



Gavin Newsom, Governor  
NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD  
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Meeting of the Wildlife Conservation Board  
May 22, 2019

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## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

May 22, 2019  
10:00 a.m.

Natural Resources Building  
First Floor Auditorium  
1416 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### Meeting Minutes

*The Wildlife Conservation Board met on Wednesday, May 22, 2019, in the auditorium of the Natural Resources Building in Sacramento, California. Chairman Chuck Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, called the meeting to order and invited John Donnelly, Executive Director of the Wildlife Conservation Board to perform roll call.*

#### 1. Roll Call

Wildlife Conservation Board Members

Charlton H. Bonham, Chair  
Director, Department of Fish and Wildlife

Alina Bokde, Public Member (arrived at 10:08 a.m.)

Karen Finn  
Vice, Keely Bosler, Member  
Director, Department of Finance

Diane Colborn, Public Member

Mary Creasman, Public Member (arrived at 11:25am)

Fran Pavley, Public Member

Eric Sklar, Member  
President Fish and Game Commission

Joint Legislative Advisory Committee

Katharine Moore  
Vice, Senator Henry Stern

Keith Cialino  
Vice, Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia

Executive Director  
John P. Donnelly

Wildlife Conservation Board Meeting, May 22, 2019

Wildlife Conservation Board Staff Present:

Mary Ahern  
Don Crocker  
James Croft  
Alexa Dunn  
Chad Fien  
Rebecca Fris  
Chris Garbarini  
Brian Gibson  
Justin Gonzales  
Judah Grossman  
Elizabeth Hubert  
Hardeep Kaur  
Kurt Malchow  
Scott McFarlin

Heather McIntire  
Colin Mills  
Joe Navari  
Celestial Reysner  
Jessica Schroeder  
Sadie Smith  
Dan Vasquez  
John Walsh  
Lloyd Warble  
Heidi West  
Jasen Yee

Others Present:

Andy Atkinson, CDFW  
Kristi Jamason, Feather River Land Trust  
Josh Bush, CDFW  
Brian Shobe, CALCAN  
John Bezelek, friend  
Elena DeLacy, American River Conservancy  
Doug Gibson, Nature Collective  
Paul Mason, Pacific Forest Trust  
Stephen Porten, property owner  
Craig Garner, Ducks Unlimited  
Larry Wyckoff, CDFW  
Jessica Strickland, Trout Unlimited

Reya Akiona, Bowles Farming  
Grace Blakeslee, Santa Cruz Co. RTC  
Lucy Blake, Northern Sierra Partnership  
Kelly Hopkins, Sac. Valley Conservancy  
Robert Eddings, CA Waterfowl Assoc.  
Ed Oneto, Oneto Rancho  
Dave VanBaren, CDFW  
Ann Porten, property owner  
Ann Van Leer, Escondido Cr. Conservancy  
Karen Buhr, CARCP  
Katie Haldeman, Sustainable Conservation  
Dan Ruman, Ruman Ranch

*Mr. Donnelly performed roll call and confirmed a quorum.*

*Additionally, he explained that the consent calendar would be considered followed by staff presentation of the remaining projects. He said there would be an opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns for each project. He explained that anyone wishing to speak could find speaker cards at the back of the room.*

**2. Public Forum for Items not on this Agenda**

An opportunity for the general public to share comments or concerns on topics that are not included in this agenda. The Board may not discuss or take action on any matter raised during this item, except to decide whether to place the matter on the agenda of a future meeting. (Sections 11125, 11125.7(a), Government Code)

*Mr. Donnelly asked members of the public if there were any questions or comments. There were none.*

**3. Funding Status**

Informational

The following funding status depicts total Capital Outlay and Local Assistance appropriations by fund source and fund number:

WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUND (0447)	<b>\$0.00</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
Total Project Development:	0.00
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$0.00</b>
HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND (0262)	<b>\$77,355,678.54</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(10,275,600.00)
Total Project Development:	(34,914,540.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$32,165,538.54</b>
SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS, CLEAN WATER, CLEAN AIR, AND COASTAL PROTECTION BOND FUND (Proposition 12) (0005)	<b>\$3,408,880.00</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(425,000.00)
Total Project Development:	(2,120,000.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$863,880.00</b>
CALIFORNIA CLEAN WATER, CLEAN AIR, SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND COASTAL PROTECTION BOND FUND (Proposition 40) (6029)	<b>\$7,779,406.43</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(2,712,213.00)
Total Project Development:	(4,897,852.66)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$169,340.77</b>
WATER SECURITY, CLEAN DRINKING WATER, COASTAL AND BEACH PROTECTION FUND OF 2002 (Proposition 50) (6031)	<b>\$26,081,798.83</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
Total Project Development:	(18,010,000.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$8,071,798.83</b>
SAFE DRINKING WATER, WATER QUALITY AND SUPPLY, FLOOD CONTROL, RIVER AND COASTAL PROTECTION FUND OF 2006 (Proposition 84) (6051)	<b>\$31,657,326.06</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(310,000.00)
Total Project Development:	(12,691,316.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$18,656,010.06</b>
WATER QUALITY, SUPPLY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT FUND (Proposition 1-6083)	<b>\$81,010,943.54</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
Total Project Development:	(326,739.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$80,684,204.54</b>
THE CALIFORNIA DROUGHT, WATER, PARKS, CLIMATE, COASTAL PROTECTION, AND OUTDOOR ACCESS FOR ALL ACT OF 2018 (Proposition 68-6088)	<b>\$69,820,000.00</b>
May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(\$646,000.00)
Total Project Development:	(\$25,821,048.00)
Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$43,352,952.00</b>

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GENERAL FUND (0001)		<b>\$13,475,000.00</b>
	May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	0.00
	Total Project Development:	(10,000,000.00)
	Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$3,475,000.00</b>
GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION FUND (3228)		<b>\$19,882,000.00</b>
	May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(4,248,655.00)
	Total Project Development:	(10,539,000.00)
	Projected Unallocated Balance:	<b>\$5,094,345.00</b>
<b>TOTAL – ALL FUNDS</b>		<b>\$330,471,033.40</b>
	Grand Total - May 2019 Board Meeting Allocation:	(18,617,468.00)
	Grand Total -Project Development	(119,320,495.66)
		<b>192,533,069.74</b>
<b>RECAP OF NATURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT ACT OF 2000</b>		
Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000		
Chapter 113, Statutes of 2000 and Chapter 715, Statutes of 2004 (through 6/30/08)		\$48,598,734.00
Chapter 220, Statutes of 2009 (effective 1/1/10)		\$8,662,500.00

*Mr. Donnelly asked Board members if there were any questions or comments. There were none.*

**4. Proposed Consent Calendar (Items 5 - 18)**

*Mr. Donnelly noted for the record the letters of support received on several items on the consent calendar, specifically on:*

*Item 7: Letters from Senator Mike McGuire; Assemblymembers Mark Berman and Jim Wood; Curtis Knight, Executive Director, California Trout; Walter Moore, President, Peninsula Open Space; and Brian Johnson, CA Director, Trout Unlimited.*

*Item 8: Letters from Senator Jarod Huffman; County of Humboldt, BOS Mike Wilson; Mark Andre, Environmental Services Director, City of Arcata; Sharon Kramer, Principle, H.T. Harvey & Associates; Craig Cornu, Estuary Technical Group, Institute for Applied Technology; Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League; John Bourgeois, Exec. Project Manager, South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project; Dan York, Vice President, The Wildlands Conservancy; and Tim Nelson, Natural Resources Director, Wiyot Tribe.*

*Item 9: Letters from Benjamin Sullivan, Assistant Professor, Department of Natural Resources; Bill Christner Jr., Principal Geomorphologist/Soil Scientist, KTC Environmental; Jim Wilcox, Executive Director, Plumas Corporation; and Woutrina Smith, Partner, Red Clover LLC.*

*Item 13: Letters from Quentin Youngblood, Sierraville District Ranger, USDA Forest Service; and John Svahn, Associate Director, Truckee Donner Land Trust.*

*Item 15: Letters from Senator Bill Dodd; Assemblymember Marc Levine; and Rebecca Schwartz Lesberg, San Francisco Bay Program Director, Audubon California.*

*Item 16: Letters from Baldeo Singh, Director for Work Training Programs, Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps; Gesna Clark, Education Committee Chair, Sacramento Audubon Society; Eaton Dunkelberger, CEO, Sierra Nevada Journeys; Robyn Smith, President, Sacramento-Shasta Chapter of the Wildlife Society; and Andy Hernandez, President, Woodlake Neighborhood Association.*

*Item 19: Letter from Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League.*

*Mr. Donnelly stated one board member wished to recuse herself on Item 11 of the consent calendar. The Board would make a motion on Consent Calendar Items 5-18, excluding Item 11, and then make a separate motion on Item 11.*

**It was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve Consent Calendar Items 5-18, excluding Item 11, as proposed in the individual agenda explanations.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**

**It was moved by Board Member Karen Finn that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve Consent Calendar Item 11 as proposed in the individual agenda explanations.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Recused**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**

**\*5. Approval of Minutes – March 7, 2019**

**\*6. Recovery of Funds**

The following projects previously authorized by the Board are now completed, and some have balances of funds that can be recovered and returned to their respective funds. It is recommended that the following totals be recovered and that the projects be closed.

<b>RECOVERIES BY FUND</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund	\$0.00
Habitat Conservation Fund	\$255,853.27
California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund	\$3,184,597.46
Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002	\$0.00
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006	\$37,215.27
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Fund of 2014	\$15,086.00

<b>Total Recoveries for All Funds</b>			<b>\$3,492,752.00</b>
<b>Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund</b>	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Salt River Wetland Restoration	\$37,904.00	\$37,904.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Recoveries to Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Habitat Conservation Fund</b>	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Dangers) Exp 60	\$4,000.00	\$775.00	\$3,225.00
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Eby) Exp 61	\$4,000.00	\$211.00	\$3,789.00
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (First Baptist Church) Exp 62	\$10,500.00	\$7,275.00	\$3,225.00
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Fredrickson) Exp 59	\$10,000.00	\$4,825.00	\$5,175.00
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Kendall) Exp 67	\$4,000.00	\$775.00	\$3,225.00
Allensworth Ecological Reserve (Welsh) Exp 64	\$4,000.00	\$1,215.00	\$2,785.00
Fay Canyon Expansion 1	\$1,430,000.00	\$1,425,487.00	\$4,513.00
Feather River Wildlife Area, Riparian Habitat Restoration, Abbott Lake Unit	\$781,460.00	\$781,460.00	\$0.00
Garibaldi Land Exchange, Phase II	\$125,000.00	\$45,609.00	\$79,391.00
Hallelujah Junction Wildlife Area, Expansion 7	\$122,000.00	\$100,196.00	\$21,804.00
Little Truckee River Fish Habitat Restoration	\$190,000.00	\$190,000.00	\$0.00
Morongo Basin, Exp. 2 (Harrington)	\$92,500.00	\$84,984.00	\$7,516.00
Morongo Basin, Exp. 3 (Portillo)	\$123,750.00	\$113,750.00	\$10,000.00
Morongo Basin, Exp. 4 (Houssels)	\$106,000.00	\$96,000.00	\$10,000.00
North Grasslands WA Enhancement and Security	\$800,000.00	\$768,631.14	\$31,368.86
Salt River Wetland Restoration	\$412,096.00	\$408,892.18	\$3,203.82
Santa Cruz Integrated Watershed Restoration, Phase II	\$465,000.00	\$433,175.41	\$31,824.59
Sinnott Parcel - OSPR Oil Mitigation fund project	\$75,000.00	\$40,192.00	\$34,808.00
<b>Total Recoveries to Habitat Conservation Fund</b>			<b>\$336,562.72</b>
<b>California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund</b>	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Jenner Headlands Preserve Hwy 1 Public Recreation Parking Lot	\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$0.00
San Joaquin River Parkway, Lost Lake Park Campground Improvements	\$1,403,000.00	\$1,246,586.98	\$156,413.02
San Joaquin River Parkway, Sycamore Island Pond Isolation Construction Project	\$4,500,000.00	\$1,471,815.56	\$3,028,184.44
<b>Total Recoveries to California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund</b>			<b>\$3,184,597.46</b>

<b>Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002</b>	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Corte Madera Tidal Marsh Restoration	\$260,000.00	\$260,000.00	\$0.00
San Francisco Estuary Invasive Spartina Eradication	\$1,500,000.00	\$1,500,000.00	\$0.00
<b><i>Total Recoveries to Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002</i></b>			<b><i>\$0.00</i></b>

<b>Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006</b>	Allocated	Expended	Balance
Feather River Wildlife Area, Riparian Habitat Restoration, Abbott Lake Unit, Augmentation	\$620,000.00	\$602,773.73	\$17,226.27
Indian Creek, Lost Coast Redwood and Salmon Initiative Phase II	\$1,270,000.00	\$1,253,422.00	\$16,578.00
Pacific Union College Forest	\$3,525,000.00	\$3,521,702.00	\$3,298.00
Yolo County HCP/NCCP Development, Phase III	\$462,500.00	\$462,500.00	\$0.00
Yolo County HCP/NCCP Development, Phase III Augmentation	\$150,000.00	\$149,887.00	\$113.00
<b><i>Total Recoveries to Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006</i></b>			<b><i>\$37,215.27</i></b>

<b>Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Fund of 2014</b>	Allocated	Expended	Balance
McKee Creek Conservation and Stream Flow Enhancement (Acquisition)	\$1,020,000.00	\$1,004,914.00	\$15,086.00
<b><i>Total Recoveries to Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Fund of 2014</i></b>			<b><i>\$15,086.00</i></b>

**\*7. Programmatic Permitting for Aquatic Habitat Restoration**

**Statewide**

**\$200,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Sustainable Conservation (SC) for a cooperative project with State Coastal Conservancy to advance a statewide expedited permitting program for aquatic habitat restoration and water quality improvement projects.

**LOCATION**

This statewide planning project will create programmatic permit approvals for aquatic and riparian restoration projects and would cover the most commonly proposed habitat restoration projects in California, including multi-benefit projects of statewide significance that prioritize restoration. These permits do not specify project sites, but rather describe a suite of detailed restoration project types that may be permitted under the program.

The project will work to complete programmatic approvals with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to assist in expediting implementation of aquatic and riparian habitat restoration and water quality improvement projects in California. A related programmatic permit with NMFS for the Central Valley restoration projects was completed and approved with other funds in August 2018.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The permitting process is often a major obstacle for habitat restoration projects, as it can take years and be extremely costly on the most complex projects. Typically, permit applicants may apply to numerous agencies to complete beneficial projects, and in some cases, projects have been abandoned due to the complexity and cost of the permitting process.

SC will conduct outreach, plan and secure programmatic permits, which will serve as advance approvals to cover a wide variety of the most commonly done and high priority restoration projects in California. SC will work to obtain programmatic permits from the Corps, NMFS, USFWS, and SWRCB.

Proposed project types under the statewide programmatic permits include, but are not limited to:

- Stream and riparian habitat establishment, restoration and enhancement to restore ecological and hydrological function of streams
- Stream crossing and fish passage improvements for upstream and downstream movement by fish and other species, and to improve hydraulic function in streams
- Water conservation projects, such as offstream storage tanks and ponds and including necessary off-channel infrastructure, to reduce low-flow stream diversions
- Floodplain restoration, including levee, berm and dike setback breaching, and removal, and hydrologic reconnection between streams and floodplains

This project's advanced approval process will greatly accelerate project implementation and further benefit conservation and recovery of protected species, including salmon, steelhead, riparian birds, amphibians, and others. In addition, the proposed types of projects should benefit water quality, increase flood resilience, reduce water treatment costs, and boost water supply by increasing groundwater recharge. Some multi-benefit

restoration projects should also assist in sea level rise resilience, which is crucial in coastal and estuarine areas.

Examples of previously funded WCB projects that might have benefited significantly from expedited programmatic permit approvals include, but are not limited to:

- Redwood Creek Restoration (Lower Marin County)
- Salinas River Arundo Eradication (Monterey County)
- Santa Clara River Riparian Restoration (Ventura County)

SC estimated that the program, by significantly expediting the permitting process for complex restoration projects, could save up to \$124 million in state grants, federal grants, and local funding over 10 years. In the future, these savings can be dedicated to implementing new restoration projects. Additionally, SC and the participating regulatory agencies expect programmatic permit approvals to be renewed, resulting in additional cost savings in future years. Three regulatory agencies have written letters of commitment to work with Sustainable Conservation on this initiative and are actively participating.

By creating an advance approval process with pre-defined project eligibility and established environmental and species protection measures, project implementation can be greatly accelerated and greatly benefit protection and recovery of some of California's sensitive species under threat, including salmon and steelhead, riparian birds, amphibians, and more.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program and meets the program's goal of providing for native fisheries restoration, restoration of wetlands that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Inland Wetland Conservation Program such as coastal, tidal, or fresh water habitats, coastal scrub, grasslands, and threatened and endangered species habitats.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goal outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- Project implementation will assist in expediting restoration projects as well as providing significant cost savings, to be applied to future high-quality restoration projects which enhance habitats for fish and wildlife species. Multi-benefit restoration projects also advance climate change adaptation goals.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The proposed project is a planning and permitting project that does not involve long term management. The permits to be developed by the proposed project are anticipated to support a large variety of conservation and restoration projects in future years.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Project Task	Total Cost	WCB	SCC
1. Project Management	\$26,795	\$11,795	\$15,000
2. Biological Assessment, Permits, and CEQA	\$308,174	\$148,174	\$160,000
3. Outreach	\$46,336	\$31,336	\$15,000
4. Administrative Costs	\$18,695	\$8,695	\$10,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>

Project costs will be for project management and administration, issuance of a final USFWS biological opinion, completion of SWRCB water quality permit, completion of a final SWRCB CEQA document, and outreach.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(b) which provides funding which can be used for the development of scientific data, habitat mapping and other research information necessary to determine the priorities for restoration and acquisition statewide.

**CEQA REVIEW**

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$200,000 from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(b), authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$200,000 from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(b), authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**



**\*8. Resilient Estuaries: Aquatic Species Assessment Tool  
Statewide  
\$144,113**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to California Trout (CalTrout) for a cooperative project with the Orange County Community Fund, the Field Foundation, and Resources Legacy Fund to research and design an Aquatic Species Assessment Tool (ASAT), guidelines, and best management practices for several listed fish species to inform scientific decision making in estuaries statewide.

**LOCATION**

Climate change presents a variety of risks, including loss of habitat, drought, insect and disease outbreaks, and altered hydrologic regimes to aquatic ecosystems. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), natural aquatic ecosystems and native California fish species are vulnerable to the ecological stresses resulting from climate change. Anadromous species are among the most vulnerable due to their complex and diverse life histories. Among the significant stresses are changes in food supplies and water quality in estuaries.

This statewide research and planning project will focus on estuarine species, including salmon, steelhead, pacific lamprey, and tidewater goby. Many species rely on estuaries for all or part of their lifecycles; they are important for food production, and they provide vital nursery habitats. Estuaries are ecologically indispensable to those species which rely on them for parts of their lifecycles. Successful completion of the project will assist in managing estuaries throughout California to benefit multiple species.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

CalTrout is intensifying efforts to address the needs of anadromous fish through an organization-wide estuaries initiative. This project was born out of recognition of the role and importance of tidal wetlands in sequestering carbon, the vital function of this ecosystem for juvenile salmonids, and the difficulty of developing restoration projects in such a complex ecological setting. The ASAT is being developed to meet that need for a comprehensive framework for development and restoration of resilient and functional estuaries that support the life history of threatened and endangered aquatic species.

For all anadromous fish, improving and restoring estuary function is an important goal due to estuaries' role in providing nursery habitat. Estuaries can be critically important to the survivorship of juvenile fish as they enter the ocean. Scientists and managers lack a robust scientific resource which, describes the physiological and structural habitat conditions that best support the juvenile life history of salmonids.

The ASAT addresses this need by generating a framework of estuarine habitat values for an assemblage of listed fishes and guidance on how to achieve them. Based on physiological requirements of target aquatic species, as well as their dependence on certain habitat characteristics and their temporal presence, a tool can be generated that compares impacts to listed and other estuarine aquatic species upon implementation of specific management actions. The ASAT builds a framework of habitat resiliency values for multiple threatened and endangered aquatic species such as salmon and steelhead, tidewater goby, longfin smelt, and Pacific lamprey and will identify and help resolve potential habitat trade-offs based on their physiological requirements in estuaries.

The species' habitat values, based on water quality, vegetative, and food-web research, will support inferences about ecosystem function such as habitat provision, carbon storage and nutrient cycling. The guidelines and best management practices will provide a useful

framework for managers, regulatory agencies, restoration practitioners, and others to understand the seasonal estuarine habitat needs of each species and to help make informed decisions to manage tradeoffs in future restoration projects. Guided by a technical advisory committee of science experts and other users, this tool will give land managers confidence that multi-species benefits can be fully accounted for when making planning decisions.

The tool will be developed with experts and end users and tested through project application in regional planning efforts, projects in technical review, and estuarine restoration projects on the ground. The tool is expected to enhance adaptation by building quality habitats for multiple climate-vulnerable species, reducing existing stressors and balancing habitat tradeoffs for species on a landscape scale to support exceptional biodiversity and promote resilience in the face of climate change.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal for planning projects to identify processes that lead to the successful implementation of future climate adaptation and resiliency projects.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:*

- This project develops a tool to show relationships between management actions and impacts to multiple estuarine species and environmental conditions and will assist managers in decision-making.

This project also addresses goals and objectives for the following statewide plans:

2015 California State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP):

The SWAP concluded that anadromous species are the most vulnerable to climate change. This project addresses this heightened vulnerability by developing a tool that assesses impacts to multiple species resulting from changes in the estuarine environment.

CDFW Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE) tool:

The ASAT tool builds on ACE data and will be able to provide resilience values to the ACE datasets in the Aquatic Significant Habitats Summary.

California Water Action Plan (CWAP):

ASAT will progress on recommended SWAP activities to protect and restore the resiliency of our ecosystems, to support fish and wildlife populations, improve water quality, and restore natural system functions.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

ASAT will deliver sustainable benefits scalable in space and time as it is incorporated into technical review committee processes, regional plans, and applied to estuary restoration projects across California for years to come. The ASAT is designed as a long-term and far-reaching tool to describe ecosystem resiliency in the service of an assemblage of listed aquatic species.

Over the next 30 years, the intentionally replicable and regionally detailed ASAT will allow managers and practitioners to make informed restoration decisions to maximize biodiversity through habitat considerations and trade-offs – increasing species resiliency to climate change. Information about the ASAT will be made available to interested parties through the CalTrout website.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

<b>Project Task</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>WCB</b>	<b>CalTrout</b>	<b>Resources Legacy Fund</b>	<b>OCCF Warne Fund</b>
Project Management	\$ 24,600	\$ 20,000	\$ 4,600		
Aquatic Habitat Research	\$ 92,930	\$ 27,930	\$ 25,000		\$40,000
Carbon Food Web Research	\$48,320	\$ 38,320	\$10,000		
Multi-species Module Development	\$ 63,853	\$ 30,863	\$ 32,990		
End-user Engagement	\$ 46,410	\$ 27,000	\$ 9,410	\$10,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$276,113</b>	<b>\$144,113</b>	<b>\$ 82,000</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>

Project costs: literature search, spreadsheet tool development, carbon food-web research, vetting the tool with restoration managers, work with scientists and managers to refine the tool.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits."

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$144,113 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to

accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$144,113 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**



**\*9. Climate Resilience at the Clover Valley Ranch  
Plumas County  
\$120,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to The Sierra Fund (TSF) for a cooperative project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Red Clover, LLC, to monitor the impacts of grazing under an existing grazing management plan and make recommendations for the development of best management practices for the Clover Valley Ranch in Plumas County.

**LOCATION**

The Clover Valley Ranch is located 14 miles north of Portola. It sits at an elevation of 5,500 feet and is surrounded by mountains rising to almost 7,000 feet to the south with lesser mountain elevations in the other directions. Its two creeks are part of the Feather River Watershed, the largest watershed in the Sierra Nevada. The project area comprises approximately 2,655 acres of beef rangeland ranch within the Feather River Watershed. The area consists primarily of wet meadow habitat that is currently experiencing stream channel incision and vegetation loss that has impacted the hydrology, ecology, and consequent habitat value of the meadow. The majority of the project area has a high species biodiversity ranking of 4 out of 5 according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE) v3.0 based on native species richness, rare species richness, and irreplaceability.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Clover Valley Ranch was once a rich and heterogeneous habitat comprised of narrow meandering channels of slow-moving water connected to shallow groundwater and edged by productive riparian zones. Over 150 years of intense grazing, which included cattle access to creeks, resulted in the elimination of the riparian vegetation, eroded banks, and deeply incised channels that now move water quickly through and out of the valley. Soil compaction and a lack of flow attenuation has impaired groundwater retention and contributed to a shift in plant assemblages from wet meadow to dry shrubland. These fundamental changes to habitat structure and availability have resulted in diminished opportunities for climate adaptation and resiliency. However, preliminary surveys indicate that with restoration, the meadow will likely provide excellent habitat for fish, birds and mammals.

This project is located in the northern Sierra Nevada, which will be subject to some of the most significant landscape-level impacts of any region in the state as the result of climate change. According to the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) significant precipitation and snowpack decline will occur throughout the region, while hot, dry, summers will result in lower stream and river flows and consequently less water for wildlife, especially wetland species.

Given these increasing pressures on Sierra Nevada ecosystems, precipitated by growing populations and changing climatic conditions, providing evidence-based recommendations for rangeland management is critical for protecting important meadow habitat. This multi-benefit planning project will ensure that a strategically important Sierra Nevada headwater ecosystem can provide full economic viability to the rural ranching community while taking an ecosystem and multispecies approach to increase suitable habitat for Species of Greatest Conservation Need as determined by the SWAP.

This planning effort will guide restoration work at Clover Valley Ranch that has already received full funding by the NRCS. The NRCS funding, however, did not include measuring the effectiveness of the current grazing management plan post-restoration for

both meeting livestock needs and preventing continued degradation of water resources and vegetation critical to wildlife. Without funding from the WCB, the restoration will still be implemented, however, monitoring to quantify wildlife benefit will be limited.

