

RCA and RCIS Guidelines – September 2018 Revisions to February 2018 Version – Highlights

The RCIS Program Guidelines may be revised periodically to provide clarifications or other changes intended to improve the process for preparing Regional Conservation Assessments (RCA), Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS), and Mitigation Credit Agreements (MCA). The MCA guidelines are in the process of being developed and are not yet available. The following are highlights of the changes made in the September 2018 RCIS Program Guidelines version compared to the February 2018 RCIS Program Guidelines version. These highlights do not summarize all the changes made. Please refer to the revised guidelines to see all the changes that were made. If you have any interests, comments, questions, or concerns regarding the RCIS Program and the RCIS Program Guidelines, please submit them to the RCIS Program team at rcis@wildlife.ca.gov. Thank you for your interest in the RCIS Program.

Local Agencies

- Clarified that the term “local agencies with land use authority” means a city, county, or a city and county.

Engagement Recommendations

- Recommend early and ongoing engagement with CDFW RCIS Program staff during development of an RCIS.
- Recommend broad stakeholder engagement, including State water and/or transportation infrastructure agencies (especially if a support letter is desired from such an agency to relieve the RCIS from the cap of eight that can be approved).
- Recommend the use of a technical review team.

Data and Models

- Clarified that new data created for the RCIS, including models, must be submitted to CDFW. Existing data available to the public does not need to be submitted to CDFW.
- Clarified that all data and models used for or created for an RCA or RCIS shall be readily available to potential users and not depend upon the acquisition of proprietary data, software, or licenses. If a proponent wishes to use proprietary data or models not readily available to the public, the proponent shall confer with CDFW.

Exemption

- All RCISs are subject to these September 2018 Guidelines, except for RCISs that were initiated prior to January 1, 2017 or filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1854(c)(1) on or before September 13, 2018.
- RCISs that were initiated prior to January 1, 2017 or filed an NOI on or before September 13, 2018 are not subject to all of the September 2018 Guidelines sections but they are subject to requirements in several sections.

- Any RCIS subject to the June 2017 Guidelines must be submitted to CDFW for completeness review by March 29, 2019. In the event the RCIS is not submitted by that date, it will thereafter be subject to the September 2018 Guidelines.

Boundary

- Clarified that an RCIS boundary should be a complete, unfragmented geographic area, and that the RCIS shall include rationale for why the boundary was selected and the rationale for excluding any areas.

Consistency Guidance

- Clarified requirements and guidance for documenting RCIS consistency with NCCPs, HCPs and Recovery Plans.

Focal Species, Non-focal Species and Other Conservation Elements

- Allows flexibility in the selection of focal species while requiring that the RCIS list of focal species consist of a range of native species with conservation needs within the RCIS area.
- Guidance is provided for demonstrating the association of non-focal species with focal species or other conservation elements.
- Allows some flexibility in the selection of other conservation elements. Habitat connectivity, important natural communities, and ecosystem functions are required conservation elements while biodiversity has been added to the list of suggested conservation elements. The list of conservation elements shall include those elements needing conservation within the RCIS area, and those whose inclusion would help to achieve a comprehensive, cohesive, and connected regional conservation outcome for consideration.