

**REGIONAL CONSERVATION  
INVESTMENT STRATEGIES PROGRAM  
(AB 2087)**

California's New Conservation & Advance  
Mitigation Program

California Department of Fish & Wildlife  
RCA and RCIS Guidelines Public Workshop

June 21, 2017

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Landscape Conservation Planning Program  
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch



## WORKSHOP AGENDA

- RCIS Program Overview
- RCA Overview & Guidelines
- RCIS Overview & Guidelines
- MCA Overview
- Examples of Uses
- Fees, Next Steps, & Contacts
- Questions and Answers

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**This presentation is meant as an overview. There is no substitute for the Guidelines. Applicants will be required to comply with the RCIS Program Guidelines and statute which are posted on the CDFW website.**

# RCIS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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## RCIS PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Regional Conservation Assessments (RCA)
- Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS)
- Mitigation Credit Agreements (MCA)

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RCIS Program is entirely fee-based – CDFW staff and costs are to be fully-funded by the program

The RCIS is not binding on local land use authorities

## RCIS PROGRAM PURPOSE

RCA - **ASSESS** conservation opportunities

RCIS - Develop a conservation **STRATEGY**

MCA - Provide an **ADVANCE MITIGATION** tool

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The program is a strategy to achieve better conservation planning. It provides a new tool (MCAs) for advance mitigation.

## RCIS PROGRAM IS TO:

- Achieve more strategic, effective conservation
- Promote resiliency to climate change & other pressures
- Support infrastructure & other projects with efficient mitigation delivery

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AB 2087 was passed in 2016 and became effective January 1, 2017. It is an ecologically-based approach for regional conservation assessments & strategies to guide conservation land acquisitions and actions beyond jurisdictional boundaries and enable opportunities for advance mitigation.

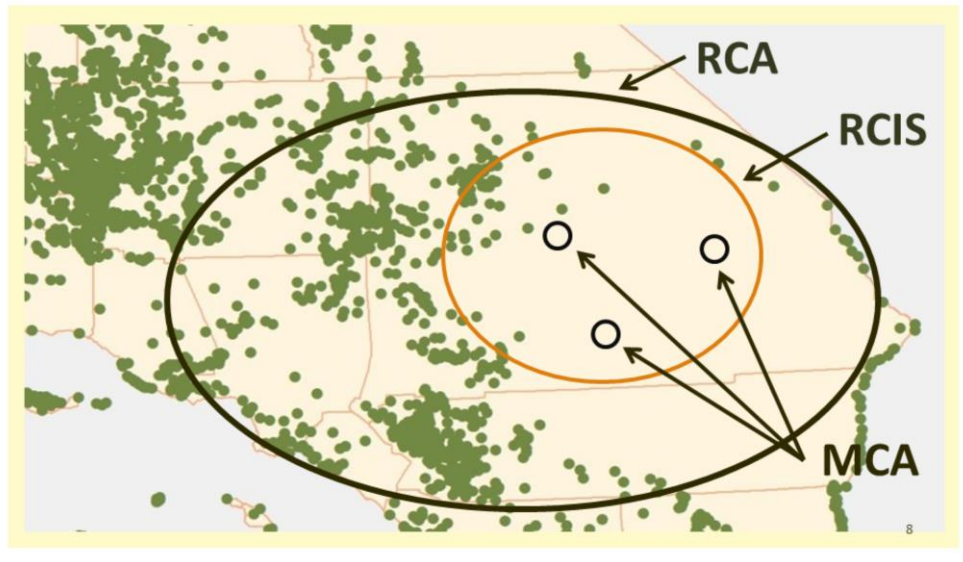
The whole process is to be done in a shorter time frame than current regional conservation plans take.

