



2018 Endangered Species Conservation and Recovery Program Grants

Proposal Solicitation Notice

Important Note for 2018 Cycle

The federal government has not yet released the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this grant program. In order to be able to respond to the federal NOFO in a timely manner the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this Proposal Solicitation Notice using the 2017 NOFO as a guide. In the event that the 2018 federal NOFO eligibility and submission requirements differ substantially from the 2017 requirements, CDFW will work with applicants to modify proposals submitted under this PSN to meet the new federal requirements. However, applicants should be aware that there is some risk that proposals submitted under this PSN may be ineligible for the 2018 federal opportunity.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is seeking high quality grant proposals for projects that will further the conservation and recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered species in the state. Eligible projects are those that target species which are currently federally listed as threatened or endangered, proposed for listing, candidates for listing, or recently recovered; and focus on one or more of the following areas:

- Species status surveys
- Captive propagation and reintroduction
- Nesting surveys
- Genetic studies
- Development of management plans
- Habitat restoration (on non-federal lands)
- Public education and outreach

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act) provides funding to states and territories for species and habitat conservation actions on non-federal lands. States and territories must contribute a minimum non-federal match of 25% for the estimated program costs of approved projects. CDFW is responsible for managing native fish, wildlife, and plant species in California, and directs the use of federal Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund resources through this Endangered Species Conservation and Recovery Program (ESCRP) grant program in coordination with the USFWS. Authority for the CDFW to administer the ESCRP program is granted through §1501.5 of the Fish and Game Code. Anticipated total funding available for the 2018 grant cycle is dependent on federal allocation of Section 6 funds to California in the 2018 federal budget year. In recent years approximately \$2 million has available for sub-grant award through this program.

Solicitation Procedure

This document details ESCRCP eligibility requirements, the proposal submission process, proposal review procedures, and other pertinent topics for the 2018 grant cycle. Potential applicants are encouraged to thoroughly read this PSN prior to deciding to submit a proposal.

In order to be considered for funding, all applications must submit a complete proposal using the supplied templates at the bottom of this page by **5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time on May 11, 2018**. Project proposals must be submitted to wildlifemgt@wildlife.ca.gov with only the words “**ESCRP 2018**” in the subject line. All information requested in this Solicitation is mandatory unless otherwise indicated. Failure to complete all required application components will make the proposal incomplete. Incomplete proposals will not be scored or considered for funding.

Eligibility Information

Entities eligible to submit grant proposals in response to this PSN include public agencies, state departments, colleges and universities, tribal governments, and nonprofit entities.

In order for a project to be eligible for ESCRCP funding, the project must address the conservation of federally listed endangered, threatened, candidate, proposed, or recently recovered species. Habitat restoration projects funded under this program cannot be located on federal lands. Proposals must be developed in consultation with CDFW and USFWS biologists and identify a CDFW staff person willing to sponsor the project by administering the subgrant between CDFW and the project lead. **Proposals developed without first consulting agency biologists or which fail to identify a CDFW subgrant sponsor will not be considered for funding.**

2018 Priorities

For the 2018 grant cycle, priority will be given to projects that address the following themes:

- Projects that identify best practices to manage land and water resources and adapt to changes in the environment.
- Assessment or conservation actions critically needed for the conservation and recovery of federally listed species, candidate species, and recently de-listed species.
- Scientific investigations into the adaptive response of listed species to prolonged drought. Priority will be given to species that are highly vulnerable to extended drought conditions. See CDFW report on [Drought-Vulnerable Sensitive Wildlife Species](#).
- Applied science that reduces the impact of changing environmental conditions on listed species, or promotes resilience in listed species populations or their habitats to these stressors.
- Projects that assess or address emerging threats to listed species from pathogens or invasive species.
- Actions or assessments directly supporting the de-listing of currently listed species.

2018 Grant Cycle Time line (Subject to Change)*

May 11, 2018	Complete project proposals due to CDFW
May 11 – May 18, 2018	Administrative review (pass/fail)
May 21, 2018 – June 15, 2018	Responsive proposals scored by Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Management Advisory Committee (MAC)
June 22, 2018	CDFW forwards selections to USFWS
~August 31, 2018	Awards are announced by USFWS
~September 1 – September 30, 2018	CDFW works with applicants to prepare final grant packages for submission to USFWS
~September 1 – December 31, 2018	USFWS reviews and approves individual grants*
~November 15, 2018 – April 30, 2019	Sub-grant agreements prepared and executed by CDFW . Funds available to projects following execution.

