



MEASURABLE GOALS FOR ACQUISITIONS.

The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) is committed to focusing its resources on statewide priority conservation objectives. This means that WCB acquisitions should be concentrated in areas that provide state-wide ecological benefits that are self-sustaining and resilient to climate change, and that provide as many public use opportunities as appropriate. This is WCB's goal no matter which habitat types are protected or which program funds are used.

In order to accomplish WCB's goals, certain broad ecological values need to be taken into account. For example, larger acreages are more resilient, more likely to provide habitats for a broader range of species, and more likely to provide sufficient space for larger, widely-ranging species such as mountain lions or bobcats. Also, areas of the state that are more likely to provide long-term benefits in the face of climate change should be targeted for protection. The State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) has been developed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to provide guidance state-wide on the most critical habitats, and the recommendations included there should carry considerable weight. Given that just under half of California is privately owned, and most of that is made up of working lands (farms, ranches and working forests), no ecological goals can be reached without considerable commitment to working landscapes. And finally, compatible public access must be encouraged whenever possible to assure public interest in maintaining these valuable landscapes.

To get a true method for determining the success of WCB's acquisition programs, we have identified six different broad criteria that can be measured to provide an accurate evaluation of accomplishments. These six criteria are biodiversity, climate change resiliency, support of the priorities in the SWAP, protection of working landscapes, protection of wetlands/riparian habitats, and providing enhanced public access opportunities. All of these criteria are identified and evaluated in the proposal form for CDFW's Land Acquisition Evaluation/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (LAE/CAPP), the latest draft of which is currently under development. Should that document change, the details identified within the goals listed below could be altered to some extent, but the concepts behind the goals will not.

The goals described below will assure that WCB is working toward accomplishing the larger conservation needs of the State in ways that can be evaluated. For clarity, terms used in the descriptions of the measurable goals are defined below:

Biodiversity. The full diversity of habitats and ecosystems, especially as it relates to areas that contain species and habitats of greatest conservation needs. These habitats and species are identified in the SWAP.

Ecoregions: California has great ecological and biological diversity, containing offshore islands and coastal lowlands, large alluvial valleys, forested mountain ranges, deserts, and various aquatic habitats. Ecoregions were developed in California (and elsewhere) in an effort to classify areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of the environment to include geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. Examples include the Northern California Coast or Sierra Nevada Foothills.

Macrogroup: The Macrogroup is one classification level within the National Vegetation Classification (NVC), which is a world-wide classification hierarchy developed specifically to classify vegetation communities. The NVC consists of eight levels. The highest level, Formation, encompasses broad world-wide combinations of growth forms (e.g., trees) adapted to basic latitude, moisture and geography. The eighth and lowest level, Association, is defined by certain specific diagnostic species, maybe as few as one or two, found in very specific locations. The Macrogroup is in the mid-level (level 5), and is defined by plant communities with a common set of growth forms (e.g., trees or herbaceous cover), many diagnostic species, and usually sharing a broadly similar geographic region and regional climate. Macrogroups number about 50 in California and are used as a basis for prioritization in the SWAP. One example is the Temperate Northwestern Rainforest Macrogroup, which in California would include coast redwood forests, but includes several different types of tall conifer forests (e.g., Coast Redwood, Sitka Spruce, Western Hemlock, and Grand Fir) adapted to cool coastal climates from central California all the way north to southeast Alaska.

Refugia: Areas within macrogroups that contain vegetation or habitats that are not expected to change significantly as a result of exposure to expected changes in climate (changes in heat and/or rainfall).

Land facets: Geophysical features of a landscape that include a large range of the following: amount of change in elevation, slope (steepness), aspect (e.g., north, south, east or west facing slopes), soils (especially their ability to accept and hold water), and solar insolation (the amount of sunlight that strikes the site). Areas with high diversity of geophysical features are expected to support high biodiversity both now and into the future.

Disadvantaged Communities. Those communities identified from five-year data of the US Census American Community Survey as having less than 80% of the State's median household income.

The LAE/CAPP proposal form identifies all of the specific criteria identified below. The goals as proposed below would allow WCB staff to evaluate success of all of the acquisition programs.

Goal 1, Biodiversity: at least 50% of all acquisitions will accomplish one or more of the following:

- Protect three or more habitats identified at the macrogroup level.
- Directly benefit multiple Species of Greatest Conservation Need, as identified in the SWAP, or rare vegetation habitat types, as identified in the most current Natural Communities List in CDFW's

Goal 2, Climate Change Resiliency and Connectivity: while all acquisitions are expected to provide ecological value in perpetuity, certain acquisitions will target those landscapes that will in themselves provide the greatest benefit no matter how the climate may change in future. To do this, at least 50% of all acquisitions will protect one or more of the following (mapping is currently available for all of the items below except land facets, which is under development):

- Connections between ecological areas with moderate to high natural resource values that are protected in-perpetuity and that total 25,000 acres or more.
- New protected areas of 10,000 acres or more.
- Species identified as vulnerable to climate change.
- Habitats identified as highly vulnerable to climate change.

- Climate change refugia.
- Sufficiently large acreages within land facets to support a broad range of species.

Goal 3, SWAP: at least 75% of all acquisitions will protect a priority macrogroup as defined by the SWAP for the ecoregion in which the project is located.

Goal 4, Working Landscapes: at least 25% of all acquisitions will protect ecologically important habitats on working landscapes (farms, ranches or working forests).

Goal 5, Water related projects: at least 50% of all acquisitions will contain wetlands or riparian habitats, or provide water for fish and wildlife.

Goal 6, Public Access on land acquisitions: at least 50% of all acquisitions will provide some level of public access, and 50% of those projects that do provide public access (i.e., 25% of all projects) will benefit disadvantaged communities. Public access can range from giving regular guided tours on conservation easements, to providing full access for all visitors every day with a variety of activities (hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.).

Every acquisition project must satisfy at least one of the above goals, and some may fall within several categories. For example, a conservation easement on a working forest might provide habitat for five pairs of nesting spotted owls and connect with adjacent forests to protect more than 25,000 acres. This would satisfy three of the goals above. However, WCB staff would be able to track all of our projects by each of the criteria listed above to determine if, overall, we are meeting the separate goals that we hope to achieve. These criteria would allow WCB staff to monitor success over time through visits to assure compliance. If the properties are not degraded over time, the habitat values that WCB wished to acquire should still be viable.

WCB staff is seeking guidance on the goals and objectives outlined above. The measurable goals will be implemented as soon as the LAE/CAPP proposal form and the process for bringing acquisition proposals to WCB for completion is finalized. That process is expected to be complete in the fall of 2017.