TSF will engage a collaborative group of scientists, technical experts, and regional stakeholders to identify priorities for rangeland and wildlife habitat management specific to Plumas County meadows. Meadow function with respect to active grazing will be quantified at the Clover Valley Ranch site to ensure that the multi-benefits of working landscapes can be realized for generations to come. To inform recommendations, this project will collect and analyze soil carbon, water quality, and vegetation data in conjunction with annual fish abundance and diversity sampling, point count sampling and analysis of 14 focal bird species, and analysis of mammal activity including that captured via wildlife cameras, in order to evaluate the efficacy of the Clover Valley Ranch Grazing Management Plan. Recommendations for best practices to meet ecosystem and community adaptation goals in the face of climate change will be developed at project completion both to assist the landowner in long-term planning and to provide a resource to other working land managers in the region. This product will be disseminated locally in Plumas County and across the Sierra Nevada through the Sierra Meadows Partnership group, in which TSF is an active member. This planning effort is meant to apply to other working meadows in the Sierra Nevada with a focus on climate resilience of native fish, birds, and mammals.

The sheer acreage of the Clover Valley Ranch project, and the fact that the land is conserved by conservation easements, means that the resultant restored wet meadow can serve as climate refugia for native species in perpetuity.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- This project will accomplish Goal B.1 by managing Sierra Nevada meadows for both ecosystem (habitat) and community (ranchland) outcomes to represent a multi-benefit climate adaptation strategy that meets the needs of people and wildlife simultaneously. Healthy meadows of the Sierra Nevada add resiliency to the hydrologic and ecological processes that sustain California and represent highly durable systems under climate change.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

As a planning project, the activities associated with this proposal do not involve restoration, construction, or acquisition, but rather leverage NRCS and Red Clover LLC funded restoration on land conserved by conservation easements. As the landowner of the project site, Red Clover LLC will be responsible for the long-term management and sustainability of any implementation activities that leverage the guidance of this planning project. A Long-Term Management Strategy that seeks to provide insight into grazing

management practices in the face of climate change will be developed as a deliverable for this project. Management planning is one of the standardized conservation strategies outlined in SWAP for providing overall conservation benefits statewide.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Task #	Project Task	Total Cost	WCB Request	Non-WCB Funds*
1	Monitoring	\$77,864	\$55,629	\$22,235
2	Soil Carbon and Water Storage Capacity	\$12,540	\$11,418	\$1,122
3	Stakeholder Engagement and Education	\$52,816	\$36,008	\$16,808
4	Project Administration	\$9,971	\$7,927	\$2,044
5	Indirect costs	\$9,018	\$9,018	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$162,209</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$42,209</b>

\*This project leverages cost-share (cash, received) in the amount of \$42,209 for TSF staff time for travel, equipment, supplies, development of outreach materials, participation in the Sierra Meadows Partnership and in monitoring subcontracts.

Project costs will cover monitoring of fish, bird, mammal, water quality and storage capacity, measurement of soil carbon and water storage capacity, collaboration with partners engaged in Sierra meadow restoration, development and dissemination of outreach materials to the local ranching community, and for conducting project administration and oversight.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits."

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which have not been approved, adopted, or funded. Subject to Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

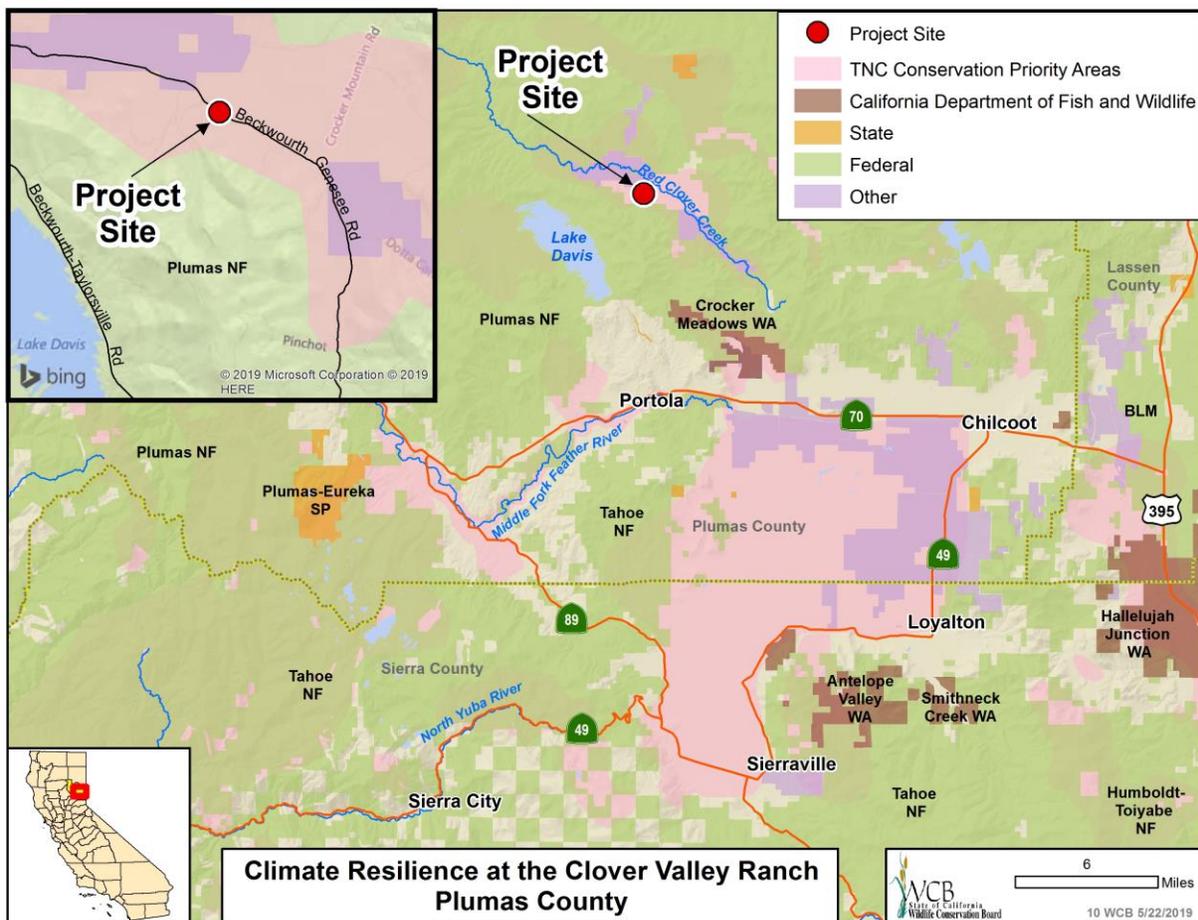
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$120,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$120,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**



**\*10. Sierra Valley Conservation Area Expansion 4**

**Plumas County**

**\$415,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Feather River Land Trust (FRLT) for a cooperative project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to acquire a conservation easement over 468± acres of land for the protection of deer range habitat, wildlife corridors, protection and preservation of rangeland, grasslands, grazing land and agriculture, and protection of sensitive species.

**LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES**

The property (Property) consists of 468± acres located north of Highway 70, three miles east of the small town of Beckwourth in the Sierra Valley area of Plumas County, and approximately 45 miles north of the town of Truckee. Access to the property is from Maddalena Road, a paved county road.

The Property falls within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Sierra Valley - Truckee Conceptual Area Protection Plan (SVT CAPP). The main objectives of the SVT CAPP are to conserve and enhance biodiversity, protect threatened vegetative communities along with other rare and important plants and animals, and maintain habitat linkages that help protect elevation gradients that allow species to migrate and adapt to climate change.

The Property is in the Sierra Valley, in the northern Sierra Nevada. The valley is ringed by the northern Sierra on the west, the Sierra and Diamond Mountains to the North, and the Bald Mountain Range to the east and south. The valley encompasses approximately 120,000 acres with the bulk of its land area lying at about 5,000 feet in elevation. The valley is drained to the northwest by the Middle Fork of the Feather River, which gathers the waters of the many creeks that head in the surrounding uplands. Agriculture in the Sierra Valley began in the 1850s and remains an important enterprise today. There about 150 active ranches in the valley, most producing hay and livestock.

The Property is near the existing Crocker Meadows Wildlife Area, which provides key deer winter habitat for the Doyle interstate deer herd. The Property also abuts Bureau of Land Management lands and other lands conserved in conservation easements including Goodwin Ranch, a WCB project, directly to the south. Further, the area contains major migration corridors used by deer as they travel between seasonal ranges.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Property is made up of one regular and two irregular shaped parcels to form an irregular shaped Property that is used for farming and grazing. Improvements on the Property include a 2,375 square foot restored historic residence, guest house, old barn, other outbuildings, and miscellaneous operating improvements including fencing, irrigation wells, center pivot irrigation systems, and farm roads.

The Property features diverse habitat features, including multiple springs, eastside pine ecotone, black oak woodland, a striking rock cliff, and a seasonally wet meadow complex. Currently, the Property employs year-round rotational grazing on the ranch, growing hay for winter feeding. The Property utilizes two center-pivots for hay production. The Property is visible from State Route 70 and protects the scenic viewshed of Sugarloaf Peak and Reconnaissance Peak, as well as important habitat for mule deer and pronghorn.

The Property contains a diverse combination of bitterbrush, sagebrush, black oak woodland, eastside pine, and irrigated alfalfa, which provide important habitat for the

Doyle mule deer herd and Sierra Valley's growing pronghorn population. Black oak woodland is quite unique above 5,000 feet in the northern Sierra. The Property also contains spectacular volcanic cliffs that provide breeding, roosting, and perching habitat for a diversity of raptors, including prairie falcon, peregrine falcon, and golden eagle. The property contains a variety of historic features and buildings that reflect the agricultural history of Sierra Valley. Conservation of the Property is strategically important to stopping rural sprawl and halting further fragmentation of economically viable, sustainable ranches and farms within the Sierra Valley.

The Property provides quality habitat for the following special status wildlife species: golden eagle, Swainson's hawk, ferruginous hawk, bald eagle, prairie falcon, peregrine falcon, burrowing owl, mule deer, pronghorn, and American badger. Burrowing owl and prairie falcon have recently been documented breeding on the property.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant for this project is being considered under the WCB's Land Acquisition Program. The Land Acquisition Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, et seq). It authorizes WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under this program acquisition activities are carried out in conjunction with the CDFW, evaluating the biological values of property through development of a Land Acquisition Evaluation (LAE)/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP).

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by the WCB Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

*Goal A.1 – Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.*

The project enhances habitat connections by expanding a network of protected linkages. The project will expand the protection of wildlife linkages and provide ecosystem responses to climate change by incorporating elevation gradients that allow species and vegetation communities to shift upward in elevation.

*Goal A.3 – Fund projects that support the implementation of Natural Community Conservation Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans and recovery of listed species.*

The Sierra Valley - Truckee Conceptual Area Protection Plan (SVT CAPP) identifies the Property as a high priority for acquisition and protection. The Property supports the recovery of listed species.

*Goal A.4 - Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.*

The habitat resources of the Property have been evaluated in the CAPP approved by CDFW. CDFW determined the Property is a high priority for protection due to the linkage it creates with protected lands to the west and extensive undeveloped lands to the east.

*Goal E.1 - Maximize expenditures of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.*

The Property is proposed to be acquired with WCB funds leveraged by the funding partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

FRLT will manage this easement as part of its larger easement program. FRLT currently has nine conservation easements in the watershed that protect 16,181 acres. FRLT has a pooled easement stewardship endowment and a land stewardship staff of four. FRLT also has a legal defense fund and a conservation easement monitoring policy and procedure that meets and exceeds the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices and WCB monitoring requirements.

**TERMS**

The conservation easement has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$830,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. The property owner has agreed to sell the conservation easement for the fair market value of \$830,000. The terms and conditions of the proposed grant between the WCB and the Feather River Land Trust provide that staff of the WCB will review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, the WCB can seek specific performance of the grant or require the grantee to transfer the Easement to WCB or another qualified holder.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$415,000
Natural Resources Conservation Service	\$415,000
TOTAL Purchase Price	\$830,000
TOTAL ALLOCATION	\$415,000

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Code Section 5096.350(a)(5) that provides matching funds for the acquisition, restoration or protection of habitat or habitat corridors that promote the recovery of threatened, endangered, or fully protected species.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION**

The acquisition has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by the WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

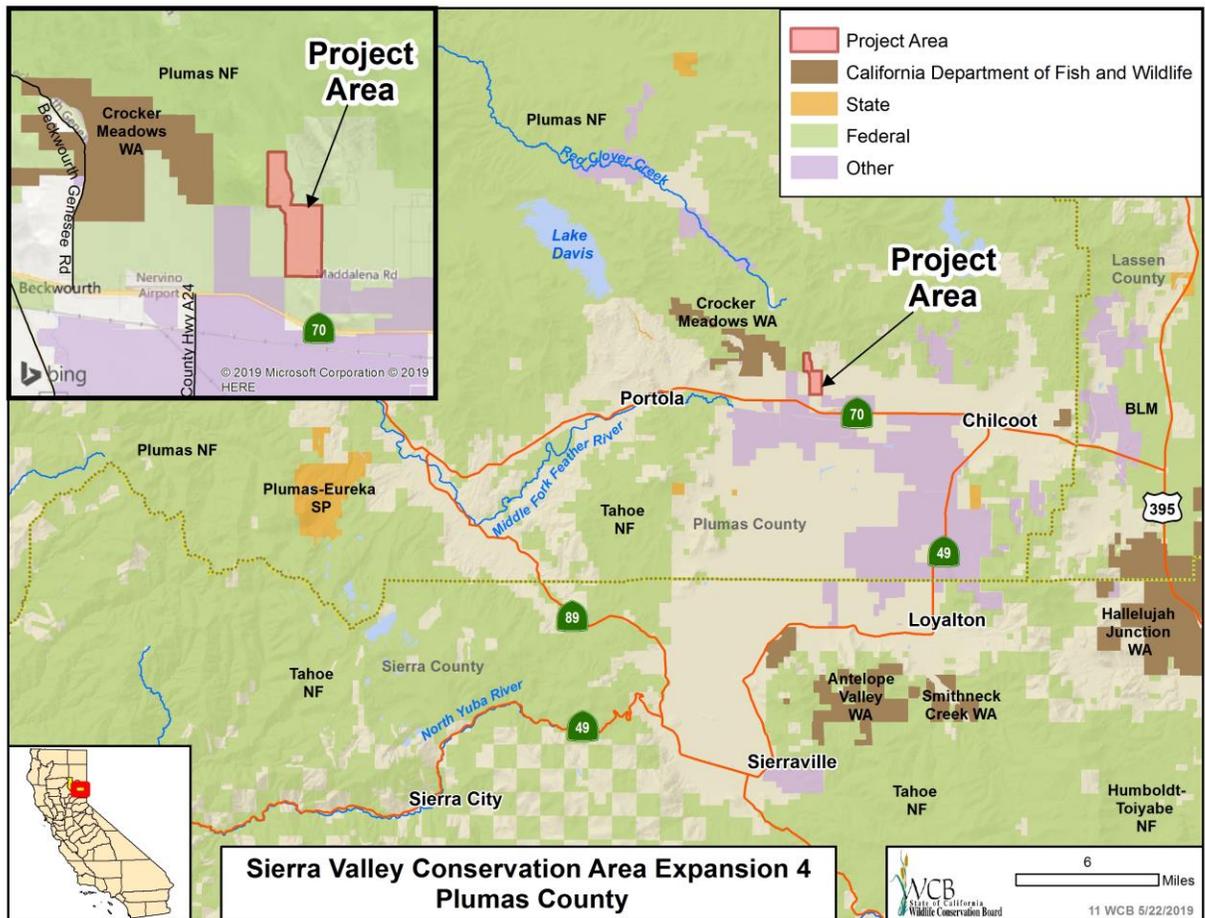
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$415,000 from Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Code Section 5096.350(a)(5) for the grant, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$415,000 from Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12), Public Resources Code Section 5096.350(a)(5) for the grant, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**



**\*11. Building Climate Resiliency in Central Valley Wetlands  
Butte, Merced, Tulare and Kern Counties  
\$197,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Audubon California, for a cooperative project with Point Blue Conservation Science and Grassland Water District to develop regional water budget models that model future Central Valley wetland water needs under climate change scenarios, located in Butte, Merced, Tulare, and Kern Counties.

**LOCATION**

Only five percent of the Central Valley's historic wetlands remain after extensive conversion to agriculture and urban land uses. The remaining Central Valley wetlands are a mixture of private wetlands, usually operated as duck hunting clubs, federal National Wildlife Refuges, and state Wildlife Areas, forming the backbone of the Pacific Flyway. In addition to providing habitat to millions of waterfowl and hundreds of thousands of shorebirds, these inland wetlands provide habitat that is critical for the survival of Swainson's hawks (state threatened), tricolored blackbirds (state threatened), and giant garter snakes (federal threatened).

California's wetlands are identified as conservation targets in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE). In the SWAP, freshwater marsh is identified as one of two conservation targets for the Great Valley Ecoregion and climate change is identified as a pressure in the region. ACE highlights the Central Valley's wetlands as significant terrestrial and aquatic habitat with exceptional biodiversity and connectivity.

While the importance of the Central Valley's remaining wetlands has been recognized for decades, the need for this specific project arises from the passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014. SGMA will address groundwater overdraft and its undesirable results by requiring basin-level Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP) that outline actions to bring basins into sustainable groundwater management in 20 years. SGMA includes specific requirements to consider groundwater dependent ecosystems in basin planning and groundwater management decisions. In order for GSPs to meet groundwater sustainability and climate change adaptation goals, robust water budget data and models are needed for managed wetlands in Central Valley groundwater basins.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

With only five percent of the Central Valley's historic wetlands remaining after extensive conversion to urban and agricultural uses, protection of these habitats from the risks of climate change and groundwater reductions is a critical task for conservation organizations and agencies. California's remaining wetlands provide essential refugia for wildlife, including millions of waterbirds that migrate through the Pacific Flyway and listed species such as the tricolored blackbird and giant garter snake. The Central Valley Joint Venture, a partnership of federal agencies, state agencies, and conservation organizations, sets wetland restoration and enhancement targets to support migratory bird populations.

Priority groundwater basins throughout the Central Valley lack water demand and recharge data for wetlands, putting these groundwater dependent ecosystems at risk and undermining the utility of GSPs. By filling a significant data gap on current wetland water needs and future needs under climate change scenarios, public and private wetlands managers will be better able to establish and protect the water needs of wildlife into the future, including in SGMA implementation.

This project will develop water budgets for wetlands in the Central Valley and work with wetland managers and groundwater sustainability agencies (GSA) to ensure that wetlands are protected in the implementation of SGMA. Through water budget modeling and a climate change analysis of water budgets for wetlands, this project will provide technical assistance to the CDFW, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), private wetland managers, and GSAs, in order to build resiliency in Central Valley wetlands and protect them as refugia for numerous species threatened by climate change.

This technical assistance project will build climate resiliency for wetland dependent wildlife through the following project objectives:

1. **Regional water budget models** - Develop regional models of wetland water budgets by refining the inputs and assumptions of the Central Valley-wide CalSimHydro model. These regional models will be a tool for private and public wetlands managers to utilize throughout the Central Valley.
2. **Detailed water budgets** - Develop detailed water budgets at three Central Valley Project Improvement Act Refuges – Kern National Wildlife Refuge, Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area, and Gray Lodge Wildlife Area – and one private wetlands complex in Kern County. Water budgets will use existing, available data from wildlife managers and modeling where data is lacking to capture surface water deliveries, groundwater pumping, recharge, evapotranspiration, and outflow at monthly time intervals and by habitat type. A field study of evapotranspiration (ET), in coordination with Semitropic GSA, will help refine ET values for the private wetlands in Kern County. The selected wetlands are dependent on groundwater pumping for habitat, represent distinct regions of the Central Valley, and are most at-risk of impacts from groundwater regulations.
3. **Climate change scenarios for wetland water** - Model future wetland water needs under climate change scenarios to build climate adaptation for Central Valley wetlands into Groundwater Sustainability Plans.
4. **Coordinate with wetland managers** - Facilitate coordination with technical model developers and wetlands managers to ensure local, on-the-ground knowledge is included in the detailed water budgets. Conduct workshops or meetings with CDFW, USFWS, and private wetland managers to provide the model and data outputs as technical assistance for their engagement in the SGMA process and review of GSPs.
5. **Engage with GSAs and their consultants** - Work directly with GSAs and the consultants developing GSPs to provide thorough wetland data for their basin-wide plans. This important step will ensure that the wetland water budgets are able to be utilized in GSPs.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- This project will achieve climate resiliency goals by protecting critical refugia and integrating climate change scenarios for managed wetlands into the projected water needs included in groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs).

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

- Climate change resiliency and adaptation through the development of technical assistance critical for protecting the state’s remaining freshwater wetlands.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

This project will be assessed based on its ability to develop accurate wetland water budgets for four target wetlands, as well as regional models applicable to the entire Central Valley. The measurement of success will be the integration of wetland information, including current water budgets and future water budgets under climate change, into GSPs in the following SGMA subbasins: Delta-Mendota, Tule, Kern County, East Butte. Audubon California will lead monitoring and assessment efforts and report to WCB.

#### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

<b>Project Task</b>	<b>WCB</b>	<b>Audubon</b>	<b>Point Blue</b>	<b>GWD</b>	<b>Total</b>
Project Management	\$49,060	\$17,030	\$12,410		\$78,500
Subcontractor(s) – Water Budget Development	\$85,910		\$40,000	\$12,000	\$137,910
Subcontractor – GSP Review	\$52,500	\$12,000			\$64,500
Indirect Charges	\$9,530				\$9,530
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$197,000</b>	<b>\$29,030</b>	<b>\$52,410</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$290,440</b>

Project costs will be for: project management and expenses, development of site-specific water budgets for targeted wetlands, development of Regional water budget models, evapotranspiration measurements, and stakeholder coordination.

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits."

#### CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter

3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies), as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$197,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Karen Finn that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$197,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Recused**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**\*12. Lacey Meadows Restoration Planning Project**  
**Sierra County**  
**\$293,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Truckee River Watershed Council for a cooperative project with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to complete restoration and management planning and support pre-project monitoring and completion of final design plans to restore 495 acres of degraded high Sierra meadow habitat.

**LOCATION**

The subject property is located just beneath the Sierra Nevada Crest on the south side of Jackson Meadows Road (a.k.a. Forest Service Road 07) approximately 8 miles west of its intersection with State Route 89, and approximately 15 miles northwest of Truckee. The property is an inholding within the Tahoe National Forest. There are two meadow areas: Upper Lacey Meadow and Lower Lacey Meadow, both of which are bisected by Lacey Creek and its tributaries.

Upper Lacey Meadow is currently a 72-acre meadow, reduced from a 99-acre meadow due to excessive sediment supply from Lacey Creek and its tributaries that run through the meadow. This excessive sediment occurs from both natural and anthropogenic sources. Anthropogenic sources include streambed and bank erosion associated with increased runoff from roads, grazing impacts, and channel modifications or diversions.

Lower Lacey Meadow is a 385-acre meadow. It is located downstream of Upper Lacey Meadow and adjoins Webber Lake. Lacey Creek is incised through Lower Lacey Meadow, limiting floodplain access and allowing for upland vegetation encroachment. The channel appears to be impacted from road building, excess sediment delivery from upland sources, lake level fluctuations, and grazing within the riparian zone. The overall size of Lower Lacey Meadow has reduced slightly due to this degradation – as measured from aerial photographs, the meadow was 396 acres in 1955 and is now 385 acres. Conifer encroachment is also prevalent along the meadow edges.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Increased temperatures that are occurring as a result of climate change are raising the snow-elevation level in the Sierra Nevada, increasing the proportion of precipitation falling as rain instead of snow, increasing the incidence of rain-on-snow events, reducing the depth of the snowpack, and accelerating the snowmelt in the Sierra Nevada. The Truckee River watershed spans high to mid-elevation and is vulnerable to experiencing a shift to a primarily rainfall-driven hydrologic regime. This type of shift would result in increased peak flows associated with downstream flooding and increased erosion and a reduced snowpack, resulting in decreased late season flows and increases in water temperature.

High elevation meadows and the species that depend upon them are particularly sensitive to the types of climate change predicted for the Sierra Nevada. Wet meadows are key habitats for many animal species because they provide water and shade during the three-to six-month dry season, promote lower summer stream temperatures, higher plant productivity, increased insect prey availability, and special vegetation structures such as willow thickets. Changes in hydrologic conditions in meadows due to climate change have the potential to jeopardize these conditions.

This project would support restoration of Lacey Meadows with three planning components: developing a conceptual restoration design, implementing a monitoring program to document baseline conditions against which to measure eventual restoration success, and management planning.

The immediate benefits achieved by this project include readying two meadows for restoration, totaling 495 acres of high-elevation Sierra meadows, located in an important headwater system. The project is designed to protect several sensitive species of wildlife and plants and would have the potential to support several additional species once implemented.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- This project will accomplish Goal B.1 by assessing the impacts of climate change on important habitats and species and developing long-term, sustainable adaptation options that can be integrated into local and regional conservation and management planning processes.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Because this is a planning/technical assistance project, there is no specific long-term management plan. However, as part of this project, grazing Best Management Practices would be developed to reduce and minimize adverse effects of grazing on the meadow habitat. Also, some minor management actions would be developed to adjust base-water levels for Webber Lake, downstream from Lacey Meadows, in a way that would reduce negative effects on the meadow hydrology. Any significant changes in management may require compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and would not be implemented with this requested WCB funding.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Task #	Project Task	Total Cost	WCB Request	Non-WCB Funds*
1	Project design	\$110,000	\$60,000	\$50,000
2	Monitoring – pre-project	\$272,690	\$161,190	\$111,500
3	Management plans (grazing and lake level management)	\$79,700	\$44,700	\$35,000
4	Project management/stakeholder coordination	\$75,110	\$27,110	\$48,000
5	Environmental compliance and permitting	\$55,000	\$0	\$55,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$592,500</b>	<b>\$293,000</b>	<b>\$299,500</b>

\*This cost share is from a CDFW grant amount that will be expended during the WCB grant term. The \$299,500 allocated for this project component is a subset of a total contribution of \$403,000 by CDFW.

Project costs will be for the planning, data collection, monitoring, technical support, travel expenses, and outreach necessary to finalize implementation steps needed to restore the Lacy Meadows area.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits".

