normal fencing required as part of its cattle grazing operation, the current use of the property. Potential threats to this property=s habitat values include rural residential development, with future permanent crops over a portion of the land suitable for this purpose, with the remainder remaining in native rangeland.

An appraisal of the property has been completed with a conservation easement value of \$1,829,700.00 being established. This appraisal has been approved by the Department of General Services. It is anticipated that an additional \$5,000.00 will be needed for administrative services, including Department of General Services= review cost, bringing the total allocation necessary for this proposal to \$1,834,700.00.

Expansion 1 (Robinson Ranch) \$2,545,000.00

A grant in the amount of \$2,540,000.00 is proposed to The Nature Conservancy for this property, which contains 3,595" acres, and is located in Merced County, approximately 7 miles northerly of the City of Merced. More specifically, it is located on the westerly side of Snelling Road, just south of the Merced River. Access to the property is obtained directly off of Snelling Road. Overall, the property contains a topography which varies from level flats, to terraces to rolling hills.

Some of the property has been farmed in the past, but it is currently in dry or native pasture land and is limited to use for cattle grazing purposes. Water is obtained from

seasonal surface water, but the main source is from the Merced Irrigation District main canal which flows along the northerly boundary of the property. Improvements on the property are limited to perimeter and cross fencing necessary for the cattle grazing operation. Potential threats to the property's habitat values are very real and could include a conversion of this rangeland to other more intensive agricultural uses such as vineyards and/or orchards.

The appraised fair market value for the proposed conservation easement over this land is \$2,540,000.00, a value approved by the Department of General Services. An additional \$5,000.00 is estimated to be needed for Department of General Services' review costs, bringing the total allocation necessary for this proposal to \$2,545,000.00.

The above noted proposals are exempt from CEQA under Class 13 of Categorical Exemptions as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes and appropriate Notices of Exemption have been filed. As the proposed purchases are for conservation easements only, with the fee ownership remaining with the current landowners, day to day operation and management responsibilities will also remain with these landowners.

Mr. Chrisman commented that he is personally familiar with this property and the work the California Rangeland Trust and that this project is another excellent example of public/private partnerships. Mr. Chrisman asked if there were any questions or comments.

Ms. Liz Borowiec, representing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, stated that since 1996 the EPA and several other state and federal agencies have been working together to study and protect vernal pools in California as part of the interagency vernal pool initiative and, as noted by Mr. Schmidt, eastern Merced County was quickly identified as having one of the largest intact remaining vernal pool complexes in California. She added that in the last three years, the EPA has been providing resources to organizations such as the East Merced RCD to work with ranchers about environmentally sensitive grazing practices and preserving landscapes in eastern Merced. She noted that these two easements represent a great beginning and she thanked the staff of the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Department of Fish and Game for doing an excellent job in putting this together.

Ms. Lydia Miller, representing the San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center, and also speaking on behalf of Mr. Steve Burke from Protect Our Water, voiced support of these two easement purchases, as well as disapproval and disappointment in the process related to the creation of the NCCP, HCP and CAPP. She read the attached letter, dated May 18, 2001, into the records.

Mr. Hight stated that it was his understanding she had two issues - the planning agreement and the process of the acquisition of the easement. Mr. Hight stated that the planning agreement has been a long process. Delaying the next public meeting until this coming Tuesday, will hopefully provide enough time to comment. He stated that they believed the planning agreement was broad and inclusive enough and is intended to provide public access

for everyone in the process. He commented that the planning agreement is an agreement on how they are going to proceed with the NCCP and HCP. He added that all the state and federal laws apply, he believed they would have an adequate number of committees and hearings, and that he felt comfortable that once they proceeded with the planning agreement, everyone would be comfortable with the process. In regard to the acquisition of the vernal pools, he stated that this is a difficult issue because it requires negotiations with private landowners and to have private parties involved in that process is difficult.

Mr. Bill Thomas, representing the California Rangeland Trust, expressed their support of this project and that they look forward to future projects in this area.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the grants to the California Rangeland Trust and to The Nature Conservancy for two conservation easement purchases as proposed above; allocate \$4,379,700.00 for the grants and to cover administrative expenses from the General Fund (2000/01 FY), as specifically designated for purchases related to the University of California, Merced campus project; 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 grants to the California Rangeland Trust and to The Nature Conservancy for two conservation easement purchases as proposed above; allocate \$4,379,700.00 for the grants and to cover administrative expenses from the General Fund (2000/01 FY), as specifically designated for purchases related to the University of California, Merced campus project; 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.

43.

ff Report - Easement Transfers

Sta

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 Temporary Ground Water Well, Del Norte County	Temporary Easement for Ground Water Monitoring	Tosco Refining	1/10 ac.	\$100.00 for administrative costs

Mr. Chrisman thanked the staff of the Wildlife Conservation Board and everyone that assisted in the preparation of this agenda. He noted that at today=s meeting, the Board allocated a total of \$59,500,000.00 toward the preservation of habitat across the entire state. He acknowledged the efforts of the Board and everyone involved, in both the public and private sector, and thanked them for their support.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Al Wright
Executive Director

PROGRAM STATEMENT

At the close of the meeting on May 18, 2001, the amount allocated to projects since the Wildlife Conservation Board's inception in 1947 totaled \$819,020,090.73. 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 Parklands 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 Act of 2000, Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Act of 2000 and the Wildlife Restoration Fund.

1. Fish Hatchery and Stocking Projects.....	\$16,006,219.06
2. Fish Habitat Preservation, Development and Improvement.....	23,425,641.88
Reservoir Construction or Improvement	\$ 5,518,592.00
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.....	41,345,114.08
Coastal and Bay.....	\$ 3,014,730.08
River and Aqueduct Access.....	11,614,915.76

	Lake and Reservoir Access.....	7,939,737.98
	Piers	18,775,730.26
4.	Game Farm Projects	146,894.49
5.	Wildlife Habitat Acquisition, Development and Improvement	718,951,210.45
	Wildlife Areas (General)	\$225,822,669.52
	Miscellaneous Wildlife Habitat Development.	5,469,933.74
	Wildlife Areas/Eco Reserves, (Threatened, Endangered or Unique Habitat)	236,378,417.48
	Land Conservation Area.....	1,669,057.18
	Inland Wetlands Conservation Grants and Easements	12,657,399.85
	Riparian Habitat Conservation Grants and Easements.....	6,229,142.14
	Other Wildlife Habitat Grants	230,724,590.54
6.	Hunting Access Projects.....	484,898.57
7.	Miscellaneous Projects (including leases).....	10,653,879.29
8.	Special Project Allocations	1,117,464.79
9.	Miscellaneous Public Access Projects.....	6,343,130.63
	State Owned	\$1,260,770.63
	Grants	5,082,360.00
10.	Sales and/or exchanges.....	<u>545,637.49</u>
	Total Allocated to Projects	\$819,020,090.73

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