

2019 WCB Strategic Plan Update

Summary of Public Comments and Responses

The Strategic Plan Update is an opportunity for WCB to reach out and solicit feedback on WCB programs, strategic initiatives and objectives. It is also a chance for its partners and the public to offer their views on WCB effectiveness and priorities. To that end, we took several actions to engage people in the Plan Update process. In mid-April 2019, we developed and distributed a survey that contained a series of questions designed to inform the nature of interactions with WCB, gain insights into the proposed Strategic Initiatives, and learn about participants’ priorities for the Plan Update. We closed the survey and held public meetings in Los Angeles (May 9, 2019) and Sacramento (May 15, 2019) and then, at the request of meeting participants, re-opened the survey until May 31, 2019. The public meeting in Sacramento was webcast to provide remote access and increase participation.

Coinciding with the publication of an initial draft Plan Update on July 2, 2019, we opened a public comment period that extended through July 31, 2019. Notice of the public comment period was distributed to everyone with project interactions, partnerships, or who expressed an interest in WCB programs. In addition, we published the draft Plan Update and notice of the public comment period on our website.

We received 13 public comments from a diverse set of stakeholders covering a variety of topics. Non-editorial substantive comments, and our responses, are summarized in the table below. We evaluated every editorial comment for potential inclusion in the final document. We acknowledge and thank those who submitted comments on the Plan Update. They greatly improved the document.

| <i>Comment Summary</i> | <i># of Comments</i> | <i>Response Summary</i> | <i>Commenting Entity</i> |
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| Add the recent Biodiversity and Conservation Initiative and Executive Orders to the table of Policies in Section 2. | 2 | Added as requested. | UCLA, California Native Plant Society |
| Acknowledge the Inland Wetland Program also benefits waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing. | 1 | Please see edit to Inland Wetland program description. | California Waterfowl Association |
| Include a description of the Department of Fish and Wildlife R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) efforts | 1 | This is a program of CDFW and not WCB. | California Waterfowl Association |
| State Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) description on page 17 should include potential impacts to surface water for waterfowl. | 1 | Please see edits to the discussion of SGMA to mention wetlands. | California Waterfowl Association |

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| Survey response insufficient. Need better outreach. | 2 | See introduction above. WCB provided several opportunities for participation through the survey, draft document review, and public comment periods. | UCLA, Humboldt Redwoods Company |
| Conservation Context – add language to the second sentence emphasizing more reliance upon the Biodiversity Initiative in conservation actions. | 1 | Please see additions to the referenced section. | California Native Plant Society |
| Table 1 – Include AB 109 (2017) WCB Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program | 1 | This table documents policy legislation affecting WCB and WCB programs for the period 2014-2019. It does not include funding legislation or Bond Acts. Those are discussed elsewhere in the document. | HCP Coalition |
| Table 1 – Add Pacific Flyway Program under program relevancy column | 1 | WCB does not have Pacific Flyway Program. There is Prop 68 funding available to fund work in the Pacific Flyway but a new Program has not been created. | California Waterfowl Association |
| Table 1 – Add the State Policy on Native Plants, Biodiversity Executive Order, and Carbon Neutral Executive Order | 1 | Please see the additions to Table 1. The Carbon Neutral Executive Order is important but outside the scope of policy relevant to WCB activities. | California Native Plant Society |
| Please provide a more detailed summary with references of how the Conservation Context has changed in California over the last five years. | 1 | The Conservation Context, along with Table 1 (Policies and Legislation 2014-2019), the Conservation Trends and Priorities, and State Policy sections describe these changes in sufficient detail for this Plan Update. | HCP Coalition |
| Section 4 – Carrying older programs into this Plan Update is an undesirable approach. | 1 | We’re not entirely sure what this means. While the goals remain the same as the 2014 Strategic Plan, the objectives are new and represent a more refined and definitive direction for WCB. Please see the additional sentence in this section that may address this concern. | HCP Coalition |
| Section 4 – Require full biodiversity surveys from successful project applicants, update solicitation criteria to favor projects that include biodiversity information, and encourage the use of citizen | 1 | WCB will update solicitation criteria to emphasize and seek voluntary compliance on gathering and documenting biodiversity project information. The WCB is also committed, as part of Strategic | California Native Plant Society |

