

Wildlife Conservation Board  
Lower American River Conservancy Program  
Program Overview  
May 13, 2020

AB 1716 requires WCB to implement and administer the Lower American River Conservancy Program (Program) to receive and expend moneys for the benefit of the Lower American River and related lands by, among other things, providing grants to local public agencies and nonprofit organizations for projects benefiting the Lower American River. Assembly Bill (AB) 1716 was enacted September 16, 2016 and added Chapter 10.5 (commencing with Section 5845) to Division 5 of the Public Resources Code; known as the Lower American River Conservancy Program Act.

The bill requires the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to establish an Advisory Committee (AC); established on August 30, 2017. Furthermore, consistent with the American River Parkway Plan, WCB, in administering the Program, may provide grants to local agencies and nonprofit organizations to be used for the acquisition, restoration, enhancement, and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resources, improvement and expansion of public access, enhancement of interpretive and educational facilities, and improvement of the quality of water that flows within and into the American River Parkway (Parkway) (commencing with Section 5845.6). As such, the Program focuses on four main resources of the Parkway, or goals for the Program, that include fish and wildlife habitat and other natural resources, public access, education and interpretation, and water quality.

Since 2017 WCB has hosted nine meetings of the AC, plus one field tour of the lower third of the Parkway. A total of \$11 million has been made available to the Program: \$1,000,000 from the General Fund and \$10,000,000 from Proposition 68 (California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018).

The AC recommended funding the Lower American River Natural Resources Management Plan (\$500,000) in order to describe the existing resource conditions of the lower American River Parkway, formalize goals and objectives for each major resource area, and develop individual projects that are succinct and well-thought to accomplish each goal and objective. This plan expects completion by the end of 2020, and will guide management, protection, and enhancement of the Parkway's natural and cultural resources.

Two competitive grant solicitations have been completed in 2018 and 2019. The 2018 Proposal Solicitation Notice (PSN) resulted in \$2,485,000 being recommended for the following three projects:

**Sutter's Landing Regional Park Acquisition (\$1,810,000)**

Expand access to the Parkway by acquiring up to 47 acres adjacent to the Parkway that will increase access for anglers, hikers, bicyclists, and other visitors to section of the American River that is currently unreachable from land.

**Camp Pollock Site Improvements (\$176,000)**

Increase accessibility to all 11 acres of Camp Pollock by designating an environmentally safe parking area for community and private events, expanding outdoor learning opportunities, improving native riparian habitat and the natural aesthetics of the property, and promoting water conservation.

**American River Ranch Parking Lot (\$499,000)**

Improve access to the American River Ranch Interpretive Center by constructing a gravel parking lot on top of the existing dirt parking lot and improving stormwater catchment features.

Two of the three projects were approved for funding by the board of WCB. The third project, the Sutter's Landing acquisition, is pending final negotiations.

The 2019 PSN resulted in \$2,310,106 being recommended for the following six projects:

**American River Ranch Parking Lot, Phase II (\$367,231)**

Improve access to the American River Ranch Interpretive Center by constructing a paved parking lot, striping accessible parking stalls, landscaping lot with native and edible plants, and augmenting bioswale with native plants that remove toxins and contaminants from water.

**Bushy Lake Conceptual Restoration Plan (\$370,000)**

Enhance wildlife habitat and learning opportunities within the Parkway by preparing a Bushy Lake Conceptual Restoration Plan with the following goals: 1) protect, enhance and restore a sustainable habitat refuge for pond turtles; 2) enhance habitat for fire resiliency; and 3) enhance the education and interpretation of resources in the Parkway, specifically showcasing tribal cultural use of the Parkway.

**Discovery Park Picnic Shelters and Interpretation (\$942,000)**

Improve public access and expand interpretation at Discovery Park by reconstructing two heavily used picnic shelters and installing five new interpretive panels.

**Effie Yeaw Nature Center Facilities Improvement Planning (\$112,000)**

Improve an existing interpretive and educational facility by completing environmental review for the *Effie Yeaw Nature Center Master Plan for Facilities Improvement (2017)* and completing studies and designs for the first phase of construction that will include a new aviary and outdoor classroom.

**Lower Cordova Creek Restoration Planning (\$248,000)**

Increase and enhance habitat for native plants, fish and wildlife, and improve access and interpretation on the east side of Cordova Creek by facilitating a planning process focused on science, design, and stakeholder engagement.

**Where Are We on the Parkway (\$270,875)**

Enhance public access by replacing faded and vandalized mile marker signs with new directional signage on the Parkway. Stakeholder outreach will be conducted to understand the key intersections and attractions to include on the 23 wayfinding signs which will be double-sided, compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and placed at every mile of the 23-mile paved bike trail.

Four of these projects were approved for funding by Wildlife Conservation Board in February 2020. Two remaining projects will be considered for funding at the May 2020 Board meeting.

**Future Proposal Solicitations**

The AC has recommended \$4,065,106 be invested in projects with a primary goal of public access, \$1,118,000 be invested in projects with a primary goal of fish and wildlife habitat, and \$112,000 be invested in projects with a primary goal of education and interpretation.

Proposition 68 requires that at least 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to each chapter be allocated for projects serving severely disadvantaged communities (DAC). Of the \$10 million allocated to the Program, \$1,869,231 or 18.6 percent has been allocated to projects serving severely DAC. An additional \$2,450,875 in projects recommended for funding also serve severely DAC. This would result in over 40 percent of the Program's Proposition 68 allocation serving DAC.

The third competitive grant solicitation (2020 PSN) is scheduled for release on June 1, 2020 and is expected to prioritize projects with a focus on improving the quality of water that flows within and into the Parkway, as well as education and interpretation projects. Approximately \$2 million will be available for this cycle.

Approximately \$2.5 million of remaining funds will be reserved for implementing projects identified in the Lower American River Natural Resources Management Plan, expected completion in 2020.

**Figure 1: Locations, Lower American River Conservancy Program Recommended Projects, 2020**