## THE ASSESSMENT HIERARCHY

	<b>Local Planning</b>	<b>Ecological</b>
<b>RCAs</b>	Regional	Ecoregion Section
<b>RCISs</b>	Multi-county to sub-county	Sub-Ecoregion
<b>MCAs</b>	Land base	Vegetation Community/ Habitat

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## REGIONAL CONSERVATION SCALES



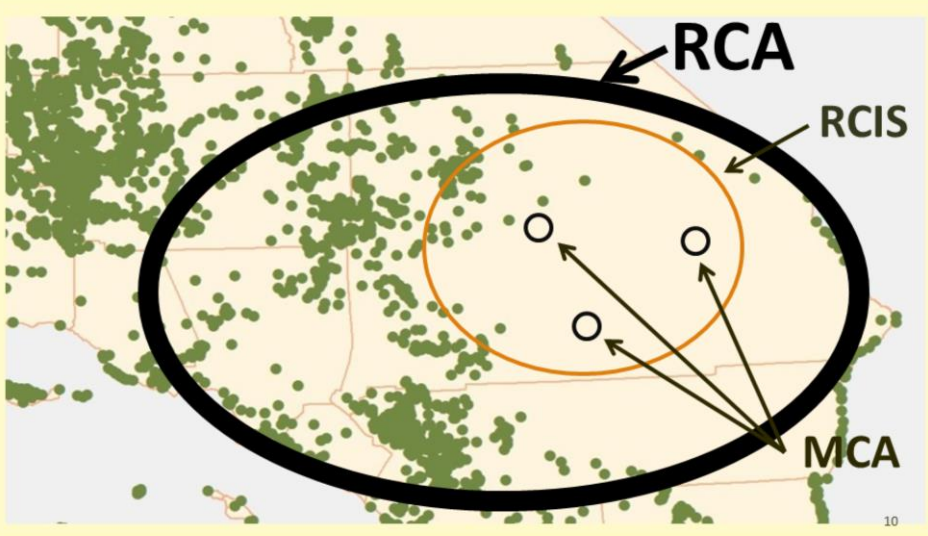
This is a representation of the different geographic scales of the RCIS components. The MCA is nested in the RCIS which, in turn, may be nested in an RCA. MCAs require an approved RCIS to be prepared, but an RCIS does not require an approved RCA.



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ASSESSMENT (RCA)  
OVERVIEW & GUIDELINES

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# RCA OVERVIEW



## RCIS PROGRAM KEY POINT

RCA is an ***assessment*** to identify areas for long-term ecosystem conservation success

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An RCA is an assessment of the diversity, vulnerability and resilience of species, habitats, and other conservation elements in an Ecoregion Section or Sections, or in HUC-4 or HUC-8 waterbasins.

It enables public or private entities to invest in areas to conserve, and land use planners to plan their projects for maximum value, least impacts, and for stewardship of resources.

## RCA OVERVIEW

- RCA is voluntary, non-regulatory
- Non-binding on land use authorities
- Proposed by any public agency
- Public review not required, but recommended
- ***RCA not required to do an RCIS***

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An assessment; it's non-binding on land use authorities  
RCA not required for RCIS but RCA information should be helpful to preparing an RCIS  
and RCIS should indicate extent to which the RCA information is used

## RCA COMPONENTS

- Required Components:
  - Description of RCA Area
  - Natural Communities Information
  - Biodiversity & Species Information
  - Habitat Connectivity Values
  - Existing Conservation Areas
  - Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments
  - Other Pressures and Stressors
  - Major Infrastructure & Development
- Consistent with Regional Conservation Plans
- Data Sharing and Access

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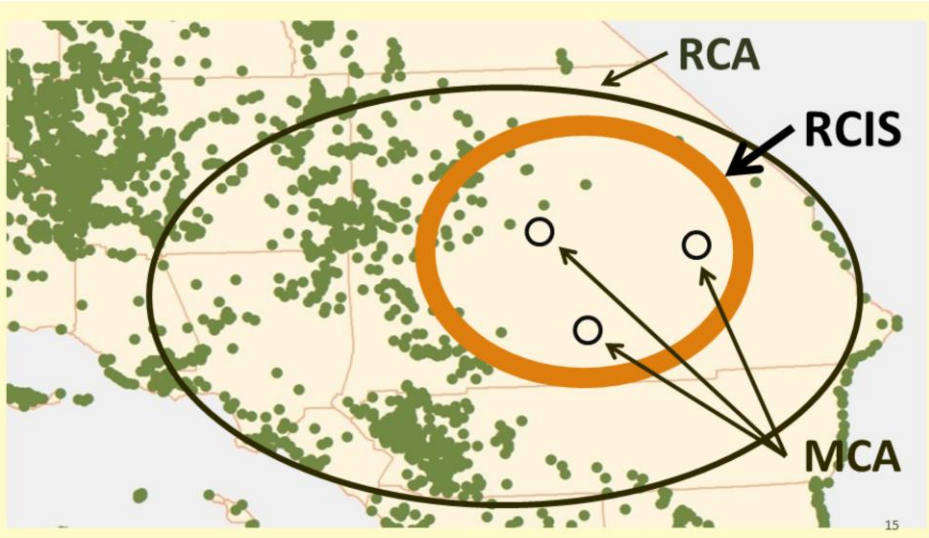
More detail regarding each of the required components can be found in the RCIS Program Guidelines.