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| science to gather biodiversity information. | | Initiative 8, to engage the public in citizen science programs to support project monitoring and evaluation. | |
| Section 4 – Criteria used in the objectives should more directly measure conservation success rather than indirectly through number of projects | 1 | Point well taken. This Strategic Plan Update moves WCB towards the goal of more refined and targeted investments where success is measured in terms of conserving species and habitats. Currently, there is insufficient information to use more refined and targeted criteria. | Humboldt Redwoods Company |
| Do the objectives in this section “ladder up” to the overall goals of the Strategic Plan? | 1 | Yes. Each Strategic Initiative directly connects to one or more Strategic Plan Goals and is noted in the heading. | Ecosulis |
| Many of the objectives prescribe 5 projects or actions. Is this an arbitrary number? | 1 | WCB is primarily a grant making agency with fixed solicitation and granting cycles. These are at times annual cycles depending on the funding source. Because this a Plan Update with a five-year planning horizon, the objectives often assume an annual grant for a particular program and were developed based on projected amount of money available for different objectives and available staff resources to develop the projects. | Ecosulis |
| Strategic Initiatives – Replace number of projects with state conservation priorities as objective metrics | 1 | WCB relies upon several policy documents for setting priorities which, when taken collectively, approximate state priorities. However, there are currently no comprehensive, integrated state conservation priorities. | Humboldt Redwood Company |
| SI 1 - Revise narrative to identify habitat loss as the number one biodiversity threat factor (UCLA). Mention the states Safeguarding California Plan (Ecosulis) | 2 | See new text in the preamble to SI 1 contrasting retrospective and prospective biodiversity threats. The Safeguarding Plan is referenced in the body of the document and is provided as a linked resource. | UCLA, Ecosulis |
| SI 1 (and/or SI 2) – Add an objective to require 50% of restoration projects be done on conserved lands | 1 | See Objective SI 2.1 that states at least 25% of restoration projects must be on conserved land. | Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council |

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| SI 1.2 - Reference specific research techniques through institutes for implementing essential connectivity | 1 | Under this objective WCB would approve projects consistent with the latest statewide Terrestrial Connectivity data (state standard) or one or more finer scale local government(s) assessments (e.g., Missing Linkages). Prescribing specific research techniques or approaches is beyond the scope of this planning document. | UCLA |
| SI 1.3 – Difficult to locate maps for comparing project locations and benefits to climate refugia (EHL). Need to see the overall scope of the vulnerability assessments (HCP Coalition, Sierra Consortium) | 3 | We have altered the objective to reflect more specifically what we will track based on maps available from CDFW. Details on how to track that data and maps to use for that analysis will be available in individual solicitations or analyses will be conducted by WCB. | Endangered Habitats League, HCP Coalition, Sierra Consortium |
| SI 1.6 – Modify objective so it doesn't impair WCB capability to invest in fewer but more ecologically valuable projects (PFT). How will resiliency to climate change be tested and measured? (Ecosulis). | 2 | This objective as written does not impair or limit WCB's investments in project types or sizes. Many of the objectives in the Plan Update require measuring and documenting benefits. Including the precise metrics for measuring objectives is 1) beyond the scope of this planning document and 2) fails to accommodate changes in the scientific or monitoring basis for a measurement that is likely to occur over the five-year life of this update. Measurement criteria will be included in the annual reporting for this objective. | Pacific Forest Trust, Ecosulis |
| SI 1.6 - Can this objective better link forests and water, e.g., restoration effects on water quality and quantity and climate change resilience? | 1 | This speaks to measuring and documenting co-benefits which is requested in some applications. Application criteria will be evaluated to make sure we're capturing this type of data. | Ecosulis |
| SI 1.6 – Modify objective to make clear that both large and small projects could be included and that they be "landscape scale" | 1 | Applications for projects funded for this objective in part may come from competitive solicitations where both large and small projects are eligible. The objective does not limit the size of projects. | Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council |

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| SI 2 – How will WCB document specific habitat- and species-based benefits from projects? | 1 | WCB requests specific habitat and species benefit information from grantees and compares this information to existing plans (e.g., SWAP) and standards. WCB will be developing more rigorous effectiveness monitoring over the life of this Plan Update. With additional capacity, WCB could implement even more rigorous monitoring. | UCLA |
| SI 2 – How will you measure the impact on biodiversity? | 1 | Please see response to SI 1.6 above. | Ecosulis |
| SI 2.1 – Why doesn't this objective include the Forest Program (PFT) or coastal sage scrub and chaparral (EHL, HCP Coalition)? How does this objective directly relate to biodiversity? Make clear how funding these projects will affect biodiversity (Ecosulis) | 4 | The habitat types identified in this objective were selected as ecologically important but relatively underserved by past WCB actions. As written, this objective does not limit WCB's investments in projects or lands under the Forest Program or in other habitat types. Please see changes to this objective to emphasize biodiversity. | Pacific Forest Trust, Endangered Habitats League, HCP Coalition, Ecosulis |
| SI 2.1 – Increase the standard for this objective to 10 projects annually rather than 10 projects over a five-year period. | 1 | This objective as written would not limit WCB to approving only 10 projects over the five-year Plan Update life. However, implementing 10 projects annually is beyond the capacity of WCB given current funding and staffing resource levels. | Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council |
| SI 2.2 – What does "development" mean as a project type? (UCLA). Is 5 projects per year a cap? (EHL, HCP Coalition) | 2 | Removed the term "development" throughout the document and replaced it with appropriate alternative which in most cases was "restoration". The objective was edited to reflect the intent for at least 5 projects per year. | UCLA, Endangered Habitats League, HCP Coalition |
| SI 2.4 – The SWAP specifically excludes Coastal Sage Scrub as a priority. This would eliminate investments in this important southern California habitat type. | 2 | The SWAP Section 5.5.2 does exclude Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS) as a priority habitat type because over 90% of this type is conserved or designated for conservation under the NCCP. However, this objective does not limit WCB from investing in CSS. | Endangered Habitats League, HCP Coalition |

