



Measurable Goals Workshop Results

August 2017

The Wildlife Conservation Board protects, restores and enhances California's spectacular natural resources for wildlife and for the public's use and enjoyment in partnership with conservation groups, government agencies and the people of California.

Measurable Goals for WCB Acquisitions

A workshop designed to present information about WCB staff's recommendations to develop measurable goals was held on July 26 to get input from interested parties. Twenty-one people attended either in person or by phone, and ten organizations sent in letters. Below is the results of the workshop, beginning with general comments, and following with specific comments on each of the six goals. Recommendations are included at the end.

The following are comments and questions that relate to the goals in general:

- ❖ Several groups were concerned that WCB may be placing too much emphasis on large blocks of habitat, leaving smaller more isolated but still ecologically important properties unprotected.
Response: Reserve not more than 10% of WCB funding for projects that clearly provide extraordinary ecological value but do not fit within any of the existing goals.
- ❖ A question arose as to how acreage targets were determined.
Response: Climate change experts within the CDFW, in partnership with Regional and headquarters scientists, used the latest models to determine acreage sizes that would be the most resilient to climate change.
- ❖ One group, while agreeing with the concept that larger is better, suggested smaller properties should also be considered, and asked how they might be evaluated in comparison.
Response: All projects, both large and small, would be evaluated using the same criteria as outlined in the Goals, in other words, the property's ability to provide biodiversity benefits, resilience to climate change, support the SWAP, support working landscapes, provide water-dependent habitats, and compatible public access.
- ❖ Several groups suggested using a different measure other than number of projects, such as dollars, acreage or some measure of ecological value. As one group said, comparing a 10,000-acre acquisition with a 100-acre property seems odd. They suggested instead that, since funding is the scarce resource, the measure should be replaced with the amount of dollars spent.
Response: Using amount of funding instead of number of projects also has its limitations. Some projects are inherently less expensive than others (conservation easements vs. fee title acquisitions, for instance), and there are usually funding partners in our acquisitions. However, we recommend tracking both number of projects and funding to alleviate the problem inherent in each of the two measures alone. We will keep the percentages the same for both, and evaluate over time, which seems to give the most accurate measure of success.
- ❖ Concerns arose that there were too many potential ways of providing ecological value – too many separate criteria within the six goals. The hope for these partners was that this process would provide greater limits and more specificity as to which habitats should be protected. The concern was that the proposed measurable goals simply provides an opportunity to acquire properties with no clear method for scoring a proposal, and that the goals are too broad to allow for discrimination.

Response: CDFW and WCB staff will be scoring applications pursuant to the new LAE/CAPP form, and each of the goals is identified within the form, and each will have a score. The more of these criteria that can be met by any one acquisition the higher the overall score.

- ❖ Several asked if the Streamflow Enhancement Program would use the same scoring and evaluation criteria.

Response: It will not – it will keep the existing scoring.

- ❖ Several groups asked if maps are available.

Response: The data is or soon will be included in CDFW's BIOS, and the mapping is being updated. Updated maps should be available in the fall.

- ❖ Questions arose on how LAE/CAPPs would be generated and scored, and if there could be input in the evaluation of forms and criteria.

Response: Every year more LAE/CAPPs are written by NGOs and that is not expected to change. Development of the new LAE/CAPP process is internal to CDFW, so the amount of input during the development of the new procedures is up to them. However, the scoring criteria will be made available to the general public when it has had final review.

- ❖ Questions on how ecosystem services (e.g., carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge) would be scored and if these will be included as a goal.

Response: They will be scored in LAE/CAPP evaluations, but will not be a specific goal of WCB's.

- ❖ A question arose asking if we will have a methodology for determining whether or not an applicant has sufficient expertise to manage properties after they are acquired.

Response: While this is not a measurable goal, WCB staff does evaluate the ability of the applicants to deliver and maintain all projects.

- ❖ Questions arose as to how many of the criteria any given project must meet.

Response: Projects must meet at least one criteria, and the score will improve with multiple benefits.

- ❖ A question asked if a project met multiple goals, how would that effect the minimum requirements for the categories.

Response: Multiple benefits is itself a goal of WCB – we want projects that score well on many of our individual goals. The percentages of the project goals is well above 100%. We don't expect to be able to say that a project that has multiple benefits would have one "primary goal", and the remaining are secondary.