*Note - projects approved for this current grant cycle will not receive funding until after federal appropriation of funds, approval by the USFWS, and execution of a grant agreement between CDFW and grantee. Funds typically become available for sub-grant project work 3-4 months after grants are approved by the USFWS.

Grant Requirements

1. Activities funded by ESCRP must be completed within 3 years of grant approval date.
2. Federal funds cannot be used for NEPA compliance or to obtain any federal permits for the project.
3. Federal funds cannot be used for habitat restoration or other physical improvements on federal lands.
4. Funds may be granted for EITHER the planning phase, OR the implementation phase of habitat restoration projects, but not both phases in the same grant cycle.
5. Projects must be developed in consultation with [USFWS regional recovery program staff](#) and [CDFW staff](#) to ensure proposed projects address priority actions for the recovery of the subject species.
6. Statement of Qualifications. If the proposed scope of work includes the handling of wildlife or activities that could modify the behavior of wildlife (e.g. broadcast surveys, baiting, etc.), field staff must demonstrate their qualification to carry out project work, including documentation of relevant field experience. A Statement of Qualifications must be submitted with the proposal and include permit numbers and expiration dates for any relevant take authorizations.
7. Land Owner Permission. For work proposed to be performed on lands not owned or managed by the applicant, written proof of permission to access the land from the fee title owner or land management agency must be supplied. For projects involving multiple landowners, all landowners or an appointed designee must provide written permission to complete the project. Applicants for projects proposing on-the- ground habitat improvement must submit documentation showing that they have adequate tenure to the properties to be accessed, improved or restored for at least 25 years. Proof of adequate land tenure includes, but is not necessarily limited to:
 - Fee title ownership
 - An easement or license agreement

- Other agreement between the applicant and the fee title owner, or the owner of an easement on the property, sufficient to give the applicant adequate site control for the purposes of the project and long-term management
8. **Required Non-federal Match.** A minimum non-federal match of 25% of the total cost of the project (25% of the sum of the federal amount requested plus the non-federal match) is required. It must be spent during the grant term and included in the proposal for a project to be eligible for an ESCRCP grant. Applicants must describe in the proposal how the minimum match will be provided, including the match source and amount. Match may include in-kind services, volunteer contributions, or partial funding for the project from a non-federal source. If the project is chosen for award, match commitment letters on the letterhead of the contributing entities will be required prior to execution of the grant agreement to certify that match requirements will be met during the grant term and the funds/services are not from a federal source nor committed to any other project.
 9. **Environmental Compliance and Permitting.** Activities funded under the ESCRCP must be in compliance with all applicable state and federal environmental laws and regulations, including CEQA, NEPA, CESA, ESA, and other environmental permitting requirements. State scientific collecting permits, CESA MOUs and federal ESA Recovery Permits must be current for staff identified to conduct work that “takes” fish or wildlife or otherwise impacts state or federally-listed species. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all permits necessary to carry out the proposed work.

Applicants must identify the project’s expected permitting requirements, state what permits have been obtained or the process through which the permits will be obtained, and describe the anticipated timeframe for obtaining each permit. Proposals for projects that are subject to CEQA and NEPA must identify the state and federal lead agencies and document whether the agency or agencies have accepted the role. The applicant must coordinate with CDFW prior to proposal submission if CDFW is anticipated to act as CEQA lead agency for the project. Projects that fail to comply with this requirement will not be eligible for funding for this Solicitation.

10. **Data and Reports.** CDFW’s intent is to improve the management of biological resources over time by incorporating adaptive management principles and processes into conservation planning and resource management. In addition, the state is required to provide real-time public access to project information, including project descriptions and accomplishments through the USFWS’s reporting system known as Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species (TRACS). Therefore, as a condition of the receipt of a grant or contract, recipients of ESCRCP grants or contracts will be required to submit data and information in a format acceptable to the Department prior to close of the grant and reports will need to be compliant with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Department-approved format for the types of information generated by a specific project will be provided to the recipient at the time of award and incorporated into any sub-grant agreement or contract.

Review Process

Administrative Review. An administrative review will determine if the proposal is complete and meets all the requirements for technical review. This review will use a “Pass/Fail” scoring method, based on the criteria presented below. Proposals which receive a “Fail” for one or more of the criteria will be considered incomplete and will not be considered for funding under this PSN.