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| SI 3.1 – Is it possible to prioritize projects to meet local and regional disadvantaged community’s needs? | 1 | Urban conservation and emphasis on disadvantaged communities is a value of WCB and is required under recent Bond measures. | Ecosulis |
| SI 3.3 – Revise objective to reflect 5 projects each for hunting and fishing access. | 1 | See changes to this objective and SI 3.2 to increase emphasis for potential hunting projects. | California Waterfowl Association |
| SI 3.5 –This objective should be 5 meetings and not 2. | 1 | This objective is specific to the Public Access Program so 2 meetings is appropriate for this one program. Objectives in SI 6 address outreach for all WCB programs. | Ecosulis |
| SI 4 – Publish guidelines for measuring and documenting ecosystem service benefits. | 1 | Grant solicitations for projects addressing ecosystem services will contain more specific information and guidance. Providing them here is beyond the scope of this planning document. | UCLA |
| SI 4.1 – Remove language requiring ecosystem services benefits to be measurable (but retain “demonstrated”) | 2 | Many of the objectives in the Plan Update require measuring and documenting benefits. Including the precise metrics for measuring objectives is 1) beyond the scope of this planning document and 2) fails to accommodate changes in the scientific or monitoring basis for a measurement that is likely to occur over the five-year life of this update. However, we feel objectives should include a provision for measurement where appropriate. | Pacific Forest Trust, Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council |
| SI 5.2 – Consider geographic diversity when looking at underserved geographies (UCLA). What does new partners mean? Funded projects? Consider increasing the number from 5 to 10 new partners annually. (Ecosulis) | 2 | Urban conservation and emphasis on disadvantaged communities is a value of WCB and is required under recent Bond measures. We continually are meeting with existing partners so feel that five visits with new partners annually is realistic given staffing resources. | UCLA, Ecosulis |
| SI 5.3 – Broaden desired coordination to include “ <u>agencies, stakeholder groups, or regional climate collaboratives</u> ” (Sierra Consortium). Change this objective to read “..where WCB takes the lead to coordinate among multiple | 1 | Please see the changes to this objective reflecting the request for broader coordination among conservation groups and reflecting WCB lead this effort. | Sierra Consortium, Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council |

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| agencies". (Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council) | | | |
| SI 6.5 Offer webinars for public meetings and hold at least one meeting in southern California (UCLA). | 1 | WCB will be researching and implementing a system to provide for web-based participation in public meetings. WCB is considering whether future meetings could be held in other places in the state. | UCLA |
| SI 6.6 – What will be the focus of the conferences? | 1 | Workshops and conferences that we sponsor all align with WCB goals and objectives; e.g. conferences of land trusts, resource conservation districts or organizations focused on fish and wildlife. | Ecosulis |
| SI 7 – Consider Conservation Genomics as a tool for differentiating species populations with the greatest genetic variation. | 1 | WCB is familiar with the work underway in developing and applying conservation genomics to biodiversity conservation and this program may be applicable to the WCB's work. | UCLA |
| SI 7.5 – Include an objective requiring the WCB to act as the land agent for other departments and conservancies. | 2 | While it could be beneficial for conservation and more efficient, the WCB currently lacks the capacity for this objective. | Pacific Forest Trust, Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council |
| SI 8 – Who would complete the WCBs monitoring work as described in this objective? (UCLA). Consider using technology for remote sensing of monitoring on selected projects (Ecosulis). | 2 | WCB has a staff person dedicated to developing and implementing project monitoring. WCB will be looking at more efficient and effective ways to accomplish monitoring and this will include the use of remote sensing technology. | UCLA, Ecosulis |