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# RCIS OVERVIEW



## RCIS PROGRAM KEY POINT

RCIS is a ***strategy*** with ***actions*** to  
achieve regional conservation

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An RCIS is a strategy to conserve and help species, habitats and other conservation elements in a sub-ecoregional setting. It's not a conservation plan and it is not binding on any land use authority.

The conservation and habitat enhancement actions determined in an RCIS help public and private entities determine opportunities for investments in conservation as good stewardship of resources and as advance mitigation for projects.



## RCIS OVERVIEW

- Voluntary, non-regulatory
- Non-binding on land use authorities
- ***RCIS required for MCAs***
- Proposed by any public agency
- State agency sponsor letter required
- Good for up to ten years
- Can be extended, updated or amended
- CDFW can approve eight (*those with a letter from a state water or transportation infrastructure agency requesting RCIS approval are exempt from this limit*)

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State agency sponsor letter – one or more agencies must request RCIS approval indicating that the RCIS would contribute to meeting state goals of both conservation and public infrastructure or forest management

## RCIS COMPONENTS

- Required Components Include:
  - RCIS Conservation Purpose
  - Description of RCIS Area
  - Focal Species and Other Conservation Elements
  - Conservation and Habitat Enhancement Actions
  - Summary of Banks in RCIS Area
  - Consistency with NCCPs, HCPs, other plans
  - Best Available Scientific Information
  - Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments
  - Major Infrastructure & Development
- Data Sharing and Access
- Public Notice Requirements
- CDFW Review and Approval Process

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More detail regarding each of the required components can be found in the RCIS Program Guidelines.

## RCIS CONSERVATION PURPOSE

- Align with State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)
- Enhance resiliency to climate change, other pressures
- Be consistent with overlapping NCCPs, HCPs
- Consider working lands conservation benefits
- Not allowed for Delta water conveyance facilities
- ***Identify conservation and enhancement actions***

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Identify conservation priorities and conservation and habitat enhancement actions to sustain and restore focal species and other conservation elements

## RCIS COMPONENTS

- Focal Species
  - SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need
  - Native vulnerable species
  - Indicator species and wide-ranging species
  - Special-status species
- Other Conservation Elements
  - Natural communities
  - Water resources

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Declining and vulnerable species should be included regardless of federal and state and other listing status

Indicator species – covering other species, habitats

Wide-ranging species – inform wildlife connectivity

## RCIS PROGRAM KEY POINT

**Species & conservation elements in an MCA  
must be covered by the approved RCIS**

## RCIS COMPONENTS

- Conservation Goals and Measurable Objectives
  - Address climate change and other pressures
- Conservation and Habitat Enhancement Actions
  - Prioritize by species & conservation elements
  - Amounts and types of habitats that will benefit
  - Evaluate effectiveness of actions

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Address pressures, including climate change, on focal species and conservation elements

Amounts and types of habitat to achieve objectives

Prioritize actions by focal species & conservation elements needs

## POTENTIAL CONSERVATION & ENHANCEMENT ACTIONS

- Acquire and protect land
- Restore creeks and rivers
- Restore habitat on public land
- Install wildlife crossings
- Remove fish barriers
- Create/restore rearing habitat