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The project is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$293,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$293,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

Bokde – Yes

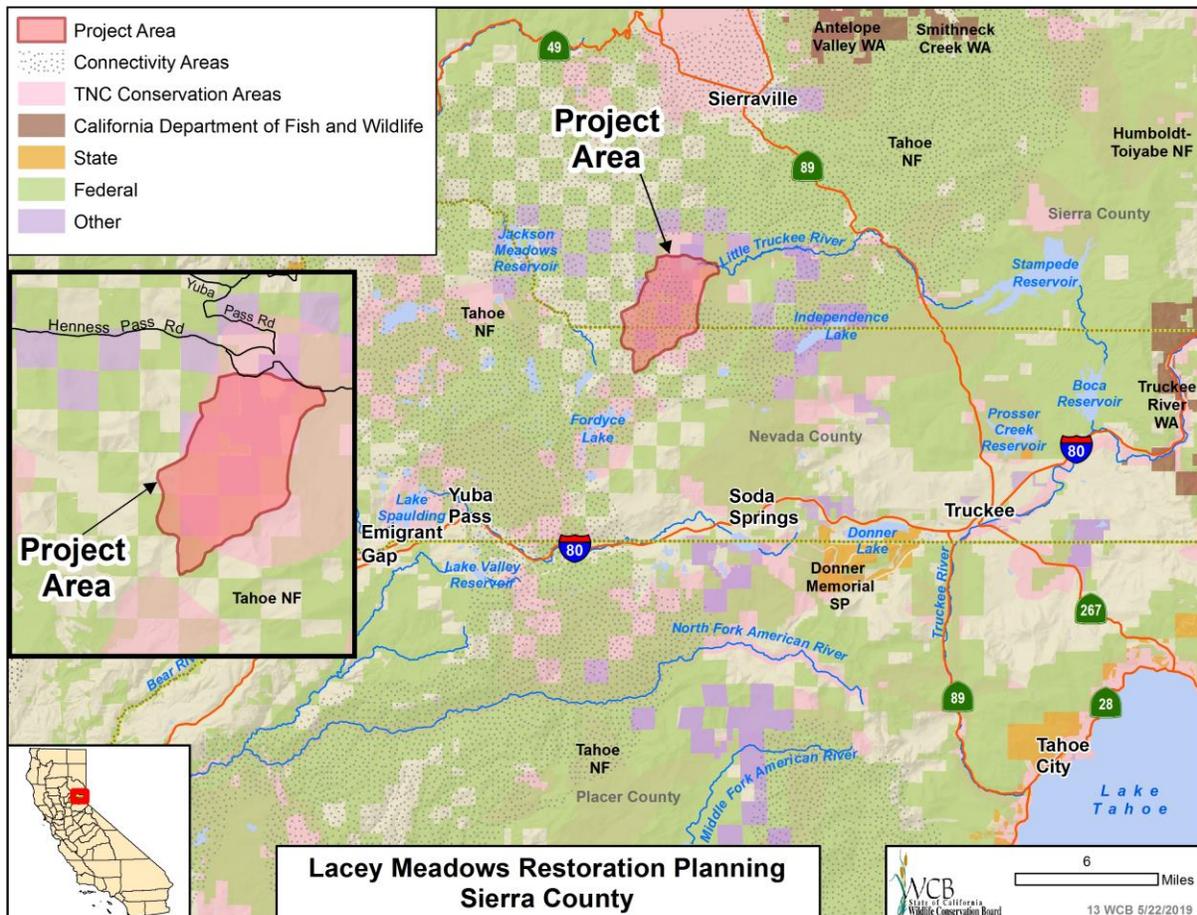
Bonham – Yes

Colborn – Yes

Finn – Yes

Pavley – Yes

Sklar – Yes



**\*13. East Contra Costa County HCP/NCCP (Olesen/Duke)**

**Contra Costa County**

**\$100,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (ECCCHC) and the acceptance of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant and the approval to sub-grant these federal funds to the ECCCHC for a cooperative project with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) to acquire 120± acres of land for the protection and preservation of existing regional wildlife linkages, including grassland, oak woodland, pond, and creek habitat areas within the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (ECCC HCP/NCCP) plan area.

**LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES**

The property (Property) is located at the western end of Briones Valley, in an unincorporated area of Contra Costa County, approximately 3 miles west of the City of Brentwood and 3 miles south of the City of Antioch. Acquisition of the Property would protect a critical piece of the wildlife corridor connecting Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve to Marsh Creek State Park and Round Valley Regional Preserve. Surrounding land uses include existing natural park lands, wildlife mitigation lands, rural ranchettes, and private cattle ranching.

The ECCC HCP/NCCP designates the Property as a high priority for acquisition and protection due to its location within a critical linkage between previously conserved areas within the ECCC HCP/NCCP plan area. Over the past several years the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), USFWS, ECCCHC and EBRPD have partnered to acquire 14,000± acres of habitat within the ECCC HCP/NCCP Preserve System, helping protect essential habitat and connectivity for multiple state- and federally-listed wildlife species. The project is also consistent with action proposed under the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) California State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The project is located within the Central Valley and Bay Delta region within the SWAP. One of the recommended conservation actions identified for this region is protection of upland linkages and reducing the risk of habitat isolation in the eastern San Francisco Bay area which this project helps to accomplish.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Property consists of three adjacent legal parcels totaling 120± acres in size and is currently used as rural agricultural grazing land. The topography of the Property is predominately level to mildly sloping along the northerly areas adjacent to the road frontage. Thereafter, the land slopes up with moderate to steep topography. Habitat types found on the Property include annual grassland, oak woodland, pond, and creek. The Property also provides benefits to wildlife in terms of future climate change resiliency by providing and connecting with varied terrains and elevations for species movement.

The Property is adjacent to the 72± acre Poppi-Halstead property which WCB approved funding for in August of 2018 and the 960± acre Smith property which WCB approved funding for in May of 2014. North and adjacent to the Smith property is the 1,885± acre Roddy Ranch property which WCB approved funding for in November of 2013. These linkages include a northwest-southeast movement corridor for the state threatened and federally endangered San Joaquin kit fox. Acquisition of the Property will protect suitable habitat for the conservation of the California-listed threatened red-legged frog and a variety of other rare and important wildlife species including California tiger salamander, golden eagle, western burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, Alameda whipsnake, and western pond turtle.

## WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant and subgrant for this project are being considered under the WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to the WCB's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, *et seq.*). It authorizes the WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. CDFW has reviewed and approved the project under its Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) program, substantiating the biological values of the Property and recommending it for funding. As a participant in the USFWS Land Acquisition grant selection and review process, CDFW has also reviewed and approved the USFWS grant proposed for acceptance for this project.

## STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by the WCB Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

*Goal A.1 – Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.*

- The project enhances habitat connections by expanding a network of protected linkages. The project will expand the protection of wildlife linkages and provide ecosystem responses to climate change by incorporating elevation gradients that allow species and vegetation communities to shift upward in elevation.

*Goal A.3 – Fund projects that support the implementation of Natural Community Conservation Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans and recovery of listed species.*

- The ECCC HCP/NCCP identifies the Property as a high priority for acquisition and protection. The Property supports the recovery of listed species.

*Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.*

- CDFW was instrumental in the creation and support of the ECCC HCP/NCCP through its NCCP program. Under the NCCP program, CDFW works with numerous private and public partners to develop a regional protection plan identifying properties to acquire for long-term protection of habitat for plants and animals.

*Goal E.1 - Maximize expenditures of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.*

- The Property is proposed to be acquired with additional funds from the USFWS Section 6 subgrant and EBRPD funds.

## MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

EBRPD has agreed to manage the Property once it is acquired. Funding of future management activities for this Property will be provided by ECCCHC and EBRPD, in part through wind turbine, communication tower, residential, and agricultural lease revenue from prior joint acquisitions within the ECCC HCP/NCCP plan area. It is anticipated that the Property will offer future opportunities for passive recreational uses, an allowed use under

the ECCC HCP/NCCP. The habitat will be maintained in conjunction with other properties acquired by EBRPD.

#### TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$1,080,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services and the USFWS. The Property owner has agreed to sell the Property for the approved appraised fair market value. The USFWS funds require a non-federal match that is being provided by EBRPD funds, the proposed WCB grant to ECCCHC and pre-acquisition research, due diligence, closing costs, and staff time costs. The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant and subgrant to the ECCCHC provide that staff of the WCB must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions, and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, the WCB can require the grantee to encumber the Property with a conservation easement in favor of WCB and seek reimbursement of funds.

#### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$ 100,000
USFWS subgrant funds	\$ 512,250
East Bay Regional Park District	\$ 467,750
Total Purchase Price	\$1,080,000
Total WCB Allocation	\$ 100,000

#### WCB FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(c) (SSJD-NCCP) that allows for grants to implement or assist in the establishment of Natural Community Conservation Plans.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3) Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by the WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. The CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

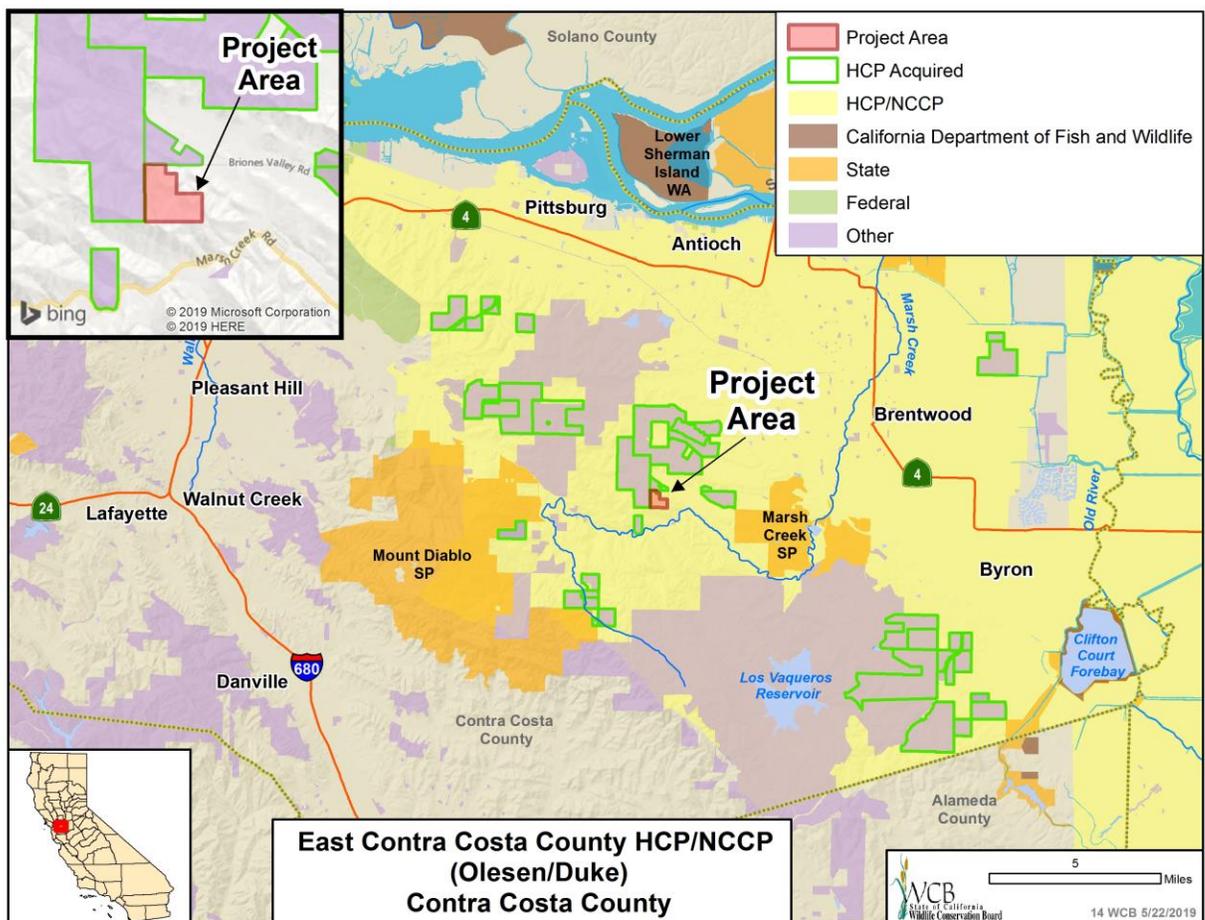
#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that the WCB approve the project as proposed, allocate \$100,000 from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(c) for the grant to ECCCHC, approve the acceptance of the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant funds from the USFWS in the amount of \$512,250 and the subgrant of these federal funds to ECCHC, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$100,000 from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006 (Proposition 84), Public Resources Code Section 75055(c) for the grant to ECCCHC, approve the acceptance of the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant funds from the USFWS in the amount of \$512,250 and the subgrant of these federal funds to ECCHC, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

- Bokde – Yes
- Bonham – Yes
- Colborn – Yes
- Finn – Yes
- Pavley – Yes
- Sklar – Yes



**\*14. Adaptation and Resilience Plan for the Petaluma River Baylands  
Sonoma and Marin Counties  
\$260,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Sonoma Land Trust for a cooperative project with the Sonoma Resource Conservation District (SRCD), San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI), and Point Blue Conservation Science to develop an Adaptation and Resilience Implementation Plan for the Petaluma River Baylands (Plan) in Sonoma County.

**LOCATION**

The Petaluma River Watershed drains to the San Pablo Bay, which forms the northern extension of the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. At 4,191 acres, the Petaluma Marsh in the lower watershed's baylands is the largest remaining ancient tidal marshland in California. The Petaluma Marsh is surrounded by approximately 7,000 acres of reclaimed wetlands. The Petaluma River is tidally influenced upstream to the confluence with Lynch Creek, in the City of Petaluma. Water uses in the watershed include agriculture, urban and rural domestic, municipal, commercial, and industrial.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

While the Petaluma River Watershed contains San Francisco Bay Estuary's largest remaining intact ancient tidal wetland (Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area), along with several other protected and restored wetlands, nearly 60 percent of the Petaluma River's historical tidal wetlands have been lost since the mid-19th century, with a corresponding loss in ecosystem services including flood protection, carbon sequestration, pollutant filtration, and habitat for threatened and endangered species.

These remaining wetlands, public infrastructure, and private lands within the Petaluma River Baylands are not adequately prepared to meet the expected challenges associated with climate change. Sea level rise will threaten the viability of existing marshes, including the 4,200-acre Petaluma River Marsh Wildlife Area, and extraordinary vulnerability exists within the lower estuary where privately operated stormwater pumps and aging levees are all that separate the subsided baylands from catastrophic flooding.

Until recently, the only major tributary in the San Pablo Baylands without a restoration plan underway was the Petaluma River. The first step toward that planning effort was recently completed with the publication of the Petaluma Valley Historical Hydrology and Ecology Study by the SFEI for the SRCD. This study identifies and maps restoration opportunities in the watershed. The proposed project will expand upon this by analyzing where vulnerabilities to climate change impacts exist and where opportunities for restoration exist based on future projected impacts, such as sea level rise.

Using the best available science, the project will evaluate nature-based flood protection alternatives and identify key watershed connections to ensure ongoing freshwater and sediment inputs to the estuary so that tidal marsh processes can keep pace with sea level rise. The Plan will integrate multiple benefits (intact wildlife habitat, clean water, and flood protection) in an area with significant restoration potential. The project will provide an opportunity to create a blueprint that will guide land protection, help direct the redesign of State Route 37 and the railroad, identify restoration projects for specific parcels, and leverage implementation funding.

### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program’s goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- This project will accomplish Goal B.1 by identifying opportunities to increase resilience and facilitate adaptation to climate change within existing and historical tidal and freshwater wetland and adjacent transition zones, and by identifying opportunities to reconnect wetlands to their watersheds through land protection.

### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Because this is a planning/technical assistance project, there is no specific long-term management plan. However, as this planning effort intends to identify large-scale opportunities for wetlands restoration and preservation through land protection, the project will serve as a roadmap for long-term management of the Petaluma River Baylands.

### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Task #	Project Task	Total Cost	WCB Request	Non-WCB Funds*
1	Administration/expenses/indirect costs	\$15,833	\$15,833	\$0
2	Project management	\$40,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
3	Plan Development	\$138,000	\$100,000	\$38,000
4	Stakeholder outreach and Regional Science Advisory Team	\$92,167	\$55,167	\$37,000
5	Prepare Adaptation and Resilience Plan	\$81,000	\$69,000	\$12,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$367,000</b>	<b>\$260,000</b>	<b>\$107,000</b>

\*Cash cost share comes in the amounts of \$50,000 from a US Environmental Protection Agency grant to SFEI, \$50,000 from a US Bureau of Reclamation grant to SRCD, and a \$7,000 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agreement passed through to SRCD.

Project costs will be for the administration, management, development, and outreach expenses needed to develop an adaptation and resilience implementation plan for the Petaluma River Baylands. The Plan will identify opportunities to increase resilience and facilitate adaptation to climate change within existing and historical tidal and freshwater wetland and adjacent transition zones and identify opportunities for reconnecting wetlands to their watersheds through land protection.

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits".

#### CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$260,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$260,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

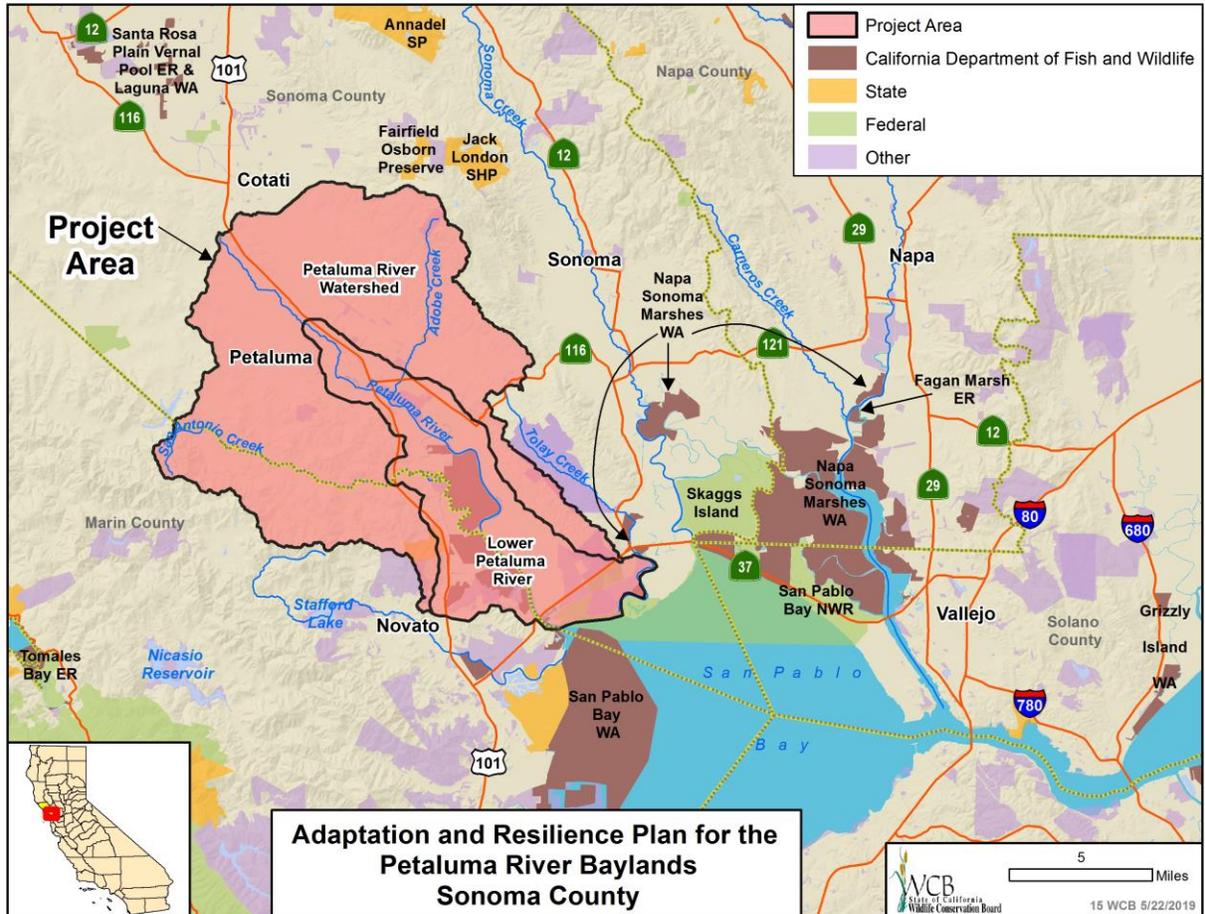
**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**\*15. Camp Pollock Site Improvement  
Sacramento County  
\$176,000**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Sacramento Valley Conservancy (SVC) for a cooperative project with the Sacramento County Department of Water Resources and Recreational Equipment, Inc. to expand public access, improve a parking lot, install educational signs, and implement water-efficient landscaping on 11 acres of State Lands Commission's Camp Pollock property, on the American River in the city of Sacramento.

**LOCATION**

The Camp Pollock Site Improvement project (project) is on an 11-acre site located on the north bank of the American River northwest of Highway 160 in the city of Sacramento. The project area is bordered by a narrow band of riparian habitat dominated by valley oaks, cottonwoods, and willows to the south, and associated riparian understory of wild grape, elderberry, ash, black walnut, and box elder to the east, north and west. The interior of the project area has landscaped grounds including irrigated and non-irrigated lawn as well as several exotic trees such as Chinese hackberry, eucalyptus, and non-native oak and maple species. The area provides potential nesting habitat for the state threatened Swainson's hawk, shaded riverine aquatic habitat, rearing habitat for Central Valley steelhead and Chinook salmon, and riparian and upland habitat for the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, northwestern pond turtle, ringtail cat, white-tailed kite, bald eagle, osprey, red-tailed hawk, red-shouldered hawk, American kestrel, yellow-breasted chat, yellow warbler, migratory waterfowl, and migratory songbirds.

Structures located within the project area include the renovated Myrtle Johnston Lodge, a shower building with restrooms, three storage buildings, caretaker's mobile residence, picnic benches, a flagpole, and enclosed well pump station.

Camp Pollock has a rich local history of providing youth outdoor education and affordable recreation for the community. The North Sacramento Land Company donated the first acre of land in 1922 to the Boy Scouts of America, Golden Empire Council. The lodge was completed in 1924 and the Boy Scouts owned and managed the property until 2013. During that time the lodge was utilized for event rentals and local community meetings, the campground and field were used for various scout training activities, and river access provided a launch point for non-motorized boats (historically there was a small dock). However, in its final years with the Boy Scouts, Camp Pollock fell neglected and subject to illegal camping and dumping. Due to the organization's inability to rehabilitate the property, it was purchased by the California State Lands Commission (Commission) in 2013. SVC facilitated the purchase and entered into a lease agreement with the Commission as the new manager of Camp Pollock.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The American River Parkway (Parkway) is a multi-faceted public resource available to the residents of Sacramento, particularly for those living in dense urban areas and communities alike. The Parkway and river provide rare opportunities for recreation, education, and connection in a natural place, close to home. Located within the Parkway, as well as a severely disadvantaged community that is subject to homelessness and illegal camping, Camp Pollock plays a vital role in the positive public perception of the Parkway by bringing visitors and volunteers to the lower reaches of the American River and contributes to the overall rejuvenation of the area.

When SVC first took over management of Camp Pollock, the site's most immediate needs included repairs and improvements to existing facilities. SVC renovated the Myrtle Johnston Lodge, improved day-use amenities, installed a native plant garden and courtyard, designated the river walk trail with interpretive signage, updated parking and ramps in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and remodeled the lodge restrooms. All this work was made possible through the support of community members and fundraising by SVC, and since this work was completed, more members of the community have visited, volunteered, hosted events, returned with friends, and ultimately taken pride and a sense of ownership over the historic 11-acre gem.

Increased day use has been accompanied by a decrease in illegal activities and dumping, however, there is still a need to integrate the remaining property into one cohesive and natural community space. In 2018 a site plan was developed for grounds improvements at Camp Pollock. The scope of this project includes implementation of the improvements that encourage visitors to access and utilize the property in its entirety. Major objectives and project details include:

1. Increased accessibility to the full property: Install decomposed granite (DG), ADA-compliant paths, and a gathering area behind Lodge.
2. Increased parking capacity for community and private events: Replace a section of lawn with a gravel parking lot.
3. Improved native riparian habitat; promote water conservation: Preparation and planting of native, drought-tolerant garden beds, install irrigation.
4. Improved natural aesthetic of the property: Remove older structures on the property, including a large grill and unused concrete pad.
5. Enhanced outdoor learning opportunities: create and install interpretive panels along the ADA trail.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project is included among the high priority projects recommended by the Lower American River Conservancy Program Advisory Committee, whose role is to evaluate and recommend projects to be considered by the WCB. The project was recommended for submittal to the WCB by the Advisory Committee on February 7, 2019.

The proposed project will be funded through the Lower American River Conservancy Program and meets the program's goals of expending funds for the benefit of the Lower American River, prioritizing the development and implementation of a natural resources management plan, and to improve access to, and protection and restoration of, the American River Parkway.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.4 – Expand project monitoring and evaluation of restoration activities to assess long-term project success, moving beyond compliance monitoring.*

- The project utilizes existing partnerships with local organizations to conduct annual wildlife surveys to observe and measure increases in wildlife activity.
- The project utilizes the pre-existing annual reporting requirement to the landowner to monitor and assess the outcomes of the project.

*Goal B.5 – Provide opportunities for greater public involvement in restoration projects.*

- The project uses the services of the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps for installation of the native plant garden beds.
- The project has partnered with a local Eagle Scout Troop to install a water barrel irrigation system for the rain garden.
- The project will use volunteers from the community to plant and maintain the native plant gardens.

*Goal C.4 – Place greater emphasis on projects that accommodate compatible wildlife-oriented public uses, while supporting urban areas and disadvantaged communities.*

- The project is within an urban area and a severely disadvantaged community.
- The project encourages visitors to enjoy the entire property on ADA-compliant trails and learn about native plant species, pollinators, and watershed resources.