Criteria	Score
Proposal was received by the deadline.	Pass/Fail
Applicant is an eligible entity.	Pass/Fail
Proposal developed in consultation with CDFW and USFWS staff?	Pass/Fail
Applicant identifies CDFW grant sponsor?	Pass/Fail

Proposal is responsive to the Solicitation's priorities and represents an eligible project type.	Pass/Fail
All proposal components have been completed in the required formats, including all proposal forms and associated documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal Narrative using the 2018 template (maximum 8 pages of text) • Budget Worksheet using the 2018 template (must agree with amounts listed in the narrative) • Statement of Qualifications • Proof of land ownership or landowner permission to conduct work on land (unless there is no field work associated with proposal) • Copies of any required permits that are already approved or issued for the project. 	Pass/Fail
A detailed budget is included using supplied template and includes at least 25% non-federal match.	Pass/Fail

Technical Review. Each proposal will be evaluated and scored based upon the criteria below by CDFW's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Proposals will be distributed among TAC members to read, evaluate, and score each proposal. The median scores of the TAC will then be calculated for each criteria and overall. Technical reviewers may make narrative comments that support their scores.

The scoring of each proposal will use the following criteria:

1. Project is urgently needed to avoid imminent extinction of a federally listed or candidate species.
2. Project is necessary to avoid a significant decline in a federally listed or candidate species' population, distribution, or range; or to avoid or reverse a significant reduction in habitat quality.
3. Project generates scientific information needed to support species recovery planning, management, and conservation actions of federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species.
4. Project will increase the statewide population, distribution, or range of federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species; or improve habitat quality over a substantial area.
5. Project is the last step to meet federal recovery plan goals.
6. Project is the necessary next identified step from the species' federal recovery plan
7. Project implements a priority action from the species' federal recovery plan.
8. Project implements an identified recovery action from an effort other than a federal recovery plan.
9. Project implements an important recovery action, although the action has not been identified in an existing plan.
10. Project actively restores, enhances, manages, or preserves a substantial portion of a federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species' habitat.
11. Proposal demonstrates substantial benefits to multiple Species of Greatest Conservation Need as identified in the [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) (see Appendix C).

12. Project objectives include the following “SMART” elements: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound.
13. Proposal identifies appropriate, defensible, and achievable scientific and non-scientific methodology.
14. Project assesses or contributes to species' ability to persist in response to changing environmental conditions.
15. Project includes an education and/or outreach effort AND the proposal demonstrates how the education or outreach will substantially benefit one or more federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species.

Management Review. TAC proposal scores are provided to the Management Advisory Committee (MAC). MAC then ranks the proposals based on a combination of considerations, including TAC scores, responsiveness to this solicitation notice, project budget, match, cost share, and past performance of grantee. Each MAC member is allocated 15 points to distribute among projects. The list of proposals recommended for funding is then based on a combination of TAC and MAC scores, as well as other factors such as final Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund apportionment to California, relative distribution of funds between 2018 priorities, geographic provinces, and other regional management and statewide considerations that extend beyond technical scientific and conservation benefit. The Director, or his designee, has the discretion to adjust project ranks or recommended funding levels in order to address any conservation issues critical to the state at the time. A list of the top ranking proposals is then conveyed to the USFWS.

USFWS Review and Award. USFWS Traditional Section 6 Program staff reviews CDFW's list of top ranking proposals to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements of the federal program and to confirm USFWS Field Office staff were consulted by project proponents to identify priority species recovery actions. Once top proposals which address the priorities of both the CDFW and the USFWS are identified, the USFWS will issue a letter to the CDFW announcing the proposals selected for funding. The number of proposals selected will be determined by the size of the federal allotment and the project budgets of the top ranked proposals.

Final Approval Process. Once the final list of projects to be awarded is determined and announced by the USFWS, CDFW prepares the Federal Assistance Application (FAA) package for submittal to USFWS. Every project will be assigned a CDFW Grant Lead who is responsible for managing the grant from start to finish, including all sub-awards or contracts. The CDFW Grant Lead will work with any sub-awardees and CDFW's Federal Assistance Section to prepare the required elements of the FAA. At this time in the process, the grant proposal and budget is updated to reflect current project status, rates, and approved funding level. Significant changes in scope and funding are not allowed. The FAA is then submitted to USFWS for their review and approval (assuming federal funds for the ESCRP have been appropriated in the current budget year). Once the grant is approved and funding obligated by USFWS, CDFW commences processing of any sub-grant associated with the project. Funding is not available for use by non-Department applicants until any sub-grant associated with the project is fully executed between CDFW and the sub-awardee.

Proposal Forms and Templates

[2018 ESCRП Proposal Template](#)

[2018 ESCRП Budget Worksheet](#)

For questions regarding this PSN or the ESCRП program, please contact Daniel Applebee at Daniel.Applebee@wildlife.ca.gov or 916-323-1575.