## RCIS PROGRAM KEY POINT

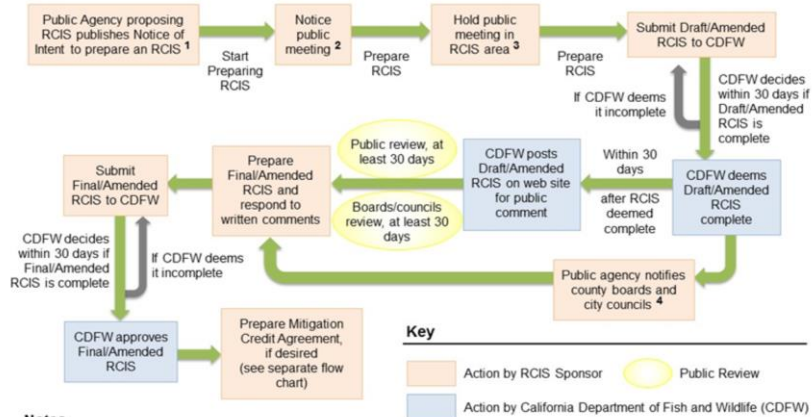
**RCISs provide a basis for conservation investments – philanthropic and mitigation**

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The RCIS identifies the conservation and habitat enhancement actions that public agencies, non-profits and other philanthropic organizations can invest in. The actions also form a basis for developing MCAs.



# RCIS APPROVAL PROCESS



## Notes

1. File with Governor's Office of Planning and Research and county clerk of all overlapping counties (filing not required if RCIS started before Jan. 1, 2017).
2. Notice public meeting to 1) each city or county within or adjacent to the RCIS, 2) each implementing entity for overlapping HCPs or NCCPs, and 3) each agency, organization, or individual who has filed a request for such notices, including those who have filed a general request with CDFW to receive all RCIS notices.
3. Hold public meeting "early in the process of preparing it" to allow adequate opportunity for the public to provide written and oral comments. If RCIS started before January 1, 2017, the public meeting can occur anytime as long as occurs at least 30 days before submitting draft RCIS to CDFW.
4. Notify county boards of supervisors and city councils in RCIS area at least 60 days prior to submitting final RCIS to CDFW for approval, and allow them at least 30 days to submit written comments.

# MITIGATION CREDIT AGREEMENT OVERVIEW

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## RCIS PROGRAM KEY POINT

MCA\* ***implement*** the conservation strategy!

\* MCA guidelines not released yet

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The program is a strategy to achieve better conservation planning

## MCA ENABLES:

- *Advance* mitigation
- *Transferable* credits
- *Excess* project conservation & enhancements used as credits
- Offset impacts under CESA, CEQA, LSA
- Offset permanent and temporary impacts
- On *public* or private land

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MCAs are unique! Unique aspects of the MCAs are that they enable advance mitigation credits; that the credits are transferable by sale, trade, exchange; that they can be used to offset project impacts under CESA, CEQA, and LSA; and that they can be used to offset temporary impacts; and can be developed not only on private land but also on public land.

Projects that have benefits to species and habitats in excess of their mitigation requirements can use those excess credits to offset future project impacts or transfer those credits.

## MCA OVERVIEW

- Anyone may apply for MCA
- Based on conservation & habitat enhancement actions in approved RCIS
- Consistent with CDFW's Banking Program
- NCCP Implementing Entity approval required

# RCIS PROGRAM EXAMPLES OF USES

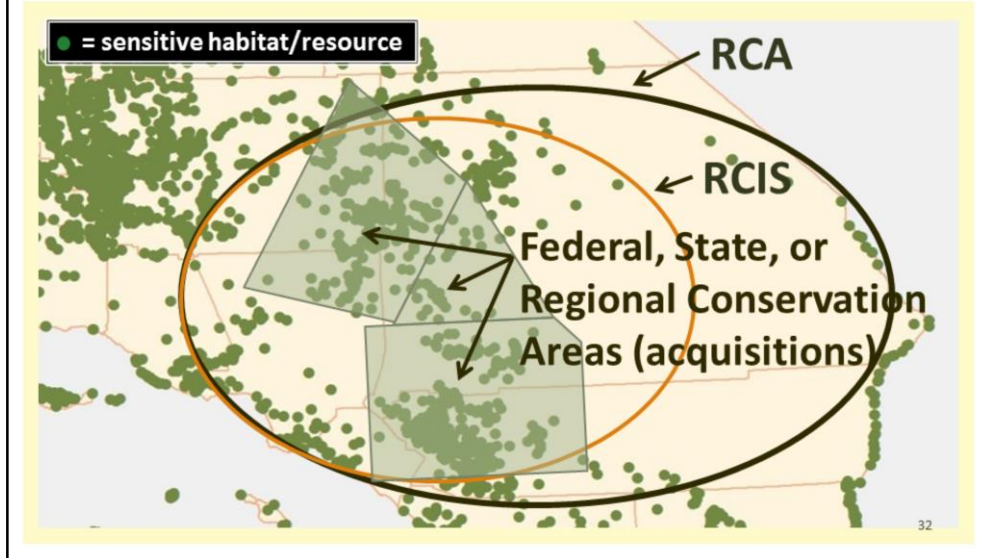
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## RCIS PROGRAM POTENTIAL USERS