Sacramento County Regional Parks completed the American River Parkway Compliance Analysis for the project at its February 28, 2019 Recreation and Parks Commission meeting, in accordance with Public Resources Code section 5845.5. The proposed project was determined to be consistent with the American River Parkway Plan.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

SVC is in the fifth year of its 35-year lease with the Commission to “use, maintain, and operate Camp Pollock.” Regular monitoring of the proposed site improvements will fall under the responsibilities of the onsite caretaker. In addition, per the Camp Pollock Management Plan (July 2013), written by SVC and approved by the Commission, SVC conducts an in-depth annual management visit and submits a report to the Commission pursuant to the terms of the lease agreement. Utilizing this preexisting procedure, SVC would add monitoring and assessment of the proposed project to coincide with the annual report.

The Camp Pollock onsite groundskeeper completes regular management and maintenance activities. Current management and maintenance activities within the project site include lawn care, trimming brush and trees, raking the DG courtyard, minor repairs to infrastructure, trash removal, cleaning and upkeep of the Myrtle Johnston Lodge, and facilitating private event rentals. In addition, the groundskeeper coordinates Saturday volunteer days year-round and schedules additional volunteer days with private companies and community groups as needed. SVC funds Camp Pollock operations via private rental revenue, donations, and grants.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the project, the SVC does not manage and maintain the project improvements, the Grant Agreement requires that it refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

<b>Task</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>WCB</b>	<b>SVC</b>	<b>Other Funds*</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
1	Project management	---	\$15,000	---	\$15,000
2	ADA trail	\$82,500	---	---	\$82,500
3	Parking lot	\$29,625	---	---	\$29,625
4	Garden beds, irrigation, interp. panels, & decommissioned amenities.	\$45,875	---	\$16,800	\$62,675
	Administrative costs	\$3,000	---	---	\$3,000
	Contingency	\$15,000	---	---	\$15,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$176,000</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$16,800</b>	<b>\$207,800</b>

\* Sacramento County Department of Water Resources and Recreation Equipment, Inc.

Project costs will be for removal of decommissioned man-made structures, construction of a DG accessible trail and gathering area, gravel parking lot extension, and native garden beds, and installation of irrigation extension lines, native plantings, and interpretive panels.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Fund of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3), which provides funding to be made available to the Lower American River Conservancy Program pursuant to Chapter 10.5 (commencing with Public Resources Code Section 5845) of Division 5 and is consistent with the objectives of this project.

**CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION**

The project is proposed as categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration to land, water and vegetation which does not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the WCB.

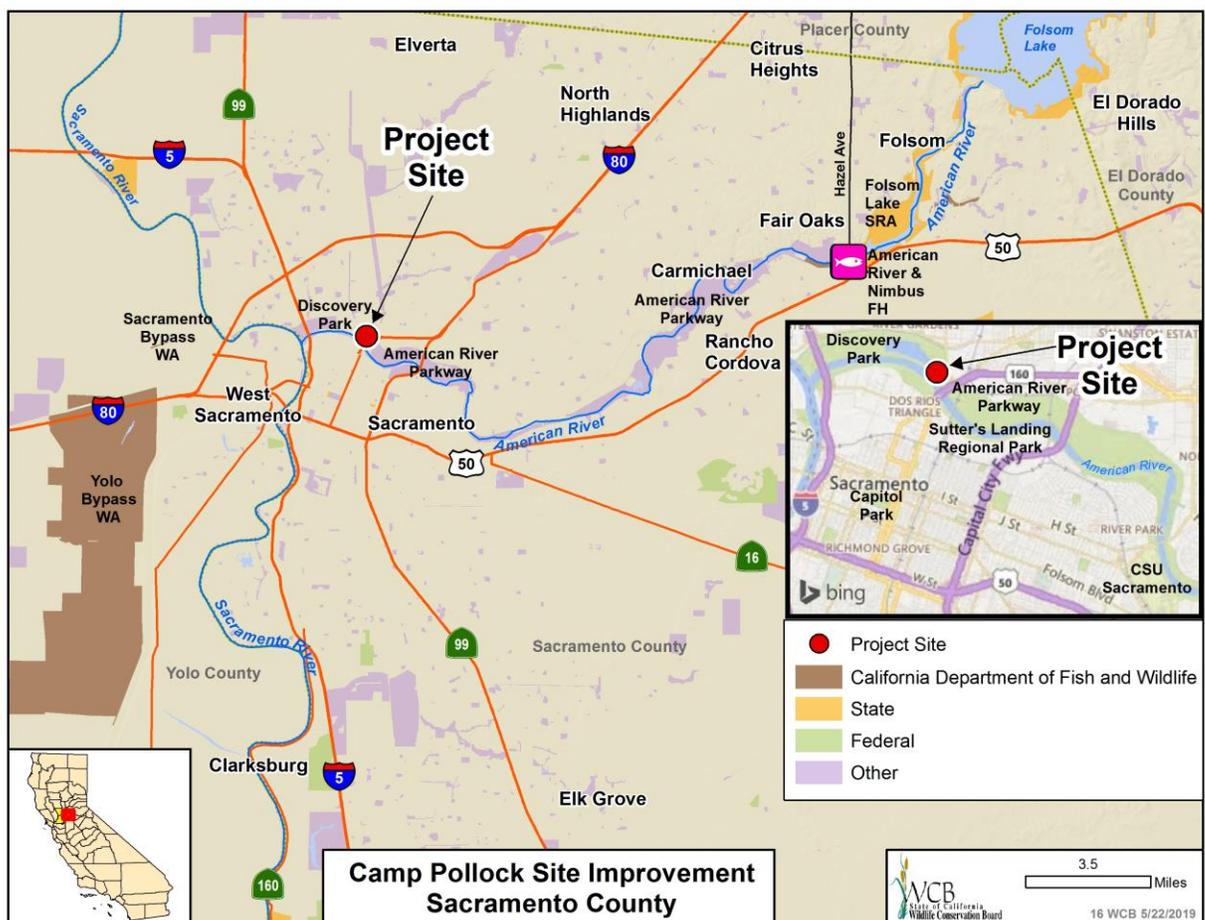
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$176,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Fund of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3), authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$176,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Fund of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3), authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

- Bokde – Yes
- Bonham – Yes
- Colborn – Yes
- Finn – Yes
- Pavley – Yes
- Sklar – Yes



**\*16. Grasslands Water Improvement Efficiency Project Augmentation**

**Merced County**

**\$172,500**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for an augmentation to an existing grant to California Waterfowl Association (CWA) for a cooperative project with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to enhance 17,000± acres of habitat and to install water control and monitoring infrastructure within the Los Banos Wildlife Area (LBWA), Volta Wildlife Area (VWA), and North Grasslands Wildlife Areas (NGWA), approximately 4 miles northeast of the city of Los Banos.

**LOCATION**

The project will occur on three CDFW Wildlife Areas including the NGWA, VWA, and LBWA. These Wildlife Areas are primarily managed as seasonal wetland habitat.

In 1929, the California Fish and Game Commission purchased 3,000 acres to create the LBWA, which was the first of a series of waterfowl refuges established throughout the state to manage habitat for wintering waterfowl. LBWA was designated as a wildlife area in 1954 and has since been expanded to 6,200 acres. The NGWA was historically grazed by cattle and hunted prior to purchase by the State of California in the early 1990s and has been expanded to 7,400 acres of habitat. CDFW acquired the VWA to protect agricultural crops from waterfowl depredation, protect waterfowl wintering habitat, and accommodate public waterfowl hunting. Each of the three wildlife areas consists of seasonal wetlands, semi-permanent emergent wetlands, and uplands with a focus on waterfowl habitat management. All wildlife areas are open to the public with a focus on waterfowl hunting.

The three wildlife areas are included within the Grasslands Ecological Area. This zone within the San Joaquin River basin supports the largest remaining block of wetlands in the Central Valley. These wetlands, dispersed riparian corridors, and associated grasslands, complemented by national wildlife refuges and multiple state wildlife areas, comprise over 160,000 acres. This area is extremely important to Pacific Flyway populations of 19 duck species and 6 goose species. The Grasslands Ecological Area has been officially recognized as an integral unit of the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network. Large concentrations of migratory waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds are common and easily observed during late winter and early spring.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project will improve water conveyance, supply, habitat, and management capabilities of the LBWA. This work will ultimately improve 17,000± acres of habitat.

Project costs will be for project management and construction of two broad crested weirs. The initial cost estimate to install ten broad crested weirs was significantly less than the actual costs due to the variability of each installation site. Augmentation of the existing grant will enable the grantee to install all ten broad crested weirs as originally approved.

**Water Control/Monitoring:**

*Broad Crested Weirs* – Ten broad crested weirs will be installed to measure water flow in an open ditch. The water is delivered by Grasslands Water District, San Luis Water District, and California Irrigation District. Wildlife Area managers need to more accurately measure water to ensure they are being supplied with the correct amount of water and that there is no overuse. The need for the weirs is significant in order justify the water supply for refuge lands in Merced County. The increased measurement accuracy will vastly help with water budgets, management, water conservation, and water re-allocation plans.

*Staff Gauges* – 205 staff gauges will be installed in wetland units throughout the wildlife areas to measure wetland water levels. The new staff gauges will create a universal landmark to measure water levels. This will greatly improve the measurement accuracy and allow for area staff to record water levels over time.

*Drop-down gate, Flash Board Riser & Screwgates* - An overshot gate or drop-down gate/weir will be installed for measuring water and accelerating water flows. This will help to meet the goals of timely drainage and water quality issues within the San Joaquin River. The gate will be located at the exit of Buttonwillow Lakes and is the main drain for LBWA managed wetlands (including 75% of LBWA wetland water). This gate is required to meet water quality concerns on the San Joaquin River during the spring draw down. The drop-down gate will allow staff to release water quickly when Total Maximum Daily Load levels allow for them and hold water when the TMDL levels do not allow for releases. The weir will allow for the drainage of wetlands during these brief times. The weir will also eliminate the need for beaver control on Buttonwillow Lakes.

Pipelines:

*Pipeline Enhancement* - Currently two 21” pipelines have gathered large quantities of silt that are impeding the ability to deliver water to wetland units. To address this issue, the pipelines will be cleaned out and extensions will be added to the existing pipeline. These enhancements will enable area staff to better manage water to specific units and increase moist soil plant production.

Earthwork:

*Earthwork* - The levee surrounding Buttonwillow Lakes is located along a public access route at LBWA. Approximately 100 yards of this levee has had some erosion over time. This section and portions of the adjacent road will be refurbished and widened, allowing vehicles to pass. The drop-down gate in the Buttonwillow Lake levee will be upgraded to be used at spring water draw-down. Swale excavation, levee enhancement, and an additional small levee are proposed on the LBWA Gadwall Unit. The swales will be excavated to promote better soils within the moist soil management units. The swales will also improve drainage, which will reduce ponding water, and mosquito related issues. All swales will be connected to the inlets and outlets of wetland units to facilitate water movement and water savings.

The original grant included the installation of ten broad crested weirs. Variability of each installation site of the weirs caused the actual construction costs of those weirs to be higher than originally estimated. The grant needs to be augmented and additional funds added in order to construct all ten broad crested weirs as approved by the board in the original grant.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Inland Wetland Conservation Program and meets the program's goal of assisting the Central Valley Joint Venture's mission to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and associated habitats within California's Central Valley.

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- The project provides water-wise wetland habitat in a very wetland-limited region in critical times for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife.

*Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.*

- The project maintains open space and develops opportunities for controlled hunting, recreation, and research and educational uses that are compatible with the managed wetlands.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

- Provide species strongholds or refugia.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The restored habitats will be managed by CDFW staff pursuant to the management plan for each Wildlife Area. The upgraded infrastructure will allow CDFW to manage these properties with less effort and at a lower cost as well as utilize water more efficiently.

#### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Project Task	Total Cost	WCB Original	WCB Augmentation
Project Management	\$118,725	\$96,225	\$22,500
Water Controls	\$632,850	\$482,850	\$150,000
Pipelines	\$7,000	\$7,000	
Earthwork	\$101,925	\$101,925	
Project Development	\$8,300		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$868,800</b>	<b>\$688,000</b>	<b>\$172,500</b>

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786 (d), Inland Wetlands Conservation Program, which allows for the acquisition, enhancement or restoration of wetlands in the Central Valley and is consistent with the objectives of this project.

#### CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/ RECOMMENDATION

The project is proposed as categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3) Section 15301, Class 1, as the repair or minor alteration of existing facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use; and Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration to land, water and/or vegetation which does not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the WCB.

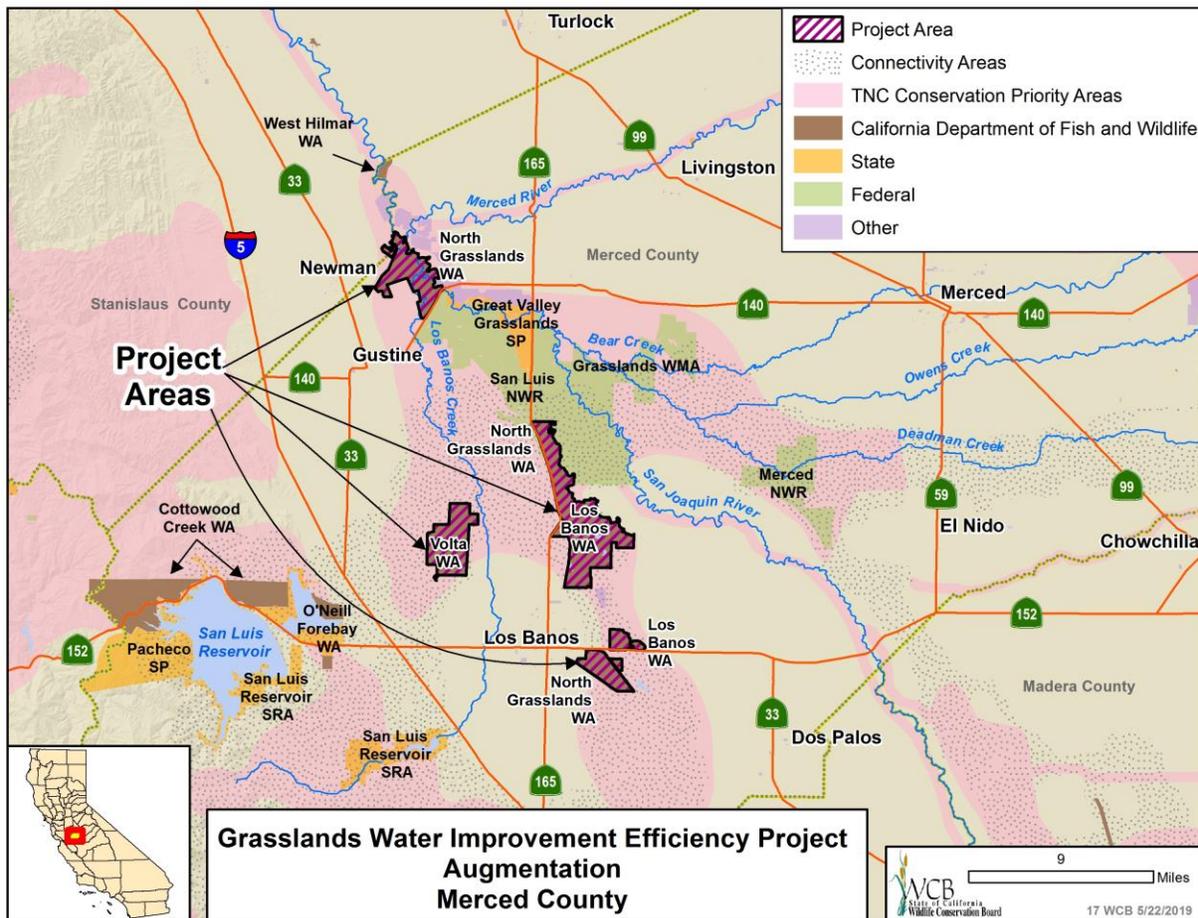
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$172,500 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$172,500 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**



**\*17. Sierra National Forest, Meadows Restoration Planning  
Madera and Fresno Counties  
\$430,100**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Trout Unlimited for a cooperative project with U.S. Forest Service and University of California, Merced for planning and environmental compliance to restore nine montane meadows totaling approximately 75 acres of Sierra National Forest (SNF) situated in Madera and Fresno Counties.

**LOCATION**

The meadow restoration sites to be advanced through this planning and permitting project are located in the SNF, Bass Lake and High Sierra Ranger Districts. SNF shares boundaries with Yosemite National Park to the north and Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park to the south. Landscape-level restoration planning evaluated over 354,000 acres, including SNF, and identified these nine meadows as severely degraded and in critical need of repair. The meadows fall within four sub-watersheds: Dinkey Creek, South Fork Willow Creek, North Fork Willow Creek, and Whiskey Creek.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Increasing fire severity and other effects associated with climate change are impacting ecosystem resilience, public safety, wildlife habitat, and landscape diversity. For example, drought and beetle kill has impacted thousands of acres in SNF (some of the highest tree mortality in the state), exacerbating fire risk and reducing ecosystem function. In addition, approximately 50 percent of SNF meadows are known to be degraded, resulting in reduced summer base flows, increased water temperatures, and exposure to upland species encroachment.

Three collaborative, landscape-level restoration planning processes involving SNF have identified several climate adaptation and ecosystem resilience goals, including:

- Meadow restoration
- Fuels reduction
- Restoration of fire regime

Specific recommended actions include restoring nine montane meadows that are severely degraded: Beehive, Benedict, China, Chipmunk, Meserve, Exchequer, Peckinpah, Poison, and Texas Flat meadows. The proposed project is to complete planning, permitting, and environmental work necessary for restoration of those meadows to proceed. The meadow restoration work, which is not funded by this Agreement, is expected to:

- Restore hydrologic function and connectivity (water quantity and quality)
- Increase plant biomass and soil organic matter (carbon sequestration)
- Support greater biodiversity and habitat quality

**WCB PROGRAM**

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal for planning projects to identify processes that lead to the successful implementation of future climate adaptation and resilience projects.

**STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:*

- This project will accomplish Goal B.1 by advancing restoration of degraded montane meadows, which should help ameliorate effects of climate change, improve water quality, increase carbon sequestration, and support native biodiversity that depends on this limited habitat type.

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

The proposed project is a one-time planning and modeling exercise that does not involve long term management. Rather, the planning, permitting, and environmental review to be completed under this proposed project should support implementation of the restoration work itself at a future date.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Project Task	Total Cost	WCB	Non-WCB funds*
1. Project Management	\$ 68,400	\$ 58,400	\$10,000
2. Environmental Compliance and Permitting	\$129,300	\$129,300	
3. Monitoring	\$289,300	\$224,300	\$65,000
4. Administration	\$ 18,100	\$ 18,100	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$505,100</b>	<b>\$430,100</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>

\*Non-WCB funding sources include contributions from Trout Unlimited and University of California, Merced.

Project costs include:

- Complete environmental review (i.e., pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act and California Environmental Quality Act).
- Complete permitting (e.g., Clean Water Act Sections 401 and 404; Fish and Game Code Section 1602).
- Baseline monitoring (document pre-restoration site conditions).

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits".

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$430,100 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

**As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$430,100 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

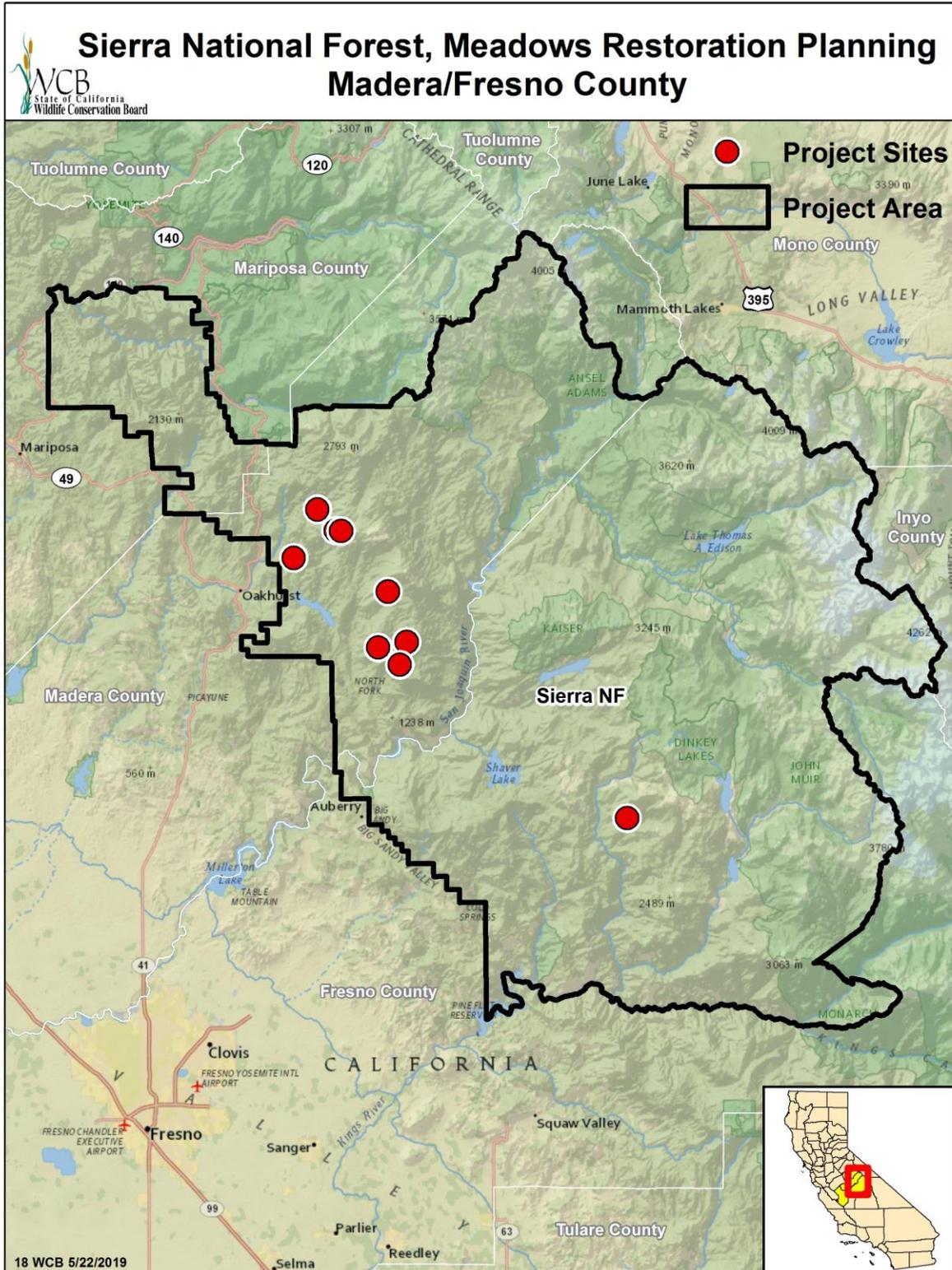
**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**\*18. Morongo Basin, Expansion 5  
San Bernardino County  
\$28,100**

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) to acquire 15± acres of land for the protection of desert habitat corridors leading to the Joshua Tree National Park.

**LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES**

The property (Property), known as the Thomas parcels, consists of three 5-acre parcels totaling 15± acres. The Property is located within the Morongo Basin near the town of Yucca Valley. The Property fronts the south side of State Route 62 just west of the city limits. Commercial development is common along State Route 62 with a number of rural residential subdivisions radiating out from the communities of Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree. These developed areas give way to large open desert habitat parcels heading south and north of the highway and the two communities.

The Property is located in the Morongo Basin Linkages Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP). The CAPP, which was spearheaded by MDLT, identified an urgent need to protect 10,000± acres of habitat corridors between federal, state, and locally owned Morongo Basin open spaces.

The Morongo Basin is a high desert region within the southeast portion of the Mojave Desert, with relatively flat to rolling hill terrain. This desert region is known mainly for the Joshua tree that dominates most of the open space desert habitat areas. The state and federally threatened desert tortoise can also be found in this area and is the focal point of many of the desert conservation efforts that take place in the region. To the south of State Route 62 is Joshua Tree National Park and to the north is the Marine Corp Air Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, both are large landscape size open space/ecosystems. The acquisition will help preserve the Joshua Tree North Linkage that is a linkage to the larger portion of the Joshua Tree-Twentynine Palms habitat linkage connection. The linkage occurs within an ecological transition zone between the Mojave and Sonoran (Colorado) desert eco-regions and connects the Joshua Tree National Park and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Property is vacant and contains a gently to steep sloping drainage throughout and is zoned for residential use. Acquisition of the Property will remove the possibility of development and preserve the viewshed from State Route 62 south toward lands associated with Joshua Tree National Park, which is one of the primary economic drivers of the Morongo Basin's communities. It will also provide public access and educational opportunities through outreach to the Morongo Basin's 68,000 residents and to the Morongo Basin Unified School District's 9,500 students.

The Property will preserve habitat and potential habitat for listed and special status species including the state and federally listed desert tortoise, fully protected golden eagle, Species of Special Concern including the American badger, northern harrier hawk, loggerhead shrike, and Le Conte's thrasher, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Watch List's prairie falcon. The Property also contains rare and protected native plant species that include Joshua Trees and Mojave Yucca.

**WCB PROGRAM**

The proposed grant for this project is being made under WCB's Land Acquisition Program. The Land Acquisition Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling

legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, et seq.) authorizing the WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of the CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with the acquisitions of properties.

Under the Program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. These activities are carried out in conjunction with CDFW, which evaluates the biological values of property through development of a Land Acquisition Evaluation (LAE)/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP). The LAE/CAPP is then submitted to CDFW's Regional Operations Committee for review and, if approved, later transmitted to WCB with a recommendation to fund.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by the WCB Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

*Goal A.1 – Fund projects and landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.*

The project will expand the protection of wildlife linkages and provide ecosystem responses to climate change by incorporating elevation gradients that allow species and vegetation communities to shift upward in elevation.

*Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.*

The strong partnership between WCB, CDFW, MDLT, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS) and the Department of Defense (DOD) and others have allowed for the establishment of the Morongo Basin Linkages CAPP. The CAPP was approved by CDFW December on 1, 2016 and has allowed multiple agencies and land trusts to leverage available dollars and target specific lands deemed important wildlife corridors between Joshua Tree National Park, Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Ground Combat Center, and various BLM and MDLT owned lands.

*Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g. hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.*

The MDLT lands are open to the public for hiking, bird watching, and wildlife viewing. MDLT provides education and outreach experiences, and volunteer opportunities to all ages. Many lands owned by MDLT border publicly accessible areas and are often managed for public access, much like bordering NPS lands or BLM lands.

*Goal C.4 – Place greater emphasis on projects that accommodate compatible wildlife-oriented public uses, while supporting urban areas and disadvantaged communities.*

The human population in the Yucca Valley is growing and sprawl has been moving into more traditional Morongo Basin desert areas. MDLT has successfully integrated its plan and mission into the communities of Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree. MDLT receives strong

local support and gives back with protected properties open to the public, thus supporting the urban area.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The Property will be managed and owned by MDLT. MDLT lands are being managed, and/or conveyed, in accordance with the Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices. In addition, MDLT plans to develop an educational program with the Morongo Unified School District for students, MDLT's 1,300 members, and the local communities to utilize the land for learning about desert ecosystems, wildlife, watersheds, and species.

#### TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$34,500. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services (DGS). The property owner has agreed to sell the Property for the fair market value of \$34,500. The terms and conditions of the grant between WCB and the Mojave Desert Land Trust provide that WCB staff will review and approve all title documents, appraisals, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions, and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, the WCB can require the grantee to encumber the Property with a conservation easement in favor of the State or another entity approved by the State and seek reimbursement of funds.

#### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

<b>Wildlife Conservation Board</b>	<b>\$28,100</b>
Mojave Desert Land Trust	\$6,400
Total Purchase Price	\$34,500
<b>Total WCB Allocation</b>	<b>\$28,100</b>

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source, the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c) that allows for the acquisition of habitat to protect rare, endangered, threatened or fully protected species and to implement the Habitat Conservation Program.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The acquisition has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by the WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

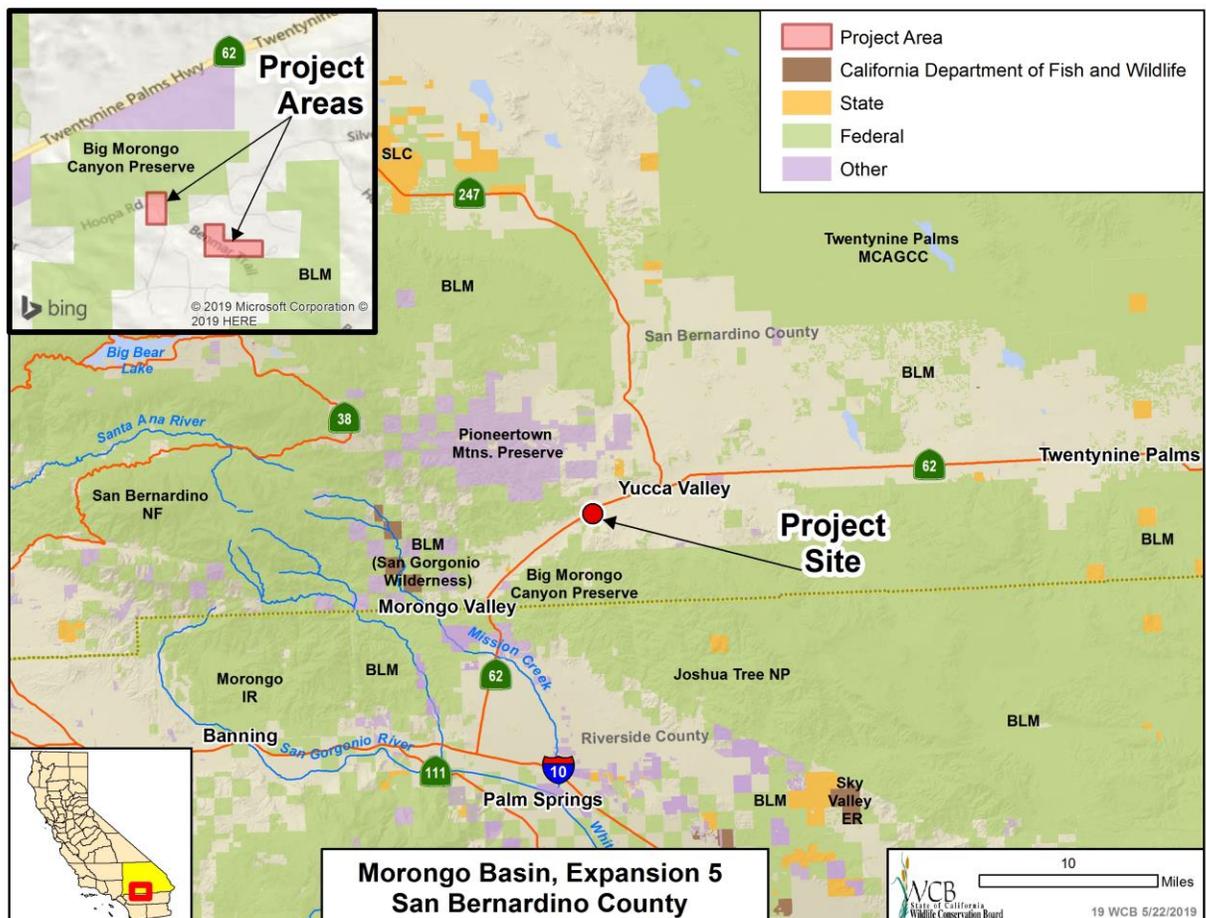
#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$28,100 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c) for the grant, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

As one of the consent items heard at the beginning of the meeting, it was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$28,100 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(b/c) for the grant, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Passed unanimously.

- Bokde – Yes
- Bonham – Yes
- Colborn – Yes
- Finn – Yes
- Pavley – Yes
- Sklar – Yes



**\*19. Otay Mesa Vernal Pool**  
**San Diego County**  
**\$21,000**

This item has been withdrawn from consideration at this time.

**20. Audubon Conservation Ranching Program  
Yolo County  
\$512,000**

*Mr. Kurt Malchow presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Audubon California for a cooperative project with the Gamble Foundation and Point Blue Conservation Science to develop grazing management protocols designed to increase climate resilience by improving carbon sequestration, water infiltration, food production, and habitat diversity for a wide range of species on California's grasslands.

**LOCATION**

There are roughly 41 million acres of rangelands in California. The proposed project will develop the Audubon Conservation Ranching Program (ACR Program) for statewide application across California's grassland ecosystems. The ACR Program will be established using Bobcat Ranch, a 6,800-acre blue oak woodland property, as a primary demonstration site in Yolo County. This area, as defined by California Department of Transportation and California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project, is considered an essential habitat connectivity area. The overall intent is for an additional three ranches to enroll as the project progresses, building momentum for incorporating these management recommendations at larger scales over time.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Grassland ecosystems provide food production, open space, water infiltration, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration. However, not all rangelands are managed with the goal of protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat, optimizing carbon sequestration, or improving soil health. Climate change, invasive species, aquifer depletion, and poor grazing practices currently degrade large portions of grasslands, increasing economic and ecological vulnerability.

Audubon California proposes to address these issues through establishing its ACR Program in California. The ACR Program was developed to slow grassland loss on working ranches while improving the climate-resilient management of these lands for birds and wildlife. The ACR Program includes developing ranch-specific habitat management plans and a third-party certified set of regenerative grazing practices to increase climate-driven drought resiliency, rebuild soil organic matter, enhance plant diversity and cover, increase water infiltration and carbon sequestration, and increase overall biodiversity. All habitat management plans are modeled after the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) farm plans. Increased ecological resilience is intended to translate to economic resilience, as participating producers will then be able to use the Audubon certification logo on their product – providing a market incentive to landowners to enroll in this program through increased sales or revenue. This program has had demonstrated success in Missouri, where pilot sites there had three times more biodiversity after enrollment in the program and a fivefold increase in bird density. This effort would expand the ACR Program into California developing a demonstration site at Bobcat Ranch, followed by the development of three additional California-based demonstration sites over the course of the project.

Audubon California and its partners would accomplish this through providing technical assistance to ranchers, hosting workshops, conducting ecological monitoring on

participating ranches, working with retail partners, and designing marketing materials to promote the program through media sources.

Implementing the ACR Program would provide expected benefits to the following State Wildlife Action Plan priority vegetative communities (macrogroups, common names):

- Western North American Temperate Grassland and Meadow, Western Upland Grasslands
- California Forest and Woodland, California Foothill and Valley Forests and Woodlands
- California Annual and Perennial Grassland, California Grassland and Flowerfields
- Warm Southwest Riparian Forest, American Southwest Riparian Forest and Woodland
- Western North America Vernal Pool, Vernal Pools
- Western North America Freshwater Marsh, Freshwater Marsh

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in WCB's Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- The project furthers Goal B.1 by assessing the impacts of climate change on important habitats and species and developing long-term, sustainable adaptation options that can be integrated into local and regional conservation and management planning processes.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Because this is a planning/technical assistance project, there is no specific long-term management plan. However, to ensure that participating land managers continue to implement recommendations and to measure results, Audubon works with Food Alliance, a third-party certifier to complete assessments. If the landowner does not comply with the habitat management plan, they cannot use the Audubon certification on their product and if they do not come into compliance, they are removed from the Audubon Conservation Ranching Program. This compliance assessment will continue annually for the first two years of participation of a ranch and then at an interval of every three years to ensure continued compliance and maintenance of improvements. With this process, Audubon is able to ensure that the positive benefits funded through this grant continue and that the integrity of the certification and label is maintained.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Task #	Project Task	Total Cost	WCB Request	Non-WCB Funds*
1	Project Implementation	\$661,673	\$420,000	\$241,673
2	Habitat Management Plans and Ranch Certification	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$0
3	Technical Assistance to Ranchers	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0
4	Ecological Monitoring	\$80,000	\$60,000	\$20,000
5	Educate, empower consumers to purchase beef from certified ranches	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$773,673</b>	<b>\$512,000</b>	<b>\$261,673</b>

\*This category includes in-kind contributions from the applicant as well as Point Blue Conservation Science.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits".

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The project is proposed as exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15304(d), Class 4, as a minor alteration to land which does not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Subject to Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$512,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Malchow noted that Meghan Hertel, Program Manager, Audubon California, was in the audience to answer any questions.*

*Ms. Pavley asked if Mr. Malchow would explain what kind of technical assistance is given to ranchers in order that they understand the premise of carbon sequestration and how they manage their soil, and how to determine if it is a success.*

*Mr. Malchow stated that for the quantification, there are protocols on different land uses that the Air Resources Board has and WCB has to report to the ARB semiannually.*

*Ms. Pavley clarified there are protocols in place that are independently verified and quantified by a third party?*

*Mr. Malchow stated yes, through the ARB, it is part of WCB's reporting regarding carbon sequestration benefits of all projects that run through this program. We do have to report, and that is the measure of success that we use for the sequestration benefits as well as the wildlife adaptation benefits.*

*Ms. Hertel noted that they would be partnering with Point Blue Conservation Science to go out and monitor each of the ranches that are enrolled and they will be taking data at the beginning of the project and then at regular intervals throughout the course of the project to measure everything from soil carbon to bird health, vegetation, the full suite.*

*From a technical assistance standpoint, for every rancher that enrolls, they actually go out to that rancher and work with them to create a habitat management plan that is specifically designed for their property. That plan aligns with the Natural Resource Conservation Service Conservation Plan. They try to make sure it's the same format so they can also get technical assistance from their local NRCS office. That habitat management plan includes everything from animal welfare to how they move cattle across the landscape to increase soil health. It's really the crux of this – can we use cattle as a way to build soil health and in doing so increase the carbon sequestration in the soil. Then a third-party certifier, Food Alliance, comes out to track progress against that habitat management plan over the course of the five years they are enrolled. This program supports the first two years of it, but Audubon is committed to this program, they have been running it for five years nationally. WCB is really helping to launch it here in California, but Audubon will be working for the long term with ranchers here.*

*Ms. Pavley asked if of those mid-western states, do they have baselines and protocols to measure?*

*Ms. Hertel stated, not carbon. Audubon will be the one bringing the carbon into this. She noted there was a study that was published last year that shows our grasslands in California are likely to be a better carbon sink going forward in the face of climate change because they store their carbon underground so when they burn, much of the carbon stays there. She also noted that in the face of climate change, forests will be reseeded and grasslands expanding, so we here in California really have a chance to prove the carbon aspect of it and this is going to be the big focus of the program. Audubon is focusing on climate and carbon, their national program on the great plains is starting to measure and monitor that; as usual, California is leading the way.*

*Ms. Pavley asked about baseline, which is critically important before you start a program. Is that the first thing you do?*

*Ms. Hertel said yes and Bobcat Ranch will be their pilot for this and they have six years of data Audubon has been working with Point Blue to collect so there is quite a breadth of data. The other benefit of having Point Blue as a core partner is, they have partner biologists throughout the state. Those are co-positions with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and those positions have been working with ranchers across the state to do similar monitoring and we will be looking to enroll ranches where we have a long set of baseline data, not just one year.*

*Mr. Sklar made three points:*

- 1. The certification says bird friendly, but it seems to be wildlife friendly and he recommended when adopted in California, adding a broader nexus than just birds.*
- 2. He encouraged Audubon to work with CDFA – they have started working on certification and geographic indicators. It is an enormous opportunity for a local area to get real recognition working with CDFA on this process as it's a market benefit as consumers look at these products.*
- 3. This is a terrific approach to something the Governor laid out in his campaign which is not just looking at species protection anymore but looking at broader biodiversity protection. It's really consistent with a broader policy that he is showing leadership on and that CDFW is going to over the coming years, almost a test project for that broader policy as we look at other ways to protect biodiversity and WCB looks forward to hearing back from you on it.*

*Ms. Hertel agreed those were great suggestions and that Audubon would follow up on them.*

*Mr. Donnelly noted three letters of support from Nita Vail, Chief Executive Officer, California Rangeland Trust; Maggie Boberg, Central Valley Regional Director, River Partners; and Paul Spraycar, Senior Project Director, the California Water Program, The Nature Conservancy.*

*Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Member Karen Finn that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$512,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

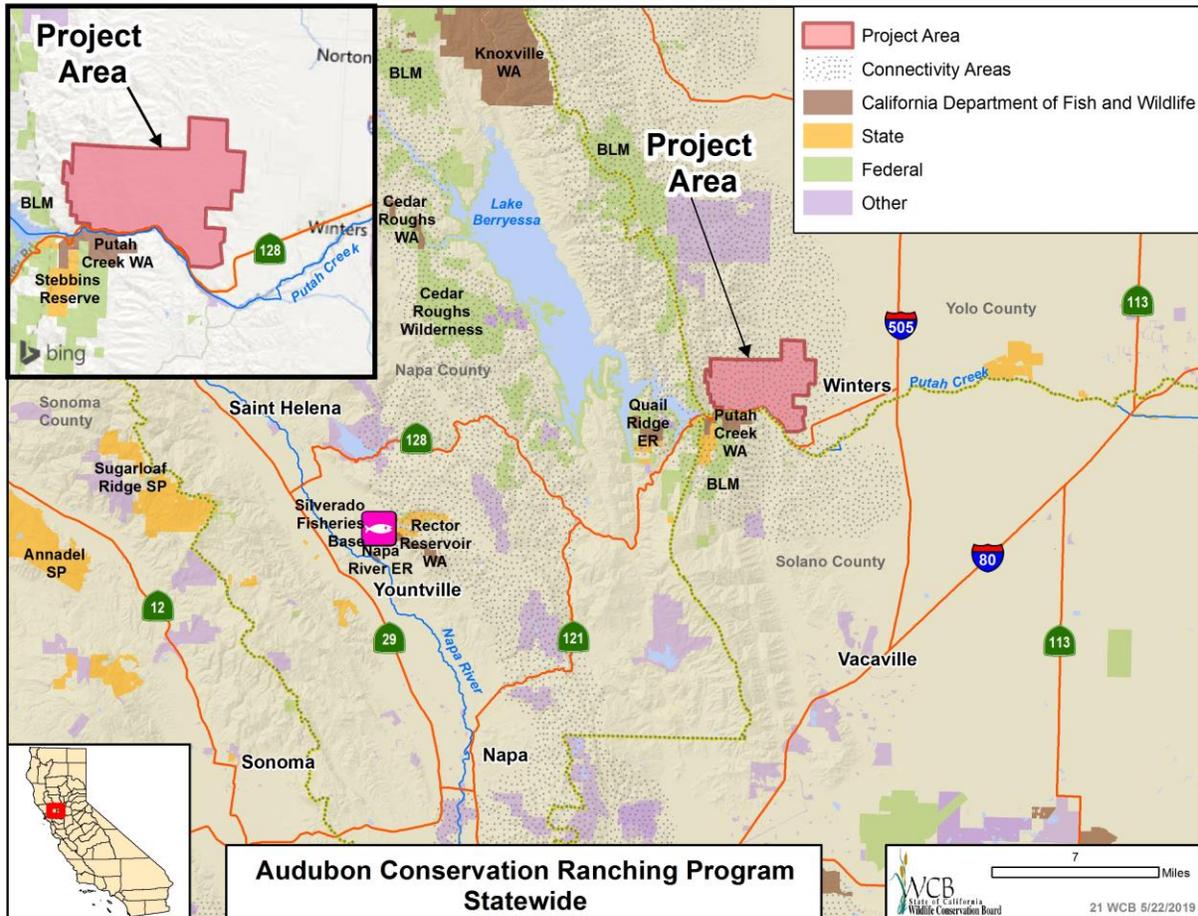
**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Abstained**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**21. Climate Resilience Planning for Key Sacramento River Watersheds  
Trinity, Siskiyou, Modoc, Lassen, Butte, Shasta, Plumas, and Sierra Counties  
\$400,000**

*Mr. Judah Grossman presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the Pacific Forest Trust for a cooperative project with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Mitsubishi Foundation, New Belgium Brewing Company, Flora L. Thornton Foundation, and Mary A. Crocker Trust to plan for climate resilience in important Sacramento River watersheds spanning eight northern California counties (Trinity, Siskiyou, Modoc, Lassen, Butte, Shasta, Plumas, and Sierra).

**LOCATION**

The approximately seven million-acre project area, characterized as forest ecosystem, is comprised of the Feather, Pit, McCloud, Upper Sacramento, and Trinity watersheds which span eight northern California counties (Trinity, Siskiyou, Modoc, Lassen, Butte, Shasta, Plumas, and Sierra Counties). Approximately 62 percent of the project area is in public ownership, versus 38 percent in private ownership. These watersheds supply the Oroville, Shasta, and Trinity reservoirs, which are critical water supply features of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The primary watersheds supplying California's water infrastructure have been greatly degraded and fragmented due to a history of fire-suppression, development, logging, grazing and mining. Climate change and its anticipated impact on water infrastructure underscore California's need for healthy, resilient watersheds and their component parts: forests, meadows, and streams. The proposed project advances the planning recommendations laid out in the Pacific Forest Trust's 2017 "[Risk Assessment of California Key Source Watershed Infrastructure](#)."

The proposed project will develop risk versus resilience maps and identify specific restoration and conservation actions by modeling climate risk, species range, habitat, and connectivity data. These maps and recommended actions will provide a decision-support tool and help prioritize conservation investments (e.g., restoration, climate refugia). This approach to targeted conservation investments is critical due to limited resources and the climate-driven urgency to repair and protect these degraded watersheds.

Restoration and conservation actions that will be assessed through the proposed project include:

- Fuel reduction and prescribed burns
- Wet and dry meadow restoration
- Stream channel restoration
- Road replacement/removal
- Herd management
- Connectivity and wildlife corridors

**WCB PROGRAM**

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal for planning projects to identify processes that lead to the successful implementation of future climate adaptation and resilience projects.

### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands*

- This project will accomplish Goal B.1 by identifying priority areas and actions (e.g., climate refugia) in the study area that can best safeguard native wildlife and plants.

### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The proposed project is a one-time planning and modeling exercise that does not involve long term management. Rather, the planning tools to be developed by the proposed project are anticipated to support a 10 to 20-year planning horizon for conservation actions, after which recommendations should be re-evaluated in the context of those future conditions.

### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Project Task	Total Cost	WCB	Non-WCB funds*
1. Data Preparation and Initial Modeling	\$180,395	\$102,281	\$ 78,114
2. Stakeholder Outreach	\$347,631	\$87,251	\$260,380
3. Prioritization, Ground-Truthing, and Feedback	\$120,263	\$ 68,187	\$ 52,076
4. Draft Report	\$180,395	\$102,281	\$ 78,114
5. Final Report and Presentation of Findings	\$ 92,076	\$ 40,000	\$ 52,076
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$920,760</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$520,760</b>

\*Non-WCB funding sources include contributions from the Pacific Forest Trust, US Environmental Protection Agency, New Belgium Brewing Company, Flora L. Thornton Foundation, Mary A. Crocker Trust, and Mitsubishi Foundation.

Project costs include:

- Data assembly, integration, identification of target species and habitat types, and initial modeling.
- Stakeholder outreach regarding species and habitats of concern.
- Initial prioritization, ground-truthing, and consultation with subject experts.
- Production of maps and report, media outreach, presentations to stakeholders, webpage development (hosted on PFT website), and assembly of final datasets.

### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase

carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits".

#### CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$400,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Grossman noted that Mr. Paul Mason, representing the Pacific Forest Trust, was in the audience. Mr. Mason stated his support for the project and noted as the state was moving forward recognizing their need to act more quickly and strategically on preparing for the climate we will be living in. Pacific Forest Trust will be working with Dr. Thorne's lab at U.C. Davis where some of the best modeling has been done with reference to what California is likely to look like in the future. He noted climate change is not going to be equally impactful for every acre and if we can identify where those stressors are greater, we can start prioritizing where an intervention may give us greater benefit in the future. They have also been working with Dr. Urban's lab at Duke University to apply some spatial prioritization. He stated if they can be even more strategic about an intervention, a thinning project, a conservation project, this area may - in the climate we're living in 20-30 years from now - provide a better opportunity for wildlife to migrate, to adapt, to persist in the world that we're going to be living in. It's a great opportunity to be more strategic and be a decision support tool, not just to WCB, but to CAL FIRE and other entities that are going to be making significant investments in the region over time.*

*Ms. Finn asked how long it would take before this tool will be usable.*

*Mr. Mason stated the projected timeline for a product is about 18 months. Ms. Finn then asked if Pacific Forest Trust had been in contact with CAL FIRE. Mr. Mason said as they move forward, they will be.*

*Ms. Bokde asked if Mr. Mason could expand on the stakeholder outreach element of the project.*

*Mr. Mason stated the first couple of phases of the project are the actual technical modeling work, working with U.C. Davis and Duke University developing the actual product. They then will be doing stakeholder outreach here in California, particularly here in Sacramento building momentum for expanding this sort of approach to other areas of the state where we can bring this sort of strategic prioritization to other geographic regions.*

*Ms. Bokde then asked exactly who this would be. Is it other land trusts, other public agencies?*

*Mr. Mason responded there would be stakeholder outreach both here and with other public agencies but also in the regions across those 7 million acres and all those different*

*counties to help make people aware of where some of those additional areas of stress are going to be. He stated those are not going to be equivalent stresses in all areas. They will do outreach to the resource conservation districts, the boards, the planning departments, etc.*

*Mr. Sklar asked if there were any other questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Member Fran Pavley that the Wildlife Conservation Board adopt the written findings and approve this project as proposed; allocate \$400,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**22. Enhancing Wildlife Habitat and Carbon Sequestration on Working Lands  
Del Norte, Humboldt, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, San Mateo, Santa Barbara,  
Sonoma and Stanislaus Counties  
\$1,036,442**

*Mr. Don Crocker presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) for a cooperative project with the California Department of Conservation, the California Department of Water Resources, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Point Blue Conservation Science, the Smith River Alliance, and ten Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) for technical assistance activities in nine California counties that will create conservation carbon farm plans (CCFP) and develop conservation practice designs that will provide wildlife-enhancing, climate-beneficial management options for producers on working landscapes.

**LOCATION**

Project activities comprise of technical assistance which will provide wildlife-enhancing, climate-beneficial management options for producers on working landscapes in Del Norte, Humboldt, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Sonoma, and Stanislaus counties. These counties represent a variety of California ecosystems and thus project activities are able to affect a wide breadth of landscapes. CCFPs and subsequent design plans are tailored for each unique parcel of land which are often located near freshwater wetlands, tidal marsh, and coastal waterways. Improving agricultural operations in these areas will enhance and protect water quality and aquatic and terrestrial habitat for fish and wildlife.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The project will create CCFPs and develop conservation practice designs that will provide wildlife-enhancing, climate-beneficial management options for producers on working landscapes. This project is a partnership of the CARCD, working together with the Carbon Cycle Institute and 10 RCDs throughout the state. Together with producers, the project will create at least 38 Conservation Carbon Farm Plans, at least 10 stream flow enhancement plans, and 12 irrigation evaluations, while also providing climate change adaptation technical assistance that will benefit at least 135 landowners and create design plans for at least 39 conservation practices that can be implemented on working lands statewide.

Nearly half of California's land is agriculturally managed. These agriculturally managed lands often interface with prime habitat for fish and wildlife that includes wetlands, grasslands, riparian corridors, and aquatic environments. When properly managed, agricultural landscapes can provide multiple ecosystem services and stay productive. However, the need to achieve, sustain, and increase agricultural production in California can lead to the loss of wildlife habitat when wetlands and riparian corridors get converted to agricultural fields; instream water flow may be reduced due to increased irrigation during hotter and longer growing seasons; wildlife dependent native plant species may be replaced with homogeneous row crops; and native and biodiverse vegetative communities may be reduced, impeding the opportunity to sequester atmospheric carbon into the soil bank. These impacts can negatively affect federal and state listed species by decreasing water quality, reducing habitat availability, and limiting biodiversity.

Adding climate change impacts to this scenario heightens the need to act now and make lasting improvements to agricultural practices that balance farmers' needs with wildlife requirements.

Over the past 150 years, carbon in the atmosphere has increased by 30 percent. Soils contain approximately 75 percent of the land carbon pool and increasing soil organic carbon (SOC) storage can significantly reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide. Agriculture and working lands play a significant role as a potential sink to reduce atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> through sequestration in agricultural soils and biomass.