The following are the six goals as identified in May. Under each are comments received regarding that specific goal.

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 VegCAMP.

Comments:

- ❖ Add links to CDFW's VegCAMP to ID very rare natural communities.
Response: Once CDFW BIOS is updated this fall, links will be added.
- ❖ Focus on rarest of the rare and use CNDDDB's rare natural communities.
Response: We utilize CNDDDB now to identify rare natural communities and will continue to do so.

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. This criteria was evaluated as a result of the comments from the workshop, and minor changes that follow the criteria of the latest draft of the LAE/CAPP application and the California Essential Habitat Connectivity are recommended. The change would be to specify that any given habitat block must be 2000 acres or larger, and the total of the connected blocks must equal 20,000 acres.
- ✓ 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.

Comments:

- ❖ Will you acquire larger properties in phases?
Response: If future phases are well planned, and a funding plan is in place.
- ❖ Are blocks only on protected areas, or do they include ecologically significant habitats on private lands as well?
Response: protected lands only.

Wildlife Conservation Board Workshop Results, August 2017

- ❖ Add emphasis to protect near-shore areas to allow upslope migration of a shoreline habitat in response to sea level rise.
Response: Agreed, this should be added, provided it is shown to fall within the most conservative models.
- ❖ Macrogroup is too gross a scale to accurately capture biodiversity.
Response: Macrogroups have been shown to be the only vegetation classification that is broad enough to be mapped Statewide, but still provide sufficient specificity to determine biodiversity. In addition, more detailed data under development now will allow for prioritization within an identified priority macrogroup.
- ❖ Do larger acreages pertain to new acquisitions or the total of adjacent protected areas?
Response: To qualify for this criteria, new stand-alone acquisitions must in themselves be larger than 10,000 acres. As revised, connected acreage must total 20,000 acres. Small acreages adjacent to a block of 10,000 acres or larger that do not provide connectivity to other habitat blocks would not qualify for this criteria.
- ❖ How were species and habitats determined to be vulnerable, and are they mapped?
Response: Exposure and vulnerability is determined by CDFW scientists using the latest data and models and is constantly updated. Mapping will be updated as well, beginning in the fall when BIOS is updated.

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.

Comments:

- ❖ Is it possible to list priority macrogroups by ecoregion, and map them and overlay that with unprotected lands?
Response: Once CDFW BIOS is updated this fall, that map will be added.
- ❖ The SWAP is not appropriate and is inconsistent across ecoregions, and therefore not useful for analysis of biodiversity.
Response: SWAP is the result of many years of work by many scientists Statewide, and provides valuable guidance to WCB.

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

Comments:

- ❖ The percentage of projects (25%) targeted for working landscapes is too high.
Response: Working landscapes provide much valuable wildlife benefit, while continuing to meet human needs. We will be evaluating this, and all other, criteria over the next couple years to determine if our goals are being met, and will adjust as necessary.

- ❖ Identify “ecologically important habitats”.

Response: The same criteria used for other acquisitions will be used here: that is, the projects should provide one or more of the following: biodiversity, climate change resilience, SWAP support, water related habitats and appropriate public access.

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

Comments: None

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.).

Comments:

- ❖ The percentage of projects (25%) targeted for public access is too high.

Response: The WCB is primarily an organization that provides wildlife benefit, and proposals that come to us must show that benefit. Public access is not always appropriate – visitor use can damage critical habitats and must be evaluated project by project to determine the appropriate amount. That said, allowing people to visit some of the properties that are acquired by the WCB allows the general public a deeper appreciation of the need for these critical habitats, which supports our mission and assures the preservation of even more habitat in the future.

- ❖ Identify criteria used to determine how a project benefits disadvantaged communities.

Response: At this time, we will continue to limit benefit to projects that provide public access, and other ecosystem services. We will evaluate that decision over time, but for now we consider public access to be the only benefit measured. If a project that provides public access falls within or adjacent to a disadvantaged community we consider it to benefit that community. If the acquisition is tied to a local program or service that provides access to the new acquisition, that also would benefit the community, even if the project is not immediately adjacent.

- ❖ Are you using CalEnviroScreen or statewide median income to define disadvantaged communities?

Response: statewide median income.