- State agencies
- Infrastructure agencies
- Local governments and public agencies
- Non-governmental organizations
- Mitigation and conservation bankers
- NCCP Implementing Entities
- Other public and private entities

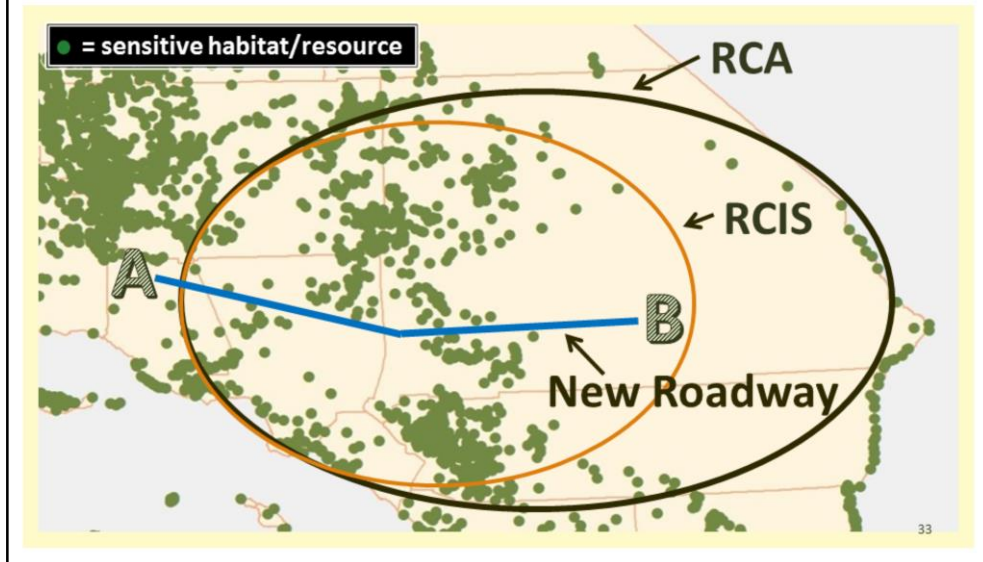
## PROGRAM USES – CONSERVATION



Federal, state, and local entities can use the RCA and RCIS to determine areas to prioritize for conservation land acquisitions based on the ecologically-based determinations of where the most sensitive, vulnerable, and important intact habitat is, where important wildlife connectivity is, and where climate change analyses indicate are important corridors and locations to protect.