Building upon existing programs aimed at reducing greenhouse gasses (GHG) and increasing SOC in the agricultural sector, CCFPs and Stream Flow Enhancement Plans incorporate practices that sequester carbon, increase production, and restore habitat values. These practices can lead to reducing the need for irrigation and can restore a riparian corridor, thus increasing instream flow and water quality parameters in key watersheds where federally and state listed species such as coho, Chinook, steelhead, and coastal cutthroat salmonids have been identified. Increasing production to agricultural land may lead to producers allowing wetlands to return on portions of their lands benefiting amphibian species of special concern such as the coastal tailed frog, California salamander, southern torrent salamander, and northern red-legged frog as well as the endangered avian species, California clapper rail. Hedgerows of native and other beneficial plants can be inter-planted among row crops to benefit federally endangered species such as the Myrtle's silver, Lotis blue, Behren's silverspotted, and mission blue butterflies. If implemented at scale, these practices can play a key role in significantly reducing atmospheric GHG, while simultaneously improving the productivity, resilience and ecological sustainability of agricultural landscapes and wildlife habitat.

For this project, the ten RCDs will work with farmers to identify management practices on the agricultural landscape and create demonstration plots that will significantly increase the resiliency of wildlife, soil carbon sequestration, and farm operations in the face of climate change. It is hoped that project outreach in the form of workshops and farmer-to-farmer field days at the demonstration plots will help garner landowner participation in the project and increase the adoption of climate change adaptation practices on working lands. Working directly with land managers to plan how best to address habitat and management concerns will build more resilient wildlife populations and create more sustainable agricultural operations, while providing the agricultural producer a greater understanding and appreciation for their working lands' role in the ecosystem and climate change mitigation, thus promoting better stewardship.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- The project will develop conservation practice designs that will provide wildlife-enhancing, climate-beneficial management options for producers on working landscapes.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

- Improve habitat for threatened or endangered species through direct habitat improvement measures such as hedgerows and indirectly through encouragement of agricultural practices that do not impair the habitat quality of nearby wetlands, riparian corridors and other sensitive habitats that are home to many threatened and endangered species.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

A CCFP is a guiding document that landowners use to implement conservation practices over the course of multiple years. A CCFP identifies and quantifies farm practices that will increase carbon sequestration and reduce emissions. Benefits of developing CCFPs with producers include identifying opportunities and practices that can help increase carbon sequestration in plants and soils, increase soil water infiltration and soil water-holding capacity, enhance biodiversity, provide ecosystem and wildlife resilience, and also increase productivity which can help with long-term sustainability of working landscapes. Different management practices implemented by landowners each have associated lifespans, and in order to ensure long term benefits from the practices identified, plans will include practice lifespans required for maintenance. For example, hedgerow plantings have lifespans of 15–40 years.

Technical support available through CCFPs will include preparing farmers and ranchers to connect with emerging carbon markets and local climate change mitigation banks by creating CCFPs that support the implementation of new conservation practices.

#### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

TASK	WCB	State and Federal Sources <sup>1</sup>	RCD Subcontractors	NGOs and Landowners <sup>2</sup>	TOTAL
Project Administration	\$173,632	\$24,700	\$7,416	\$1,000	\$206,748
Outreach and Education	\$171,392	\$104,900	\$2,367	\$11,812	\$290,471
Technical Assistance	\$691,418	\$154,841	\$50,067	\$42,925	\$939,251
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,036,442</b>	<b>\$284,441</b>	<b>\$59,850</b>	<b>\$55,737</b>	<b>\$1,436,470</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes \$7,500 from the California Department of Conservation for Project Administration; \$10,000 from the California Department of Water Resources for Technical Assistance; \$15,200 from the California Department of Food and Agriculture for Outreach and Education; and \$17,200 for Project Administration, \$89,700 for Outreach and Education, and \$144,841 for Technical Assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

<sup>2</sup> Includes \$15,000 from Point Blue Conservation Science for Technical Assistance; \$7,438 from participating landowners for Technical Assistance; \$1,000 from the Smith River Alliance for Project Administration; and \$11,812 for Outreach and Education and \$20,487 for Technical Assistance from the Regenerative Agriculture Foundation.

Project costs will be for grant management and other administrative costs, outreach to the owners and managers of working lands in California, and to provide technical assistance to agricultural producers who are willing to incorporate climate and wildlife friendly practices in their operations.

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits."

#### CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is proposed as exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15304, Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land) as a minor alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. Subject to Board approval of the project, staff will file the appropriate Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that the WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$1,036,442 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Crocker noted that Ms. Kristen Murphy, Project Coordinator, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), was in the audience.*

*Ms. Finn asked is there overlap between this project and the Audubon project.*

*Mr. Crocker stated this project is more of a technical assistance project than an implementation project. This is more ground-level work, helping farmers learn about these procedures and start to adopt them as much as they can. Another big difference is this project has a much broader geographic range. Audubon is focused in one area; this project is across nine counties and those nine counties were picked specifically due to the variance of the agricultural operations there and the ecosystems that will be impacted. This project is much more of a first step where Audubon's project is much more of a way to capture market benefits of an improved process.*

*Ms. Finn then asked if this project is the first step and Audubon's project is after farmers are using these protocols?*

*Mr. Donnelly asked Ms. Kristen Murphy for further explanation. She noted that one of the great things about the Audubon Conservation Ranching Program is they really try to design it to work with other programs and practices throughout the state, including NRCS practices. CARCD and the resource conservation districts have long been partners of ours and one of the first steps of our project is to put together a working group to really think through what practices we can complement and build off of. This project is definitely*

*looking at more of the technical assistance, but we take that technical assistance and use it as part of our project so they should work together.*

*Ms. Colborn asked if they were going to provide technical assistance and work with the landowners to develop these management plans. Is it part of this project to look long-term at any monitoring to see to what extent they continue to utilize the plans? Several years ago, we had an issue in California regarding leafy greens where some of the buyers that purchase in bulk were concerned about contamination, E.coli that was getting into some of the leafy greens. They had some projects where people had gone in with government funding and put in hedgerows and done certain things to try to make the agricultural lands more habitat friendly and then the growers, at the instruction of the marketing companies, had gone and taken all of that out because of the concerns about critters getting in the leafy greens. There was some concern at that time that government funding had gone into projects that had not been followed through. She said it sounded, at this point, that they weren't doing any long-term monitoring you're just giving them information upfront and it will be totally voluntary whether they want to implement these or not.*

*Mr. Crocker said yes, this is basically a technical assistance. It's different from a lot of the projects we typically bring in for the Board that are planning or implementation, this is neither. This is giving information and it's a three-year project window. It takes 30 years for results to show up on a farm so this project's not doing that. Basically, it's putting the first level down, acquainting them with the concept, giving them site-specific plans that are tailored to their operation, and then it is up to them. This is not funds to the farmers to implement and we don't have any jurisdiction to monitor them. That's not what this project is about, it's about setting up the first step. He felt the Audubon project is probably about the more long-term monitoring and implementation, but we are trying to lay the groundwork in introducing some practices that are just not widespread enough in California.*

*Mr. Sklar noted that as a farmer of grapes and cannabis, he thinks we need that assistance. This is just one more set of tools, we're already trying to conserve our soil but if we can do this in a way that adds this to it, that's terrific. Mr. Sklar then asked why Lake County wasn't included given that three of its four adjoining counties were. It's a county that is very poor but has a real opportunity to have its agriculture under programs like this.*

*Ms. Karen Buhr, Executive Director, CARCD, responded they had 36 RCDs ready to work on this and 12 more actually cued up and interested in starting programs so we had to be a little judicious with where we could put our resources. Lake County wasn't ready to move forward; however, we are working with a durable collaboration in that area to hopefully have either the Napa or Sonoma RCD be able to move up into Lake County and deal with some of the devastation from the fire that they've had up there.*

*Mr. Sklar recommended they get in touch with CalCannabis at CDFA because that's an industry that's moving from being incredibly environmentally damaging to environmentally positive and there is a great opportunity to start from day one.*

*Ms. Buhr stated they were very excited about this opportunity and thanked the Board for its consideration. She noted the RCDs see such an opportunity to have a big impact on carbon through these types of practices. The 96 RCDs were created back in the dust bowl era to deal with healthy soils issues so the refocusing on carbon and the impacts of ranching and farming on carbon sequestration has really invigorated and energized the RCDs and she reminded the Board they have 36 RCDS that are in the process of adopting one of these programs and another 12 that are interested, so this funding will really help to*

*jump start a program that already has a tremendous amount of energy behind it and a number of projects and programs that are already on the ground that will help them expand their breath of scope of what they can do.*

*Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$1,036,442 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**23. Gray Lodge Wildlife Area Auto Tour Route and Habitat Enhancement Project  
Butte County  
\$1,410,000**

*Mr. James Croft presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU) for a cooperative project with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to restore wetland fields along the auto tour route within CDFW Gray Lodge Wildlife Area (Gray Lodge WA), located five miles west of Gridley in Butte County.

**LOCATION**

The Gray Lodge Gun Club was first organized in 1921 and was primarily used as pasture land for cattle while the lower areas were flooded in the fall and winter for waterfowl hunting. The property was a very successful duck club with records showing an average annual take of more than 12,000 birds. The State of California acquired the Gray Lodge Gun Club in 1931 and renamed the property the Gray Lodge Refuge. From 1931 through 1952, the area was maintained as a sanctuary for waterfowl. In 1953, public hunting for waterfowl and pheasants was initiated on the area and it was once again renamed and became the Gray Lodge Waterfowl Management Area.

Over the next twenty years, acquisition of adjoining lands saw the Waterfowl Management Area triple in size. Development of management plans ensured that the area would provide attractive marshland for waterfowl and other wildlife, produce agricultural crops as feed for birds, provide regulated public hunting, and maintain a sanctuary area closed to hunting where waterfowl and other wildlife could escape from hunting pressures. In 1970, in an effort to indicate a broader wildlife management interest, the area was renamed to its current name, the Gray Lodge WA.

Today, Gray Lodge WA consists of over 9,000 acres of seasonal, semi-permanent, and permanent wetlands, riparian habitat, wetland-associated uplands, and wildlife food plots. The wildlife area provides critical habitat for over 200 species of birds and numerous fish, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals, including several special-status species. Gray Lodge WA is one of the most important wetland areas in the Pacific Flyway and supports up to 1 million ducks and 100,000 geese during the winter.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The wetlands within this proposed project were developed in the 1940s. Since that time, routine management activities and as-needed maintenance to the water conveyance infrastructure has been conducted by Gray Lodge WA staff. However, no comprehensive wetland enhancement project has been completed in these fields. As a result, these wetlands do not meet their potential to provide high-quality wildlife habitat.

Some of the wetlands have substantial topographic variation, limiting water distribution and drainage capabilities. The wetlands cannot be irrigated efficiently or effectively during the summer to promote moist-soil vegetation. Summer irrigations can also cause mosquito production due to poor drainage capabilities. The wetlands also lack functioning swale systems, and the existing water control structures are degraded and lack capacity to effectively and efficiently convey adequate amounts of water. Wetland field 17's perimeter levee is severely degraded and no longer functions to isolate the field from the adjoining canal. As a result, this field is a monotypic stand of cattails and tules, providing minimal habitat benefits to waterfowl.

The perimeter levee for wetland fields 7 and 11 also functions as the Gray Lodge WA's auto-tour route. This levee is ten to twelve feet tall with a borrow area that is at least a few feet deep. Numerous areas of this levee are eroded with an inside side-slope that is nearly vertical. In addition, several turns on the auto-tour route are compromised by the eroded side-slope, making those turns hazardous for vehicles, especially school buses. Habitat and infrastructure improvements need to be conducted within these fields to improve habitat quality, water use efficiency, public safety, and public recreational opportunities, including environmental education, wildlife viewing and photography.

To restore these wetland fields, a topographic survey will be conducted, and a final engineering design will be prepared for habitat improvements within the project area. Select areas within the wetlands will be recontoured, while new levees, swales and potholes will be constructed to improve wetland management capabilities and create topographic conditions that will support a mix of open water and emergent vegetation.

Sections of existing levees and ditches will be regraded or improved and degraded water control structures will be replaced in all the wetland fields. These new structures will improve operational flexibility, water conveyance, and water and vegetation management capabilities. Swales and potholes will be linked to water control structures to provide positive drainage and prevent areas of standing water that can lead to mosquito production. Islands, loafing bars, and/or submerged benches will be constructed to increase habitat quality and diversity. Select areas along the auto-tour route's levee side-slope will be improved to reduce sharp drop-offs and provide improved public safety. Four new auto turnouts will be installed along the auto-tour route to provide designated areas to safely pull over, stop and observe wildlife.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Inland Wetland Conservation Program (Fish and Game Code Section 1400, et seq.) and meets the program's goal of assisting the Central Valley Joint Venture's mission to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and associated habitats within California's Central Valley.

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife, and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- The project will improve the quality of wetland habitat that is available for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other waterbirds at Gray Lodge WA.

*Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.*

- The project maintains open space and develops opportunities for controlled hunting, recreation, and research and educational uses that are compatible with the managed wetlands.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

Provide species strongholds or refugia, by enhancing wetland fields and upgrading water supply infrastructure giving Gray Lodge WA managers improved ability to move water efficiently, which will enhance water resources for wildlife, in all years, wet or dry.

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

The project will be within the Gray Lodge WA, and management of this project will be incorporated into the existing Land Management Plan for the WA. The improved water management capabilities associated with this wetland enhancement will allow Gray Lodge WA managers to provide improved wetland habitat through more efficient water delivery and drainage.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the project, DU does not assure that the project improvements are managed according to the Land Management Plan for the WA, the Grant Agreement requires that DU refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

<b>Project Task</b>	<b>WCB</b>	<b>CDFW</b>	<b>DU</b>	<b>Total</b>
Project Management	\$88,518		\$118,343	\$206,861
Survey & Design Work	\$129,068			\$129,068
Construction	\$1,093,950	\$2,625		\$1,096,575
Contingencies	\$98,464			\$98,464
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,410,000</b>	<b>\$2,625</b>	<b>\$118,343</b>	<b>\$1,530,968</b>

WCB funding will be used to cover all direct costs for the auto-tour route improvement and habitat enhancement work in wetland fields 3, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 17 including project management, survey and engineering design, construction management, earthwork, auto turnout pad installation, gravel acquisition and installation, water control structure and pipe acquisition and installation, and upland seed acquisition.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding for this project is the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Inland Wetlands Conservation Program. The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which provides funding for the acquisition, enhancement or restoration of wetlands.

**CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/ RECOMMENDATION**

The project is proposed as exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15301, Class 1 as the repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use; and Section 15304, Class 4, as a minor alteration in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish productions facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production. Subject to approval by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by the WCB.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,410,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Inland Wetland Conservation Program; authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Croft noted that Craig Garner, Regional Biologist, Ducks Unlimited; and Dave VanBaren and Andy Atkinson from CDFW were in the audience.*

*Ms. Bokde asked about the outlook areas that are being developed as part of this project for the traffic safety but also access for visitors. Is there any plan to put any kind of interpretive signage or any educational component for visitors about the wetlands, the habitat, the waterfowl that are there?*

*Mr. Croft stated Gray Lodge Wildlife Area already has an extensive educational walking tour with signage, including wood duck boxes and other amenities. It's one of the most visited wildlife areas in the state.*

*Mr. Atkinson, CDFW, noted the auto tour loop is in addition to existing walking and nature trails because if you get out of your vehicle on the auto tour loop it makes the birds move out. The purpose of the auto tour loop with the islands and development is to bring the birds to the people, at the same time improving the safety for vehicles. As buses get larger, getting around some of the turns with the erosion over the years, they're cutting it pretty close. His biggest fear is a bus rolling over, so getting those slopes up to about 15 to 1 and going into water that deep is a lot safer than falling into 9-10 feet of water.*

*Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Member Diane Colborn that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed; allocate \$1,410,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Inland Wetland Conservation Program; authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

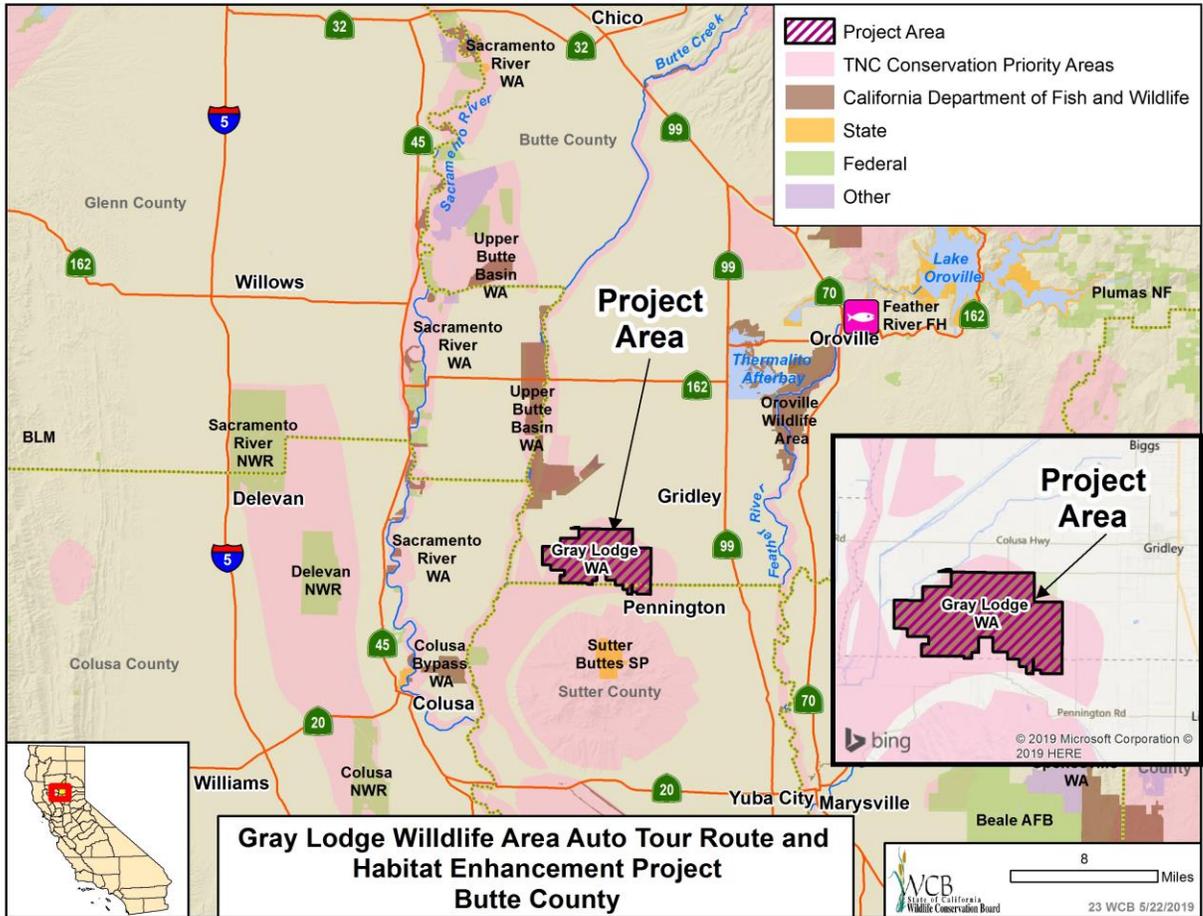
**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**24. Ervin Ranch**  
**El Dorado County**  
**\$4,055,000**

*Mr. Joseph Navari presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the acquisition of 1,781± acres of land by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for a cooperative project with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), American River Conservancy (ARC), and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) for the protection and preservation of riparian and oak woodland habitat, deer and mountain lion habitat, and to provide for potential future wildlife-oriented public use opportunities.

**LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES**

The property (Property) is located west of Latrobe Road, approximately one mile east of the Sacramento/El Dorado county line, approximately 4 miles northeast of the Rancho Murrieta community and 36 miles east of Sacramento in southwestern El Dorado County. The Property lies in proximity to a nearby corridor of protected properties located along the Cosumnes River that are owned by ARC, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service. The closest protected land is the nearby El Dorado Ranch, which was acquired by ARC with funding from CNRA and WCB. The Property is also located within the Upper Cosumnes River Basin Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP), which helps guide efforts to preserve an intact, landscape-scale ecosystem, running the entire 80-mile length of the Cosumnes River and protects the foothill belt of the Cosumnes watershed that supports intact blue oak woodlands and a number of sensitive wildlife species. The long-term plan is for ARC to transfer El Dorado Ranch to CDFW. CDFW will then request the Fish and Game Commission designate Ervin Ranch and El Dorado Ranch as a CDFW Wildlife Area.

The Cosumnes River is one of the last undammed rivers flowing from the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the greater Central Valley. The river harbors salmonid runs including steelhead and fall-run Chinook salmon, and provides habitat for otters, beavers, and the rare giant garter snake. The river and riparian corridor support numerous species including deer, mountain lion, wild turkey, and coyotes along with numerous migratory song birds and waterfowl.

The Property currently remains in its natural and undeveloped state, albeit a development plan was pursued by the previous landowners, but never completed. The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of open land with single-family homes situated on large lots or acreages to the south, west, and east of the Property. The area primarily supports livestock grazing activities and is noted for its scenic beauty consisting of rolling hills, riverfront properties, and open space appeal. These attributes along with the Property's close proximity to the greater Sacramento metropolitan area, make the Property appealing for more intensive development.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Property consists of 17 legal parcels that are zoned for agricultural use. The Property is characterized by a slightly sloping to rolling topography, covered with oak woodlands, grasslands, riparian vegetation, and riverine habitat areas along the Cosumnes River.

Acquisition of the Property will help expand the protection of the Cosumnes River from its headwaters to the confluence with the Mokelumne River as an ecologically and hydrologically intact river system and expand the protection of significant riparian habitats

beneficial to a number of native fishes, including salmonids, and other endemic mammals, birds and insects. The acquisition will also expand the protection of upland habitats and help maintain wildlife corridors extending from the downstream protected areas of the Cosumnes River up into the higher foothill areas and into the El Dorado National Forest. Projects such as this also help provide protection against the effects of climate change by providing varying elevations for species to move between to better adapt to temperature variations. The Property is also potentially suitable for future development of public access uses and facilities.

The Property supports multiple plant and animal species such as the Nissenan manzanita, blue oak woodland, deer, mountain lion, and northern goshawk, along with a number of rare and sensitive species including riverine habitat for the state and federally threatened Chinook salmon, the California threatened Central Valley steelhead, the State endangered bald eagle, the State threatened red-legged frog, and other rare species including the foothill yellow legged frog and northwestern pond turtle.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed acquisition is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program (Program). The Program is administered pursuant to WCB's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, *et seq.*) authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or rights in real property, and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the Program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. These activities are carried out in conjunction with CDFW, which evaluates the biological values of property through development of a Land Acquisition Evaluation/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (LAE/CAPP).

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This project is guided by the WCB Strategic Plan and supports the following Strategic Plan Goals:

*Goal A.1 – Fund Projects and Landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.*

The project conserves oak woodland and riparian habitat that support healthy fish, wildlife and plant populations and ecosystem functions in a changing climate. Furthermore, the project protects connectivity areas between critical habitats to allow the movement of species in response to climate change.

*Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended by CDFW.*

The Ervin Ranch has been a priority for Region 2 for a number of years and is included in the Upper Cosumnes River Basin Conceptual Area Protection Plan.

*Goal E.1 – Maximize expenditures of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.*

The Property is proposed to be acquired with WCB funds leveraged by Pittman-Robertson funds provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and CNRA funds.

### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

The Property will be owned and managed by CDFW. The acquisition of the Property will provide an opportunity for CDFW to protect and preserve the Property's open space and natural resource values and afford future recreational opportunities to the public such as hunting, fishing, boating, nature viewing, hiking, photography, and biking.

### TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$9,550,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by DGS. The Property owner has agreed to sell the Property for the approved appraised fair market value. WCB and DGS will review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition.

### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$4,055,000
Caltrans EEM	\$1,000,000
Pitman Robertson Grant Funds	\$4,495,000
TOTAL Purchase Price	\$9,550,000
TOTAL WCB ALLOCATION	\$4,055,000

### FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding sources: the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40), Public Resources Code Section 5096.650(a) that allows for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration and protection of habitat to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, to provide corridors linking separate habitat areas to prevent habitat fragmentation, and to protect significant natural landscapes and ecosystems and other significant habitat areas and the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) that allows for the acquisition of habitat, including native oak woodlands, to protect deer and mountain lions.

### ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The acquisition has been reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and under Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant and animal habitats. Subject to authorization by the WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$1,355,000 from the California Clean Water, Clear Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40), Public Resources Code Section 5096.650(a) and \$2,700,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) for the acquisition, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to

accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Navari noted that Elena DeLacy, American River Conservancy, and Josh Bush, CDFW Region 2, were in the audience.*

*Chair Bonham asked if the Board had any questions for staff. There were none. Mr. Bonham then noted there were three speaker cards, one for Elena DeLacy, Dan Ruman, and Eddie Oneto.*

*Ms. DeLacy expressed her support for the project and noted acquisition of the ranch provides an opportunity to protect a very important wildlife corridor in the Consumes River watershed and it's one of the last remaining free-flowing rivers from the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada.*

*Mr. Dan Ruman of Ruman Ranch understood that hunting and fishing was going to be allowed. He noted the woodlands on this property are limited and he asked what plan there was to police the property and get someone who is out there hiking, hunting, or fishing, to stop at the border of the park. He stated he wasn't in favor of putting houses on the property, he was all for preserving it and the continuation of running cattle.*

*Chair Bonham noted that was very fair input and asked Mr. Donnelly to have staff respond.*

*Mr. Bush stated that before it is opened to public access, CDFW performs a number of improvements including creating signage in the parking lot and securing boundary fences. In terms of grazing, CDFW will send out a Request for Proposal, and graze the property as it has been. It helps for habitat management and fire reduction for the neighboring landowners as well as a revenue source for us to continue to manage the property as it should be.*

*Chair Bonham asked regarding enforcement, would he be right in predicting our wildlife officers are involved in enforcing on our property as needed.*

*Mr. Bush stated yes, CDFW wildlife officers would be actively patrolling and responding to any adverse activity reported on the property.*

*Chair Bonham asked if a management plan is contemplated on the property.*

*Mr. Bush stated yes, along with the acquisition of the El Dorado Ranch further to the east that will be included in the plan. It will be called the El Dorado Wildlife Area.*

*Chair Bonham then asked if, when CDFW does the management plan, will they notify the adjacent landowners about public engagement in the design of that plan.*

*Mr. Bush stated he was not aware of the scoping, but believed it would be part of the management plan.*

*Chair Bonham asked Mr. Bush if he felt CDFW's Region 2 could commit right now to make sure they get the input from adjacent landowners as they are designing the approach.*

*Mr. Bush replied yes.*

*Mr. Eddie Oneto of Oneto Ranch which is east of the property spoke noting he generally had no problem with the project. His only two concerns were that the property continue to be grazed in the future to avoid fire threat, and containment of invasive species such as star thistle. He also suggested a minor boundary line adjustment between him and CDFW would probably block both parcels up and be better for both him and the CDFW. He hoped they would be good neighbors and coexist for a while.*

*Chair Bonham thanked Mr. Oneto for his comments. He then stated his suggestion was that he make a motion to approve the project with the staff recommendation and with the acknowledgment of the express commitment by CDFW's Region 2 to make sure it is seeking the feedback of the adjacent landowners on the public access and grazing issues that have been raised.*

**It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham, with the acknowledgment of the express commitment by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Region 2 to make sure it is seeking the feedback of the adjacent landowners on their public access and grazing issues that have been raised. Chairman Bonham then moved that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$1,355,000 from the California Clean Water, Clear Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40), Public Resources Code Section 5096.650(a) and \$2,700,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) for the acquisition, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and the CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

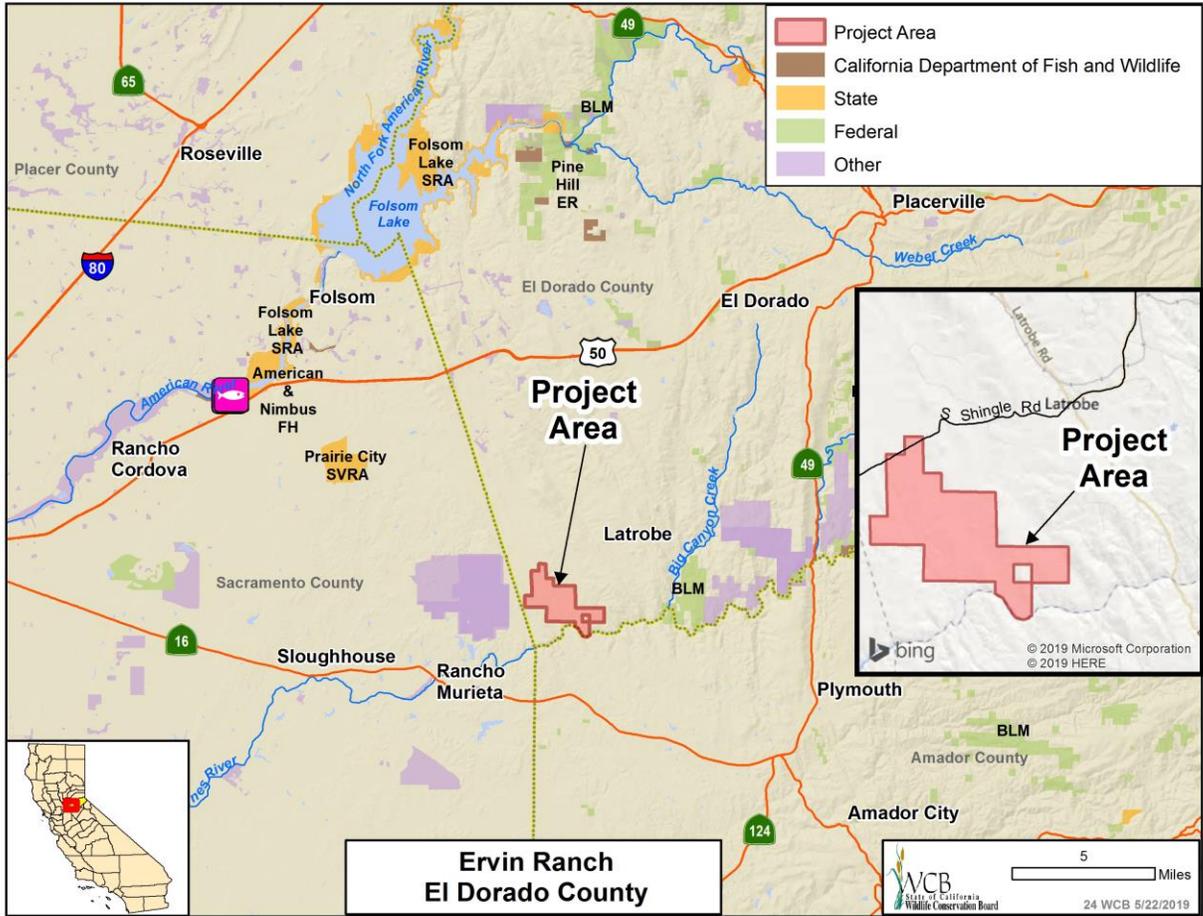
**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**25. Grizzly Island Wildlife Area Habitat Improvement  
Solano County  
\$721,000**

*Mr. James Croft presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to California Waterfowl Association (CWA), for a cooperative project with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to restore wetlands within CDFW's Grizzly Island Wildlife Area (GIWA), located nine miles south by south east of Suisun City in Solano County.

**LOCATION**

Grizzly Island Wildlife Area (GIWA) is owned and operated by CDFW and lies in the heart of the Suisun Marsh on Grizzly Island. GIWA is comprised of multiple distinct land parcels totaling almost 13,000 acres, with the Grizzly Island unit encompassing 8,600 acres. GIWA is managed to provide wildlife habitat, primarily for waterfowl, since CDFW acquired the land in the 1950s. Prior to CDFW's acquisition, a portion of the land was used for commercial agricultural production. GIWA is protected from tidal inundation by perimeter levees that allow the area to be flooded and drained as desired.

In January 2018, CDFW acquired the Mendoza and Bent Barrel Gun Club properties through a land swap. These adjacent properties were privately-owned duck clubs, and have been since their reclamation, prior to the State's recent acquisition. The Grizzly Island unit, Mendoza, and Bent Barrel Gun Club properties make up the footprint of this proposed project.

GIWA is a Wildlife Area complex of managed brackish seasonal wetlands, sloughs and uplands. Much of the area still retains its natural topography, while others have been leveled and sloped during historical agricultural production. The managed wetland units of GIWA are typical of most in the Suisun Marsh, topographic variation, with mostly shallow open water and highly variable amounts of tall emergent cover. Most of the emergent cover is *phragmites australis* (phragmites), an invasive reed from Europe, which is the primary subject of this proposal.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The most common problem impacting wetland productivity in GIWA is inadequate water conveyance infrastructure. The volume and salinity of water flowing through Suisun Marsh fluctuates daily, seasonally, and annually. This makes it imperative to be able to move water quickly and efficiently when the conditions are favorable. If the water in managed wetlands is not adequately circulated or drained, salts will accumulate in the soil and suppress productive wetland plant growth. Mosquito production is also generally higher in areas with slow-moving water or poor drainage.

In addition to inadequate infrastructure, a growing infestation of phragmites is impacting habitat quality and availability. Phragmites invades shallowly flooded permanent and seasonal wetlands, the same locations that most waterfowl food plants prefer. Based on aerial photo evaluation and plant survey data, there is estimated to be between 1,000-1,500 acres of phragmites throughout the GIWA. This represents 20-30 percent of the total managed wetlands on the wildlife area. However, since phragmites prefers shallowly flooded wetlands, it is occupying a disproportionately high percentage of would-be productive wetlands that are preferred by waterfowl, shorebirds, and most other wildlife.

In addition to displacing native and more desirable vegetation, phragmites also inhibits water conveyance. There are several areas on the wildlife area where entire swale systems and ditches are choked with phragmites, severely limiting water flow as well as proper maintenance or evaluation of infrastructure. Although complete eradication of phragmites is not possible, if the affected area is small enough, the remaining vegetation can be easily managed and its effect on water conveyance and wildlife can be minimized. The primary purpose of this proposal is to reduce the amount of phragmites on the GIWA to a point that it can be managed effectively.

Existing stands of phragmites will be treated with a combination of burning, mowing, and herbicide. The actual treatment plan for each part of the wildlife area will be determined by GIWA and CWA staff at the time of treatment. Many factors will determine the order and number of treatments for a given site including, but not limited to, wind; presence and amount of standing water, equipment accessibility and proximity to features such as ditches, roads, power lines, or trees.

Once phragmites control has been completed, tule and cattail transplants will be placed throughout wetlands where possible. Transplanting tules and cattails will expedite the recovery of tall emergent cover that has been lost. Transplants will be taken from areas on the GIWA that have large dense stands. Priority will be given to areas that would benefit from tule/cattail reduction (i.e. ditches, swales, areas in front of water control structures, etc.). Transplants will be removed using an excavator and will be transported and placed using a variety of methods dependent upon the site conditions at the time.

Once the majority of phragmites has been removed, CWA staff will work with CDFW staff to evaluate water conveyance infrastructure throughout the GIWA to identify deficiencies and develop a plan to remedy them. This plan will be used to pursue additional grant funds to implement the identified projects.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Inland Wetland Conservation Program (Fish and Game Code Section 1400, et seq.) and meets the program's goal of assisting the Central Valley Joint Venture's mission to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and associated habitats within California's Central Valley.

The project furthers the following goals outlined in the WCB Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- The project will improve the quality of wetland habitat that is available for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other waterbirds on GIWA.

*Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.*

- The project maintains open space and develops opportunities for controlled hunting, recreation, research, and educational uses that are compatible with the managed wetlands.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in WCB’s Strategic Plan.

Provide species strongholds or refugia by reducing phragmites in GIWA. This will allow native and more desirable plant communities to reestablish. It will also improve water delivery and drainage within management units, providing increased habitat diversity and productivity for a wide variety of wildlife.

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

The project will be within the GIWA, and management of this project will be incorporated into the existing Land Management Plan for the Wildlife Area. The improved water management capabilities associated with this wetland enhancement will allow GIWA managers to provide improved wetland habitat through more efficient water delivery and drainage.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the project, CWA does not assure that the project improvements are managed according to the Management Plan, the Grant Agreement requires that CWA refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the project life.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Project Task	Total Cost	WCB	CWA
Project Management	\$70,000	\$70,000	
Infrastructure Evaluation	\$50,000	\$50,000	
Weed Control	\$447,000	\$407,000	\$40,000
Tule and Cattail Transplanting	\$135,000	\$135,000	
Contingencies	\$59,000	\$59,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$761,000</b>	<b>\$721,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>

WCB funding will be used to cover all direct costs for project management, weed (phragmites) control, tule/cattail transplanting, and water control infrastructure evaluation within the GIWA.

**FUNDING SOURCE**

The proposed funding for this project is the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Inland Wetlands Conservation Program. The purposes of this project are consistent with the authorized uses of the proposed funding source, which provides funding for the acquisition, enhancement or restoration of wetlands.

**CEQA AND CDFW REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION**

The project is proposed as exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15304 Class 4, as a minor alteration in land, water, and vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas or fish production facilities which result in improvement of habitat for fish and wildlife resources or greater fish production. Subject to approval by WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for funding by WCB.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$721,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Inland Wetlands Conservation Program, authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

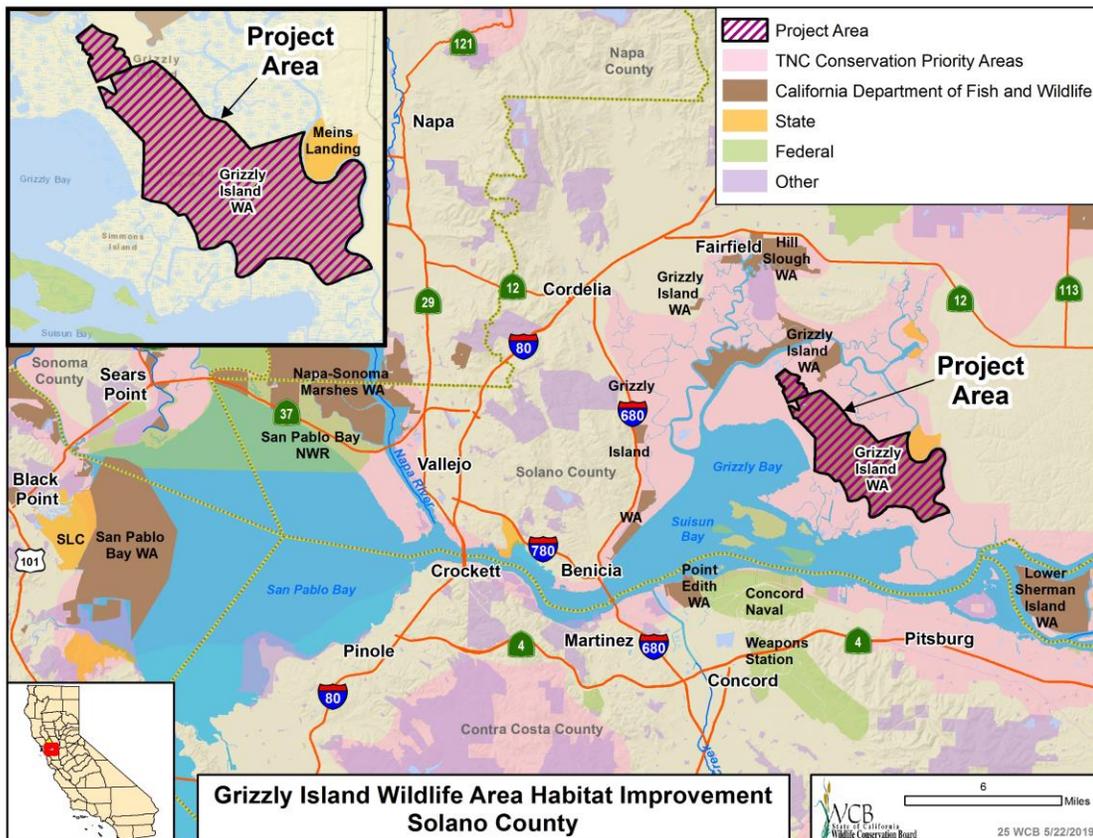
*Mr. Croft noted that Robert Eddings, CA Waterfowl Association, and Larry Wyckoff, CDFW, were in the audience.*

*Chair Bonham asked if there were any questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Member Eric Sklar that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve these projects as proposed, allocate \$721,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(d), Inland Wetlands Conservation Program, authorize staff and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

- Bokde – Yes**
- Bonham – Yes**
- Colborn – Yes**
- Finn – Yes**
- Pavley – Yes**
- Sklar – Yes**



**26. Santa Cruz County, Regional Conservation Investment Strategy**  
**Santa Cruz County**  
**\$470,000**

*Mr. Scott McFarlin presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) for a cooperative project with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCDSCC) to develop and complete a final draft of the Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (SCC RCIS), covering Santa Cruz County.

**LOCATION**

The proposed SCC RCIS would encompass all of Santa Cruz County. Santa Cruz County is located on the Central Coast of California between the Monterey Peninsula to the south and the San Francisco Bay area to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the west, with approximately 30 miles of beaches, and the Santa Cruz mountains, approximately 10 miles from the coast.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This project allows RTC to develop a regional conservation investment strategy (RCIS) to guide voluntary conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions for a suite of species and natural communities. The RCIS must include specific information about conservation actions necessary to adequately reduce stressors and pressures on those species, including identifying conservation priorities within the region, where appropriate. An RCIS will identify areas of conservation priority for implementation of conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions by public agencies, conservation organizations, or private entities.

Transportation improvements are planned to occur in urban and rural areas throughout Santa Cruz County. These infrastructure improvements can be associated with potential impacts to natural resources and require mitigation. Transportation projects may occur in the rural north coast coastal area, the Santa Cruz mountains, and south county wetlands, which are areas critical to biodiversity, and protected and cultivated lands.

Senate Bill 1 (2017) established the Advanced Mitigation Program (AMP) within Caltrans to oversee and implement Caltrans advanced mitigation projects. The AMP is designed to supply high-quality compensatory mitigation that will be available to satisfy future transportation project natural resources mitigation. Under the AMP, Caltrans can enter into or fund the preparation of a Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA) with CDFW, where an RCIS has been approved by CDFW. In addition, compensatory mitigation credits developed in accordance with an MCA tiered off the proposed SCC RCIS may be usable by, and hence increase the delivery efficiency of, Caltrans' future transportation projects. Santa Cruz County is within the area evaluated by Caltrans District 5 for potential inclusion in the Regional Advanced Mitigation Needs Assessment.

Climate change has made the need to plan for and strategically invest in human and wildlife resilience to catastrophic events such as drought, floods, and coastal erosion eminently clear. Development and design of transportation improvements will also benefit from consideration of climate change impacts to ensure long term resilience and compatibility with natural resources. Communities, such as Santa Cruz County, nestled along the coastline of the Pacific Ocean and Monterey Bay and within nine different

watersheds, face unique challenges associated with sea level rise, coastal erosion, and flooding.

Santa Cruz County is unique in that 72,000 acres of land is already protected – either in the form of public lands such as State Parks, County Parks, or Bureau of Land Management, or private lands in ownership by land trusts or other conservation owners.

Santa Cruz is geographically positioned between nearly completed or in progress RCIS efforts. Between the RCIS efforts in Santa Clara County and the East Bay and the recently funded effort in the Monterey County RCIS, Santa Cruz County will be able to leverage lessons learned as well as collaborate directly with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County on cross-jurisdictional conservation with the Santa Clara County and Monterey County RCISs. This expands the RCIS unfragmented area and increases connectivity between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Monterey Bay Area.

The SCC RCIS will result in a comprehensive strategy to address Santa Cruz County conservation priorities and identify conservation strategies that can serve as mitigation tools and maximize ecological benefits. The SCC RCIS development will build on prior local and statewide conservation plans, existing Caltrans statewide and district advanced mitigation planning efforts, and agreement through the Early Mitigation for Transportation Improvements in Santa Cruz County MOU from key stakeholders to discuss conservation needs and priorities.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed project will be funded through the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy pilot program and meets the program's goal of creating the authority and process for developing Regional Conservation Investment Strategies. An RCIS establishes biological goals and objectives at the species level and describes conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions that, if implemented, will contribute to those goals and objectives.

The project furthers the following goals outlined in WCB's Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands:*

- The SCC RCIS will lead to the enhancement of wetland and riparian areas for fish and wildlife.

In addition, the SCC RCIS will lead to the protection and enhancement of habitats to provide species strongholds, and to enhance habitats for threatened and endangered species by:

- Developing scientifically rigorous conservation goals for focal species and conservation elements.
- Creating a comprehensive, countywide, and non-fragmented, regional conservation strategy that includes specific actions for habitat uplift, corridor connectivity, and species recovery to address infrastructure development and climate change stressors.
- Developing a list of focal species that is broad enough to reflect conservation of Santa Cruz's diverse biota but focused enough to allow meaningful analysis and actions that will enable resilience and long-term conservation. While the final list of

focal species will be developed through extensive outreach and analysis, likely fauna includes:

- o California red-legged frog, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, marbled murrelet, snowy plover, Coho salmon, steelhead, tidewater goby, American badger, mountain lion, San Francisco dusky footed woodrat, western pond turtle, and Mount Hermon June beetle.

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

The SCC RCIS development will begin in July 2019. The SCC RCIS grant award will be a priority discussion at the Santa Cruz County Advanced Mitigation Group meeting to inform stakeholders of the work plan and schedule. To provide sufficient time for stakeholder engagement and data collection, the RCIS is scheduled to take 31 months to complete (July 2019 to December 2021). Major milestones include:

- The existing conditions report supported by robust data analysis (July 2019-March 2020).
- The RCIS conservation strategy, including, but not limited to, identification of pressures and stressors and climate change vulnerability assessment (March 2020-February 2021).
- The RCIS implementation plan focused on mitigation needs and tools (November 2020-March 2021).
- The administrative draft and draft RCIS to document findings (March-June 2021).
- Community workshops to solicit input from the public (October 2019 and June 2021).
- Approved final RCIS (September 2021-December 2021).

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

<b>Project Title:</b>		<b>Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy</b>		
<b>Task Number</b>	<b>Task Name</b>	<b>Fund Source</b>		
		<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>	<b>Local In-Kind Match</b>
1	Project Coordination	\$168,000	\$71,000	\$97,000
2	RCIS Development	\$305,000	\$291,000	\$14,000
3	Draft & Final RCIS Preparation	\$115,000	\$100,000	\$15,000
4	Fiscal Management	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$0
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$596,000</b>	<b>\$470,000</b>	<b>\$126,000</b>

The table identifies the grant funds requested and match provided as in-kind funds from RTC, RCDSCC, and contribution by stakeholders and technical advisory committee participants. The Project Scope of Work considers the requirements included in the RCIS Guidelines for RCIS development and completion. Budgeted amounts by task were developed based on estimated staff hours, hourly rates for staff are based on skills and experience requirements.

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018, Public Resources Code Section 80111(a), which provides funding for the development of Regional Conservation Investment Strategies and is consistent with the objectives of this project.

#### CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15262, Planning and Feasibility Studies) as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to approval of this proposal by WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$470,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018, Public Resources Code Section 80111(a); authorize staff and CDFW to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. McFarlin noted that Grace Blakeslee, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, and Shannon Lucas, CDFW, were in the audience.*

*Mr. Donnelly stated there were eight letters of support: Steve Henry, Field Supervisor, United States Fish and Wildlife Service; Tim Gubbins, District Director, California Department of Transportation; Debra Hale, Executive Director, Transportation Agency for Monterey County; Tom Gandesbery, Project Manager, Coastal Conservancy; Kathy Molloy, Planning Director, County of Santa Cruz; Bryan Largay, Conservation Director, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County; Elizabeth O'Donoghue, Director of Sustainable Development Strategy, The Nature Conservancy; and Lisa Lurie, Executive Director, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County.*

*Ms. Finn wished to confirm Mr. McFarlin's conclusion where he states the final goal of getting approval from department? Mr. McFarlin confirmed it is CDFW.*

*Chair Bonham noted two things about the RCIS Program:*

- 1. Historically, developers have two main choices when they deal with CDFW on permitting. They can get an individual permit for an individual project or they can do a NCCP/Habitat Conservation Plan. The theory behind the RCIS was to do something in the middle between project by project and what can tend to be a very time consuming and costly grand conservation plan.*
- 2. Once we are successful, when the parties develop the conservation strategy and submit it to CDFW and they approve it, then that opens the pathway for a mitigation crediting. The transportation agencies will tell you that if you look at regional scale and figure out the most important places to do conservation, create mitigation banking, you will end up with better processing and more time efficient infrastructure development. That's what is going on in this RCIS world.*

*Ms. Pavley asked is it always by county or by region or can it be flexible, i.e., multiple counties?*

*Chair Bonham said it's flexible, but you need some sort of government to be the submitting entity. There is also great interest for water infrastructure. DWR is developing several regional conservation investment strategies as well.*

*Ms. Pavley asked are the advantaged mitigation credits expended within that region?*

*Chair Bonham stated yes; they are within the boundaries of the RCIS.*

*Chair Bonham noted the original legislation capped the number at eight RCIS. That was lifted in subsequent legislation and we probably have six or seven already submitted and another half dozen in development around the state. The interest seems pretty high.*

**It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$470,000 from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018, Public Resources Code Section 80111(a); authorize staff and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**27. Colton Sand Dunes**  
**San Bernardino County**  
**\$1,934,000**

This item has been withdrawn from consideration at this time.

- 28. CDFW Land Management Plans, South Coast Region  
San Diego/Los Angeles County  
\$1,327,213**

This item has been withdrawn from consideration at this time.

**29. John Henry Ranch  
San Diego County  
\$3,200,000**

*Mr. Jasen Yee presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider the allocation for a grant to The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) for a cooperative project with the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to acquire 282± acres of land for the protection of habitat consisting of oak and riparian woodlands, grasslands, plants, and chaparral that supports a variety of wildlife including mountain lion and deer, along with other sensitive species. The acquisition would also increase the protection of regional wildlife habitat corridors and linkages and offers the potential to provide future wildlife-oriented public use opportunities.

**LOCATION AND SURROUNDING USES**

The property (Property), known as John Henry Ranch, is located in an unincorporated area of north San Diego County, just northeast of the Escondido city limits, 20 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and 30 miles north of downtown San Diego. Access to the property is provided by way of Lake Wohlford Road which runs along the southeast boundary of the Property.

The immediate outlying area consists mostly of rural open space and mountainous acreage along with the presence of Lake Wohlford, which is about a quarter mile southeast of the Property. Lake Wohlford is a moderately sized reservoir lined with rocky outcroppings and is a popular public fishing destination. The headwaters of the Escondido Creek Watershed begin above Lake Wohlford, and flows through a southwest segment of the Property, continuing through the city of Escondido, until it meets the Pacific Ocean at the San Elijo Lagoon in the city of Encinitas. The primary mission of TECC is to preserve and restore the Escondido Creek Watershed. TECC has participated in a bioassessment of Escondido Creek, which determined the water quality to be “poor” for aquatic wildlife species, along with not being suitable for public recreation, such as swimming. With restoration and enhancement efforts, TECC is looking to improve water quality and environmental conditions to support the revitalization of native plants, wildlife, and public recreation within the Escondido Creek watershed.

The Property has been identified as a high priority for protection in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (CDFW) Rancho Guejito Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP). The CAPP identified a large expanse of intact undeveloped land totaling 36,000± acres in north San Diego County that support native habitat and sensitive species. In 2010, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) provided a grant to TECC to acquire the 418± acre property, known as Bottle Peak, which is less than a half-mile southeast of the subject Property. Together, Bottle Peak and the subject Property support the protection of an ecological connectivity corridor between the higher elevation of the Cleveland National Forest to the east and coastal habitat to the west while also preserving the watershed of Escondido Creek. The Property will also contribute to success of the CDFW approved San Diego Regional Natural Communities Conservation Plan and the San Diego North County Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan by preserving intact core wildlife linkages and key populations of sensitive species.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Property consists of four undeveloped irregular shaped parcels with topography that varies from level and gently sloping to steep, rugged, and mountainous. The elevation gradient for the Property varies from 900 feet near the southwesterly corner to

approximately 1,700 feet at the top of a peak on the east side. The Property is currently zoned for rural residential development with a 40-acre minimum lot requirement. Most of the Property is comprised of vacant land with the exception of a water well and some miscellaneous equipment associated with a paintball operation that is isolated on the east portion of the Property. The paintball facility operated under a use permit and a lease that expired in February 2019. An environmental assessment of the Property (Phase I) determined that there were no recognized environmental conditions of concern. The landowner is currently organizing the removal and cleanup of the paintball operation and the close of escrow will be contingent upon the approval of the cleanup by CDFW.