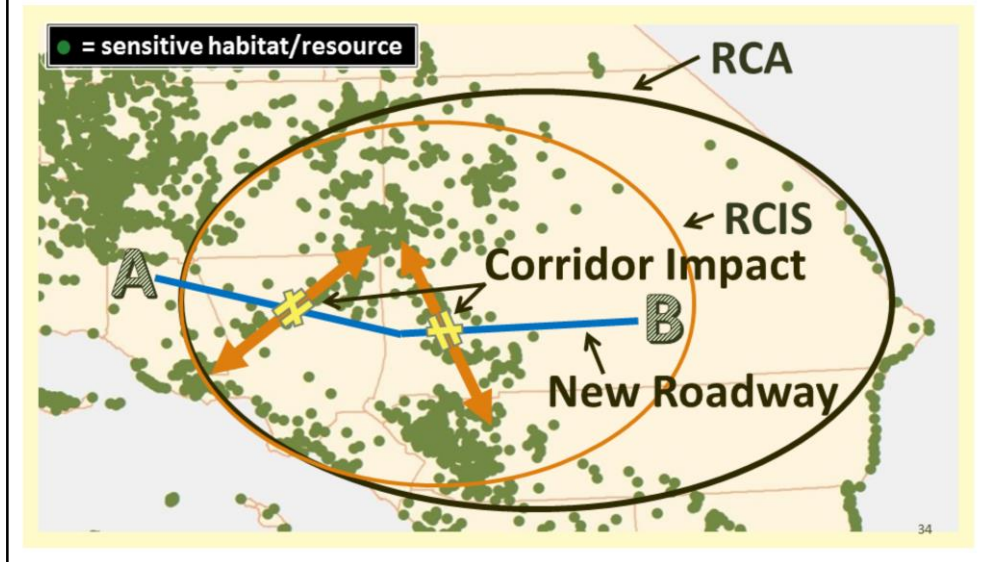


## PROGRAM USES – TRANSPORTATION



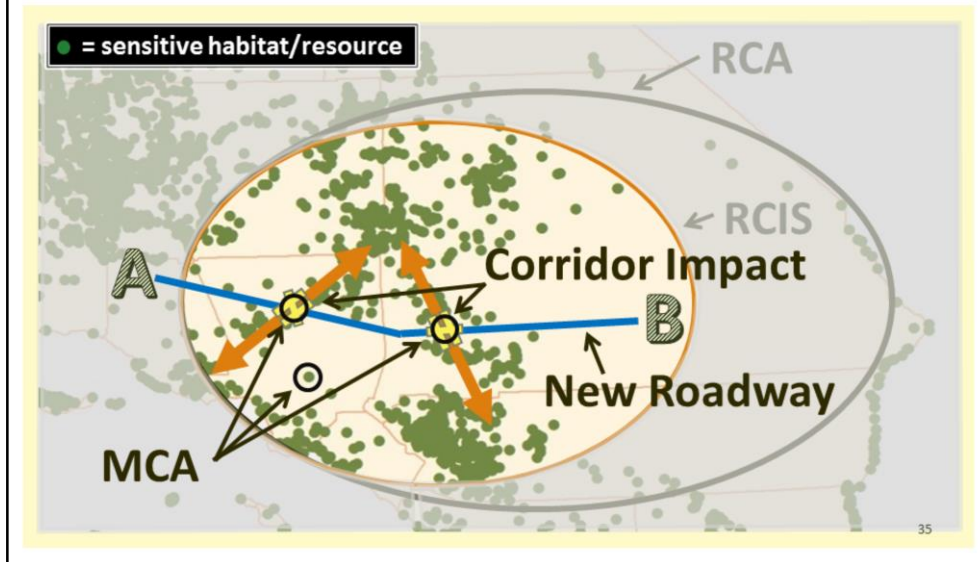
Transportation agencies can determine the most ecologically-sound and economically efficient routes with least environmentally damaging effects.

## PROGRAM USES – TRANSPORTATION



If corridors are going to be broken and obstructed a roadway, the RCIS can be used both to determine where to include wildlife connectivity features (such as overpasses and underpasses) in the road design, and also to determine where to do offsite mitigation for impacts to habitat. This can be done in advance to create advance mitigation credits.

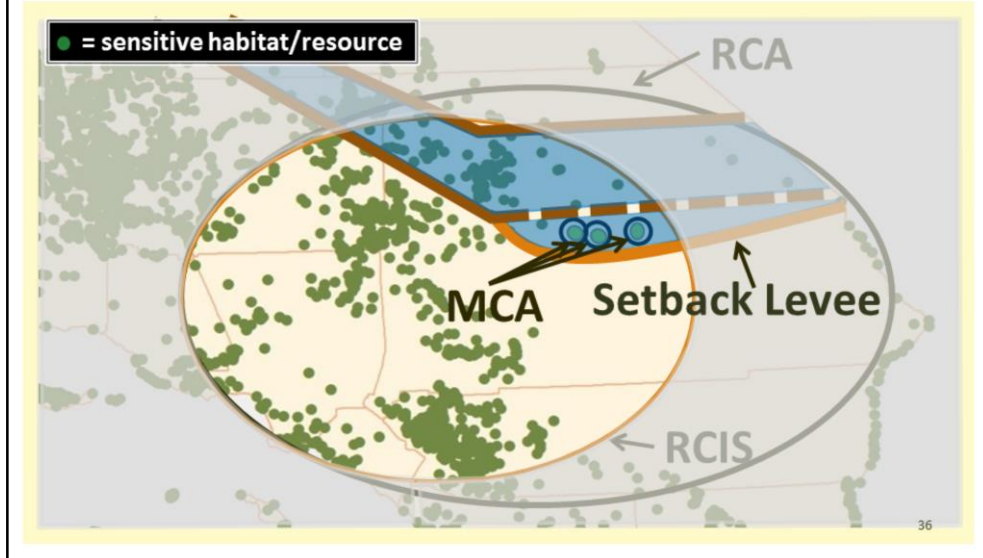
## PROGRAM USES – TRANSPORTATION



The MCAs can be used as mitigation by an entity for their own project impacts and, if they have excess credits, they can be used for other or future projects. The entity can sell or trade their credits to others, if needed.