The Property is characterized by habitat consisting mostly of dense strands of endangered Engelmann oak woodlands, southern mixed chaparral, along with small amounts of riparian woodland, Diegan coastal sage, grassland, and coast live oak woodland. This diverse habitat supports a variety of wildlife including deer, mountain lion, and both the federally threatened Coastal California gnatcatcher and the federal and state endangered least Bell's Vireo, as well as other sensitive species. This acquisition would permanently protect the Property from development fragmentation and will support the preservation of intact core habitat and linkages in the Escondido Creek watershed and outlying areas.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed grant is being considered under WCB's Land Acquisition Program. The Land Acquisition Program is administered pursuant to the Board's original enabling legislation, "The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947" (Fish and Game Section 1300, *et seq.*), authorizing WCB to acquire real property or rights in real property on behalf of CDFW, grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property, or rights in real property and accept federal grant funds to facilitate acquisitions or subgrant these federal funds to assist with acquisitions of properties. Under the program, WCB provides funds to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in land that can successfully sustain or be restored to support wildlife and, when practicable, provide for suitable wildlife-oriented recreation opportunities. These activities are carried out in conjunction with CDFW, which evaluates the biological values of property through development of a Land Acquisition Evaluation/Conceptual Area Protection Plan (LAE/CAPP). The LAE/CAPP is then submitted to CDFW's Regional Operations Committee for review and, if approved, later transmitted to the WCB with a recommendation to fund.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

This Project is guided by WCB's Strategic Plan and supports the following outlined goals:

*Goal A.1 – Fund Projects and Landscapes that provide resilience for native wildlife and plant species in the face of climate change.*

The proposed acquisition will increase the protection of the area's wildlife habitat corridors with the nearby protected lands to the west. The Property offers various elevation gradients and will allow for anticipated habitat and wildlife migration in the face of climate change.

*Goal A.4 – Invest in priority conservation projects recommended under CDFW's land acquisition evaluation process or within other conservation plans supported by CDFW.*

The habitat resources of the Property have been evaluated in a CAPP along with a Natural Community Conservation Plan approved by CDFW. CDFW determined the Property is a

high priority for protection due to the linkage it creates with protected lands to the west and extensive undeveloped lands to the east.

*Goal C.1 – Support a wide range of recreational activities (e.g. hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, camping, photography, etc.) in conjunction with other land uses and without degrading environmental resources.*

Future recreational opportunities on the Property will include TECC led hikes and conservation research undertaken through TECC education programs along with joint activities with the nearby San Pascual Band of Mission Indians. These recreational activities will be limited to areas determined to have nominal impact on the habitat resources of the Property.

*Goal E.1 – Maximize expenditures of remaining bond funds and identify opportunities to leverage existing funds as effectively as possible.*

The Property is proposed to be acquired with WCB funds leveraged by the funding partnership with CNRA.

#### MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

TECC is dedicated to the preservation, restoration and protection of the natural open space within the Escondido Creek watershed. TECC currently owns and/or manages 2,432 acres of land within the watershed, between the cities of Encinitas and Escondido. The Property will be monitored on a monthly basis by TECC land management team. Currently, TECC consists of eight staff members and utilizes over 70 active volunteers to remove invasive species and for site restoration projects. Public access on the Property will include TECC led hikes and conservation research undertaken through TECC education programs along with joint activities and events with the nearby San Pascual Band of Mission Indians.

#### TERMS

The Property has been appraised as having a fair market value of \$4,200,000. The appraisal has been reviewed by WCB staff and reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. The owner has agreed to sell the Property for the approved appraised fair market value. The terms and conditions of the proposed WCB grant to TECC provide that WCB staff must review and approve all title documents, preliminary title reports, documents for purchase and sale, escrow instructions and instruments of conveyance prior to disbursement of funds directly into the escrow account established for the acquisition. In the event of a breach of the grant terms, WCB can require the grantee to encumber the Property with a conservation easement in favor of the state or another entity approved by the state and seek reimbursement of funds

#### PROJECT FUNDING

The proposed funding breakdown for this project is as follows:

WCB		\$3,200,000
California Natural Resources Agency – Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program		\$1,000,000
<b>TOTAL Purchase Price</b>		<b>\$4,200,000</b>

#### WCB FUNDING SOURCE

The purposes of this project are consistent with the proposed funding source that allows for the acquisition of habitat, including native oak woodlands, to protect deer and mountain lions. [Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a)]

#### ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE RECOMMENDATION

The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and is proposed as exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15313, Class 13, as an acquisition of land for wildlife conservation purposes, and Section 15325, Class 25, as a transfer of an ownership interest in land to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including plant or animal habitats. Subject to authorization by WCB, a Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse. CDFW has reviewed this proposal and recommends it for approval.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$3,200,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) for the grant, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Yee noted that Ann Van Leer, Executive Director, Escondido Creek Conservancy, was in the audience.*

*Mr. Donnelly noted a letter of support from Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League.*

*Chair Bonham noted there was a speaker card for Ms. Van Leer.*

*Ms. Van Leer indicated they started about three years ago with the Save a Thousand Acres campaign with the idea of being able to stitch together a series of properties that were near or adjacent to already conserved lands. They have had over 600 individual donations towards the campaign supporting the concept of putting this whole mosaic of properties together. It's truly conservation in action and they're very happy and appreciative of WCB's support.*

*Chair Bonham asked if there were any other questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Member Karen Finn that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve this project as proposed, allocate \$3,200,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund (Proposition 117), Fish and Game Code Section 2786(a) for the grant, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

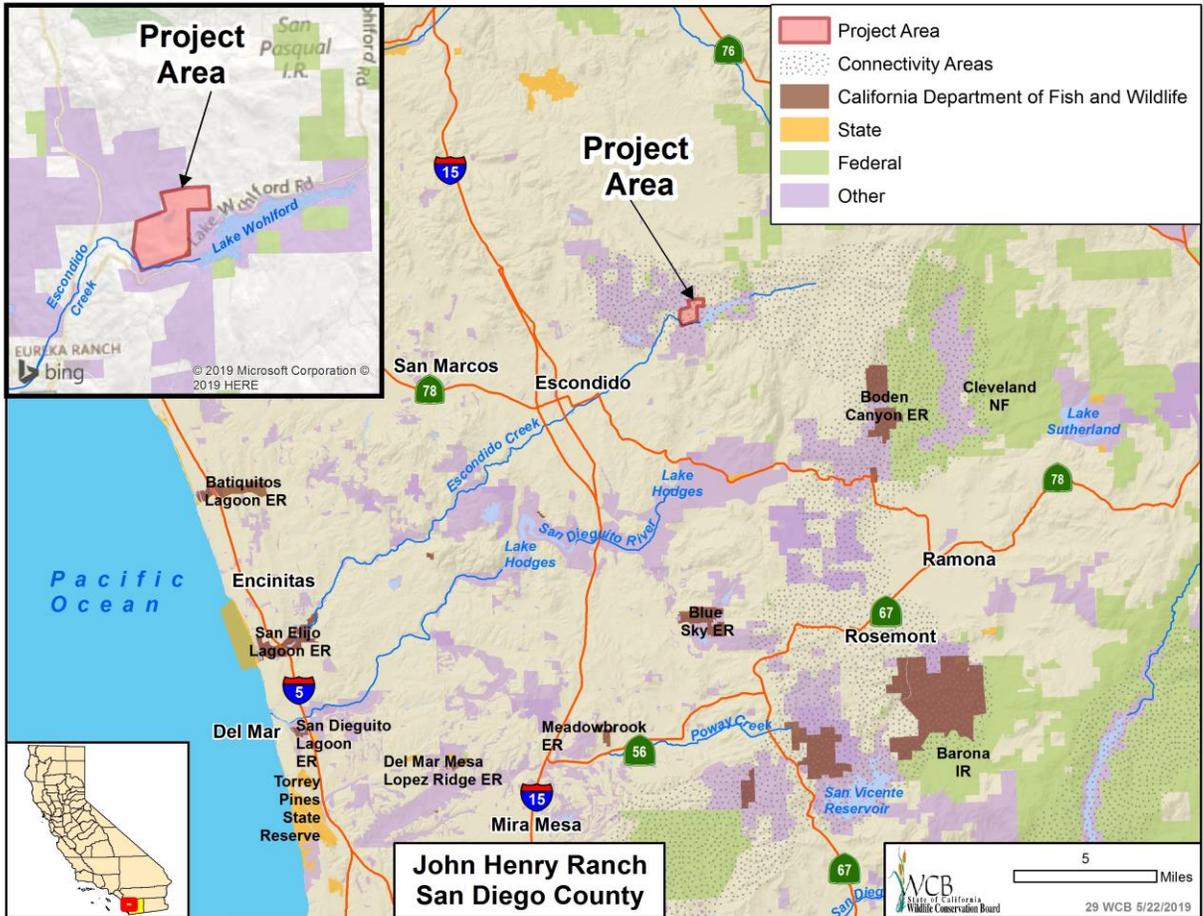
**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**30. Stonebridge Mesa and Santa Carina Terrace Climate Adaptation and Resilience Project**  
**San Diego County**  
**\$759,000**

*Mr. Don Crocker presented this project.*

This proposal was to consider an allocation to the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy (Conservancy) for a cooperative project with the San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation that will restore 38 acres of diverse upland habitat in the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve (SELER) to provide climate change adaptation and resilience benefits to ecosystems deemed moderately or highly vulnerable to climate change.

**LOCATION**

The SELER is a nearly 1,000 acre reserve bordered by the city of Encinitas to the north, the city of Solana Beach to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the community of Rancho Santa Fe to the east. This location is in a highly developed area, making the San Elijo Lagoon an important refuge for wildlife. Historically, the SELER area was a mixture of coastal and freshwater wetlands, coastal sage scrub (CSS), and native perennial grassland habitats, but the Project sites are on former agricultural land currently characterized by dense non-native annual grasses that dramatically reduce native plant diversity, displace sensitive wildlife species, and alter fuel structures and fire regimes.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Project will restore 25 acres of CSS habitat and 13 acres of native perennial grassland to provide climate-resilient, high-quality habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher, other migratory and resident birds, and other associated wildlife. The Project will simultaneously improve buffer habitat to protect adjacent ongoing wetland and riparian restoration projects by reducing soil erosion and invasive plant seed dispersal into these areas. This Project is part of a larger effort by the Conservancy to restore upland communities that were lost as a result of historic agricultural land use leading to conversion of these lands to exotic grassland. While continuous invasive species control efforts conducted since 2004 have reduced the abundance of high priority weed species at the Project sites, natural recruitment of native species has not been sufficient to regenerate CSS habitat structure or biodiversity, indicating the need for active restoration.

Within the SELER, CSS restoration efforts have largely focused on the Santa Carina Terrace, where grant funds and private donations have allowed the Conservancy to refine planting techniques and recruit local volunteers to engage in community-based restoration. The Conservancy has also acquired federal grant and private mitigation funds to conduct initial pilot site restoration at Stonebridge Mesa. Previous revegetation sites at these locations have restored approximately 0.5 to 1 acre each year, incrementally expanding the total area to 6.6 acres over 7 years. This grant will contribute to the expansion of restoration efforts to make use of larger-scale techniques and add a component of perennial grassland to the sites. In developing the Project, the Conservancy sought to apply the lessons learned during previous incremental restoration projects while reducing costs by working on a larger scale, to maximize efficient use of restoration funding.

Climate change adaptation is incorporated in the development of all projects across the Conservancy's habitat management program on a variety of scales. In developing projects with the potential to sequester carbon, the Conservancy can contribute to California's statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. Sequestration through

implementation of restoration and management projects statewide has the potential to contribute up to 17 percent of the state's emissions reduction goal for 2030.

On the watershed scale, the Conservancy's Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit invasive species control program has sought to address climate-related concerns by removing non-climate stressors, to increase the resilience of priority ecosystems. On a landscape-scale, the San Elijo Lagoon is classified as having low climate stress and landscape exposure, but high adaptive constraints, indicating a need for restoration of degraded lands and riparian corridors to reduce adaptive constraints.

Within the Project area, the Conservancy has selected three coinciding adaptation objectives: 1) protection of current patterns of biodiversity, 2) protection of climate refugia, and 3) maintenance and restoration of ecological connectivity. Specific design elements intended to meet these objectives center around development of a plant palette that uses climate-smart restoration principles, includes species for which the site is expected to be a climate refuge, and excludes taxa for which the site is expected to be climatically unsuitable.

Plant installation and seeding will consist of installation of approximately 4,800 container plants per acre within the coastal sage scrub sites, using plugs and 2-inch pots, broadcast seeding of 25 pounds per acre within the coastal sage scrub sites, and drill-seeding of 50 pounds per acre within the native perennial grassland sites. The plant palette selected for this project is composed of 24 Diegan coastal sage scrub and 13 perennial native grassland species, designed to reduce climate vulnerability by creating redundancy in climate-related plant traits and ensure that a variety of resources for wildlife remains available year-round.

#### WCB PROGRAM

The proposed Project will be funded through the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program and meets the program's goal of providing for climate adaptation and resiliency projects that will result in enduring benefits to wildlife.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The project furthers the following goals outlined in WCB's Strategic Plan:

*Goal B.1 – Invest in projects and landscape areas that help provide resilience in the face of climate change, enhance water resources for fish and wildlife and enhance habitats on working lands.*

- The Project will provide climate refugia for 78 native plant species, including three rare species, and will provide climate change adaptation and resilience for the San Elijo Lagoon by enhancing biodiversity at the selected sites, restoring important ecosystem functions, and providing habitat for climate-vulnerable wildlife species.

In addition, the proposed project addresses the following priorities outlined in WCB's Strategic Plan:

- Improve habitat for threatened or endangered species through the restoration of coastal sage scrub which is a biologically diverse habitat whose range has been greatly diminished due to urban development.

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

The Project area is managed through a cooperative agreement between the Conservancy, the County of San Diego (the landowner for the Project sites), and CDFW. In addition, the Conservancy and the County of San Diego have established a Memorandum of Agreement regarding compliance with the Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Plan for the Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit Invasive Non-native Plant Control and Revegetation Project. The Conservancy will also be responsible for conducting maintenance and monitoring according to the Monitoring, Reporting, and Long-term Management Plan submitted with the application.

If at any time during the 25-year life of the Project, the Conservancy does not manage and maintain the Project improvements, the Grant Agreement requires that it refund to the State of California an amortized amount of funds based on the number of years left on the Project life.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

The proposed funding breakdown for the Project is as follows:

<b>TASK</b>	<b>WCB</b>	<b>SELC<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>USFWS<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Private Donation</b>	<b>Leonard Foundation</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Project Management	\$104,660		\$5,070		\$5,070	\$114,800
Monitoring and Data Management	\$80,720	\$6,877	\$2,390		\$5,790	\$95,777
Carbon Sequestration Study	\$19,125					\$19,125
Site Preparation Weed Control	\$35,615	\$17,113				\$52,728
Native Plant Installation and Seeding	\$316,445	\$62,643	\$21,770		\$52,765	\$453,623
Supplemental Irrigation	\$151,060	\$13,801	\$4,800		\$11,630	\$181,291
Maintenance and Weed Control	\$24,425	\$17,208	\$5,970	\$15,000	\$14,485	\$77,088
Training	\$5,000					\$5,000
Travel and Mileage	\$4,000				\$260	\$4,260
Indirect Costs	\$17,950					\$17,950
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$759,000</b>	<b>\$117,642</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>	<b>\$1,021,642</b>

<sup>1</sup>The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy

<sup>2</sup>The United States Fish and Wildlife Coastal Program

Project costs will be for project management, monitoring, removal of invasive plant species, planting native species, and irrigation and maintenance of the project site during the project's active life.

#### FUNDING SOURCE

The proposed funding source for this project is the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, which provides funding for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems to provide climate change adaptation and resilience, assist natural and working lands managers in adapting to and becoming more resilient to climate change, facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration in natural and working lands, and provide additional social, economic, and environmental benefits, or "co-benefits".

#### CEQA COMPLIANCE

The Project is proposed as exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15304 Class 4, as a minor alteration in land, water, and vegetation which does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Subject to approval by WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that WCB approve this project as proposed, allocate \$759,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

*Mr. Crocker noted Doug Gibson, Executive Director, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, was in the audience.*

*Mr. Donnelly noted a letter of support from Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League. Mr. Donnelly also welcomed Ms. Mary Creasman to the meeting.*

*Chair Bonham asked if there were any questions. There were none.*

**It was moved by Board Chairman Chuck Bonham that the Wildlife Conservation Board approve the project as proposed, allocate \$759,000 from the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Fund under the Budget Act, Chapter 14 and 249, Statutes of 2017, authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Bokde – Yes**

**Bonham – Yes**

**Colborn – Yes**

**Finn – Yes**

**Pavley – Yes**

**Sklar – Yes**



**31. Strategic Plan Update**

Informational item regarding the update of WCB's Strategic Plan, as required by Proposition 68.

*Ms. Rebecca Fris presented this item.*

A survey has been completed to inform the Strategic Plan update. Results of the survey and further input from the public will occur at two public meetings. One meeting is being held May 9 in Los Angeles and the second will be held in Sacramento May 15. [Results](#) from this outreach will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan update. A final version of the update is expected to be presented to the Board in August.

*Chair Bonham noted the Board's huge thanks and gratitude to staff and subcommittee board members.*

*Ms. Pavley asked when you do outreach to local Los Angeles cities, there are 88, is the outreach to all 88 cities?*

*Ms. Fris responded that with Ms. Bokde's help, WCB focused on Los Angeles and key partners, but not every city.*

*Ms. Bokde noted there is a great need to do more outreach, maybe do another meeting to focus on all 88 cities and start to build those relationships.*

*Ms. Pavley noted there are about 40 cities in Los Angeles County that are now involved in climate action plans and with WCB's focus on climate and resiliency that might be an opportunity to reach out.*

*Ms. Bokde felt the part of the survey that asked the participant to list the region they are from might have been confusing to some southern Californians, if they aren't already working with WCB or CDFW. Ms. Bokde suggested supplying a map that gives some key cities and regions. She also asked if there was anything in the survey that identified public access as one of the key elements?*

*Ms. Fris said yes, that was one of WCB's goals and there were responses of 'yes' this is an important goal, and 'yes' you should continue funding this. There were many individual responses stating we needed to increase funding for the public access program.*

*Ms. Bokde then asked how WCB becomes more engaged. Is there thinking about how this is incorporated into the update?*

*Ms. Fris responded, yes this would definitely be part of the conversation and part of the update given our more recent funding with both Proposition 1 and 68 – it's a tenant of both of those funding sources. That is something we are tracking very closely as we fund projects.*

*Ms. Creasman asked if Ms. Fris had talked about the communication modes?*

*Ms. Fris stated WCB had the whole range of 'yes you should be using social media more, hosting more workshops' and WCB is committed to doing more. WCB has offered to meet with groups in place or at local conferences or workshops.*

*Ms. Creasman asked Ms. Fris if there was anything that surprised her?*

*Ms. Fris stated that personally she felt there wasn't anything that surprised her much. She did get a lot of good input from the Los Angeles meeting about incorporating the urban aspect, understanding how important a small inholding could be as far as open space or a park for an inner area. That, she felt, was something she hadn't been thinking about as much. Overall though, she was surprised there wasn't more negative reactions or more forceful comments about how 'you really should be doing something differently'. It was more validation that the programs we are doing right now are working and to continue our partnerships and improve our communications.*

*Ms. Creasman asked with regard to target audiences, youth, under-represented communities, and urban communities, are we reassessing those as part of the strategic planning process or are we leaving those be with regard to public access?*

*Ms. Fris stated that for WCB, public access is all about wildlife-oriented recreation for all parties.*

*Mr. Donnelly noted we did have a solicitation the year before last that targeted youth and disadvantaged communities. WCB will look to broaden that a little bit. Folks' comments for the most part said, 'keep doing what you are doing, but do it this way'. WCB wants to invest in those communities and the bond acts that have passed require us to invest in those communities, but he doesn't want WCB to lose sight of those other important communities around the state that are important from public access but as well as habitat and wildlife. WCB needs to focus a little more on those urban areas and disadvantaged communities as we are required to do, but we don't want to lose sight of those very rural areas that have high wildlife diversity particularly from a climate resiliency perspective, but also get used by the public.*

*Ms. Creasman stated she didn't think it was an either or, it's some of both. If you don't measure it then you don't know what it is. Being clear about what WCB's target audiences are, it should be broad and inclusive would be good out of this process. Especially as there are new funding streams and engaging folks more as to why they should pay attention, that there are funds to access, and being really clear about that, ensures that we target the right folks and measure our impact.*

*Ms. Fris had one last point, as part of the two public meetings, WCB spent a little time at the end of each talking about its programs and funding opportunities and what they have coming up in the next six months to a year. She wanted to give staff credit for the outreach including putting together glossy brochures and one-page handouts. They bought a banner that can be used at conferences and future public meetings and WCB plans on having a webinar in the next month or so that gets information out to folks to let them know what WCB is doing.*

## **32. Discuss and Act on Board Administrative Items**

### **New Business**

*Mr. Donnelly introduced a video that was prepared for a project that WCB and others funded on Elkhorn Slough that speaks for itself.*

*Ms. Fris noted projects WCB funds are creating videos of their own and then uploading them to our website or distributing them through Facebook or other social media outlets. This video was a really nice one that was done recently.*

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*Mr. Sklar asked that once WCB completes the Strategic Plan Update, it be presented at the next Fish and Game Commission meeting along with the Elkhorn Slough video.*

*Mr. Donnelly informed the Board that WCB's website update was eminent, it will be reformatted and upgraded, and will have a new look.*

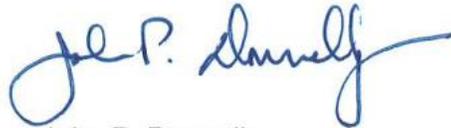
*The next meeting for the Lower American River Conservancy Program Advisory Committee will be on Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 8 a.m. at the Sacramento County Chambers.*

Next WCB Meeting – August 28, 2019

**Adjourn**

*The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted



John P. Donnelly  
Executive Director

## PROGRAM STATEMENT

At the close of the meeting on **May 22, 2019**, the amount allocated to projects since the Wildlife Conservation Board's inception in 1947 totaled **\$2,826,823,941.24**. This total includes funds reimbursed by the Federal Government under the Accelerated Public Works Program completed in 1966, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program, the Anadromous Fish Act Program, the Sport Fish Restoration Act Program, the Pittman-Robertson Program, and the Estuarine Sanctuary Program.

The statement includes projects completed under the 1964 State Beach, Park, Recreational and Historical Facilities Bond Act, the 1970 Recreation and Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Bond Fund, the Bagley Conservation Fund, the State Beach, Park, Recreational and Historical Facilities Bond Act of 1974, the General Fund, the Energy Resources Fund, the Environmental License Plate Fund, the State, Urban and Coastal Park Bond Act of 1976, the 1984 Parklands Fund, the 1984 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Bond Act, the California Wildlife, Coastal and Park Land Conservation Act of 1988, Cigarette and Tobacco Products Surtax Fund of 1988, California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990, the Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Supply Act of 1996, the Natural Resources Infrastructure Fund, the Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund, Forest Resources Improvement Fund, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond, Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Fund, California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Fund, Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002, Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Fund of 2006, Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Fund of 2014, and the Wildlife Restoration Fund. In addition to projects completed with the above funding sources, this statement includes tax credits awarded under the Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act. The tax credits are not reflected in the total amount allocated to projects.

A. Fish Hatchery and Stocking Projects .....	\$18,414,394.06
B. Fish Habitat Preservation, Development & Improvement.....	\$51,512,882.76
Reservoir Construction or Improvement.....	7,456,397.00
Stream Clearance and Improvement.....	31,212,411.62
Stream Flow Maintenance Dams.....	542,719.86
Marine Habitat.....	5,865,581.57
Fish Screens, Ladders and Weir Projects.....	6,435,772.71
C. Fishing Access Projects.....	\$70,112,550.86
Coastal and Bay.....	9,469,773.14
River and Aqueduct Access.....	24,542,047.44
Lake and Reservoir Access.....	15,097,877.24
Piers.....	21,002,853.04
D. Game Farm Projects.....	\$146,894.49

E.	Wildlife Habitat Acquisition, Development and Improvement.....	\$2,582,434,325.72
	Wildlife Areas (General).....	506,065,676.41
	Miscellaneous Wildlife Habitat Development.....	58,858,079.22
	Wildlife Areas/Ecological Reserves, (Threatened, Endangered or Unique Habitat).....	814,637,241.31
	Land Conservation Area.....	15,168,564.18
	Inland Wetlands Conser. Grants & Easements.....	50,845,516.31
	Riparian Habitat Conser. Grants & Easements.....	105,160,520.08
	Other Wildlife Habitat Grants.....	1,031,698,728.21
F.	Hunting Access Projects.....	\$1,365,195.57
G.	Miscellaneous Projects (including leases).....	\$54,317,275.32
H.	Special Project Allocations.....	\$1,926,104.85
I.	Miscellaneous Public Access Projects.....	\$43,256,886.59
	State Owned.....	2,418,004.81
	Grants.....	40,838,881.78
J.	Sales and/or exchanges.....	\$3,337,431.02
K.	Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act (tax credits awarded).....	(\$57,261,234.00)
	Statutory plans.....	(0.00)
	Corridors, wetlands, wildlife habitat, streams and riparian habitat.....	(6,289,658.00)
	Agricultural lands.....	(13,775,640.07)
	Water and water rights.....	(0.00)
	State and local parks, open space and archaeological resources.....	(37,195,935.93)
	<b>Total Allocated to Projects</b>	<b>\$2,826,823,941.24</b>