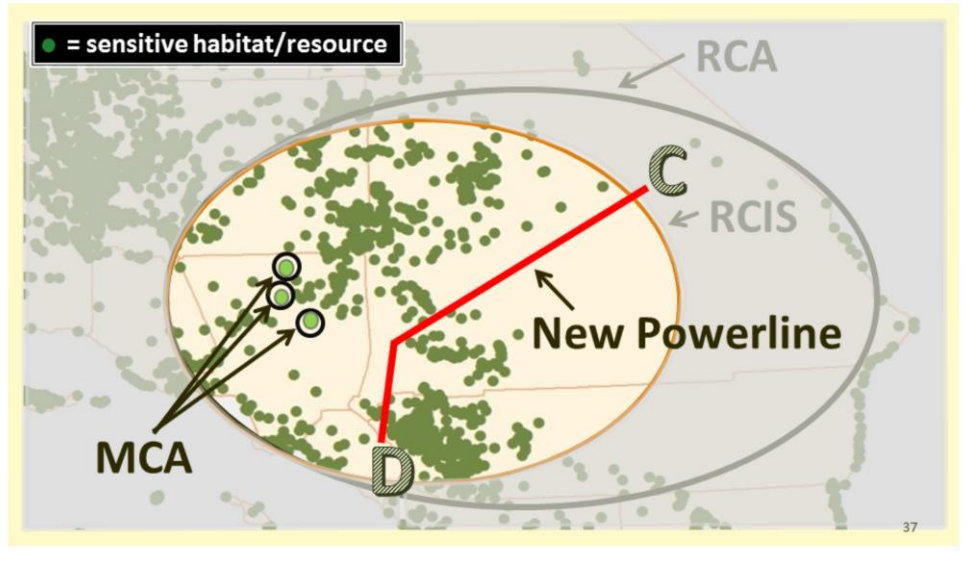
The shaded area is to indicate that, while sensitive resources may exist outside of the RCIS area, even habitats of the same species that are focal species in the RCIS area, they cannot be used to create MCAs unless they were included in the RCIS.

## PROGRAM USES – FLOOD CONTROL

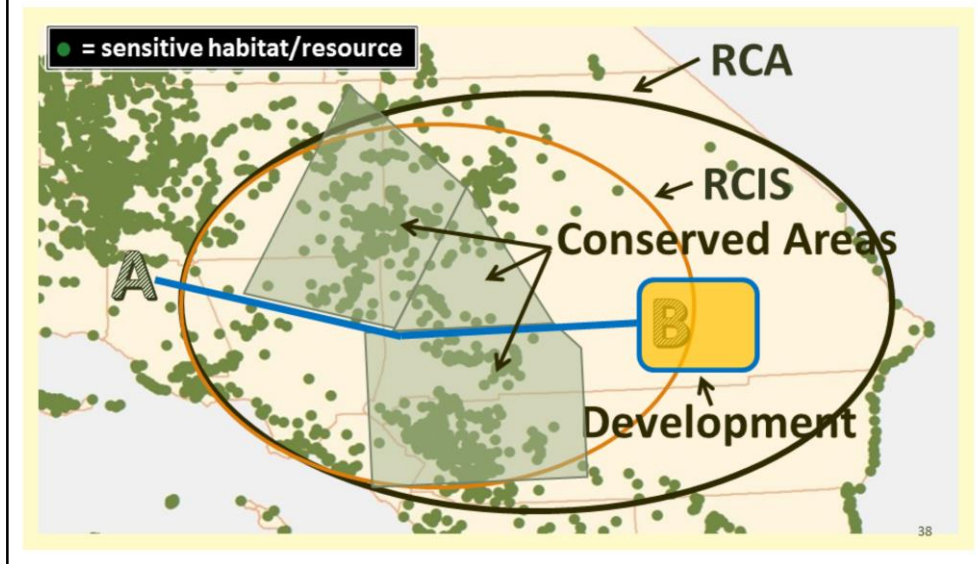


Flood protection agencies doing a setback levee could potentially create and use MCA credits to offset the construction-related impacts. Excess credits may be used for future project impacts such as maintenance activities or levee work that impact those same focal species or habitats. They could also sell or trade the excess credits for use by others.

# PROGRAM USES – UTILITIES

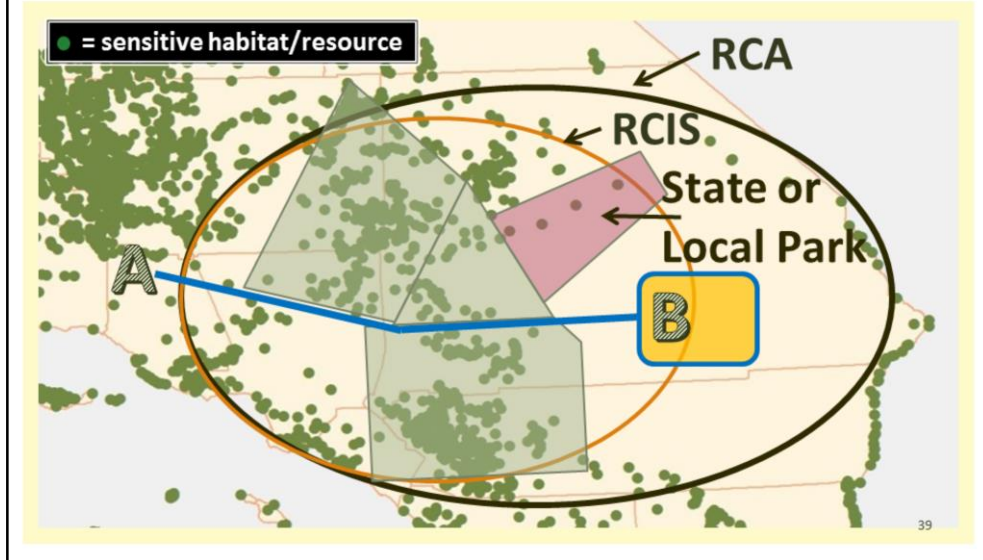


## PROGRAM USES – DEVELOPMENT



Local and regional land use authorities, such as counties, can use the RCIS to avoid sensitive resources while considering other factors such as nearby access to natural areas, transportation, etc.

## PROGRAM USES – PARKS



State and local park planners can use the RCIS Program tools to determine best places to locate new parks to buffer and benefit conserved areas while avoiding impacts from recreation uses.

As such, this program adds a new tool to improve on regional land use planning for California's future.

# RCIS PROGRAM FEES, NEXT STEPS & CONTACTS

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## RCIS PROGRAM FEES

- RCIS Program is entirely fee-based:
  - RCA Review/Approval - \$22,000\*
  - RCIS Review/Approval - \$28,500\*
  - MCA Review/Approval – to be determined

**\* Notes:**

- Additional fees apply for revisions and amendments
- CDFW may adjust fees after June 30, 2018

## CDFW'S NEXT STEPS INCLUDE:

- CDFW is currently developing the fee structure and schedule for MCAs
- Revise program guidelines as needed
- Approve RCAs, RCISs, and MCAs

## RCA, RCIS, MCA SUBMITTALS

Submit to:

Richard Macedo, Branch Chief  
RCIS Program  
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
1416 Ninth Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

To receive RCIS and MCA notifications:

[rcis@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:rcis@wildlife.ca.gov) or address above

## RCIS PROGRAM RESOURCE LINKS

- RCIS Program Website:
  - <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation>
- CDFW Conservation Resources (BIOS, etc.):
  - <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation>
- Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments:
  - <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Climate-Science/Resources/Vulnerability>
- Landscape Conservation Planning Program (NCCP, Conservation Banks, etc.)
  - <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning>

## WHERE TO SUBMIT RCIS PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Submit to:

Ron Unger, Program Manager  
RCIS Program  
Landscape Conservation Planning  
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

[RCIS@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:RCIS@wildlife.ca.gov)  
(916) 653-3779

QUESTIONS?

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## RCIS PROGRAM RESOURCE LINKS

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