



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife



## **2021 Endangered Species Conservation and Recovery Grants**

### **Proposal Solicitation Notice**

December 14, 2020

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is seeking high quality proposals for projects that will further the conservation and recovery of federally listed threatened and endangered wildlife, plant, and certain fish species in the state. Projects that benefit species for which a positive federal 90-day finding has been made, species that are the subject of a proposed federal listing rule, species for which the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has initiated a status review and has announced the review in the Federal Register, and species de-listed by the USFW within the last five years will also be considered. Projects designed to benefit marine species and anadromous fish are funded under separate programs. Projects proposed for funding may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof. Proposals should include clear and specific information about how the proposed work would contribute to species recovery or prevent the need to list a species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a direct conservation benefit to the species or its habitat. Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Introduction of species into suitable habitats within their historic range
- Enhancement or restoration of habitat
- Surveys and inventories of habitats
- Species status surveys
- Propagation of animals and plants
- Research such as genetic analysis to determine genetic health and population structure
- Monitoring of candidate and recently recovered species
- Public education and outreach tools such as website development or coordination workshops with local landowners to address a specific threat to a species

Priority will be given to projects designed to have a direct impact on the recovery of federally listed species, prevent extinction of a listed species, or prevent the need to list a candidate species, although proposals involving candidate and recently delisted species will also be considered. Proposals that involve only research will be considered a lower priority for funding relative to management proposals unless they provide information that can be directly used to prevent listing, recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a species. Proposals involving only public education and outreach activities must demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding of and participation in conservation activities.

For the 2021 cycle, CDFW will give priority to projects that address the following themes:

- Actions or assessments directly supporting the de-listing of currently listed species.
- Projects that identify and implement on-the-ground land and water resource management practices for the conservation and recovery of federally listed species.
- Applied science that reduces the impacts of large high intensity wildfires and other climate-related stressors on listed species or promotes resilience in listed species populations or their habitats to these stressors, with priority given to species listed under both ESA and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).
- Scientific investigations into the adaptive response of listed species to changing environmental conditions, including prolonged drought, altered water and fire regimes, proliferation of non-native species, and habitat type conversion. See [CDFW Reports, California Climate Assessment](#), and reports on [vulnerable species and ecosystems](#).
- Activities and applied research in natural communities which include assemblages of listed species when grant-funded activities and research will benefit multiple listed species.

Other assessment or conservation actions critically needed for the conservation and recovery of species listed under both CESA and ESA. CDFW receives funding for this program through the federal Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act) which provides funding to states and territories for species and habitat conservation actions on non-federal lands.

States and territories must contribute a minimum non-federal match of 25% of the estimated program costs of approved projects. CDFW is responsible for managing native fish, wildlife, and plant species in California, and directs the use of federal Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund resources through this Endangered Species Conservation and Recovery Program (ESCRP) grant program in coordination with USFWS. Authority for CDFW to administer the ESCRP program is granted through Fish and Game Code §1501.5. Anticipated total funding available for the 2021 grant cycle is estimated to be \$2 million; however, the actual available funding depends on the federal allocation of Section 6 funds to California in the yet to be adopted 2021 federal budget.

Applicants should review the 2021 federal [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) for this grant program (click on “see related documents” near bottom of linked page). Applicants are encouraged to consider and address the review criteria in Section E of the NOFO when preparing their proposal.

### Solicitation Procedure

This document details the ESCRP grant eligibility requirements, the proposal submission process, proposal review procedures, and other pertinent topics for the 2021 grant cycle. Potential applicants are encouraged to thoroughly read this PSN prior to deciding to submit a proposal.

In order to be considered for funding, applicants must submit a complete proposal using the supplied templates at the bottom of this notice by **5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time on January 22, 2021**. Project proposals must be submitted to [wildlifemgt@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:wildlifemgt@wildlife.ca.gov) with only **“ESCRP 2021” in the subject line**. Incomplete proposals will not be considered for funding.

## Eligibility Information and Grant Requirements

1. Entities eligible to submit grant proposals in response to this PSN include public agencies, state departments, colleges and universities, tribal governments, and nonprofit entities.
2. The proposed project must address the conservation of federally listed endangered, threatened, candidate, proposed, or recently recovered wildlife, plant, or fish species that are managed by USFWS. Projects involving marine species, including sea turtles, marine mammals, and anadromous fish are funded under separate federal grant programs.
3. Proposals must be developed in consultation with [USFWS biological staff](#) and [CDFW biological staff](#) and identify a CDFW staff person willing to sponsor the project by administering the sub-grant between CDFW and the project lead. Proposals developed without first consulting agency biologists or which fail to identify a CDFW sub-grant sponsor will not be considered for funding.
4. Funded activities must be completed within the grant period which may not exceed 3 years of grant approval date.
5. Required Non-federal Match: A minimum non-federal match of 25% of the total cost of the project (25% of the sum of the federal amount requested plus the non-federal match) is required. It must be spent during the grant term and described in the proposal for a project to be eligible. Applicants must describe in the proposal how the minimum match will be provided, including the match source and amount. Match may include in-kind services, volunteer contributions, use of donated equipment, or partial funding for the project from a non-federal source. If match will be provided by entities outside of CDFW, a letter on the entity's letterhead indicating their commitment to provide the described non-federal match contribution must be included with the application.
6. Grant funds cannot be used for federal compliance or to obtain any federal permits for the project.
7. Grant funds cannot be used to satisfy federal, state, or local regulatory requirements, including mitigation, avoidance, minimization, and monitoring.
8. Funds may be granted for EITHER the planning phase, OR the implementation phase of habitat restoration projects, but not both phases in the same grant cycle.
9. If the proposed scope of work includes the handling of wildlife or activities that could modify the behavior of wildlife (e.g. broadcast surveys, baiting, etc.), field staff must demonstrate their qualification to carry out project work, including documentation of relevant field experience. A Statement of Qualifications must be submitted with the proposal and include permit numbers and expiration dates for any relevant take authorizations.
10. Landowner Permission: For work proposed to be performed on lands not owned or managed by the applicant, written proof of permission to access the land from the fee title owner or land management agency must be supplied. For projects involving multiple landowners, all landowners or appointed designees must provide written permission to complete the project. Applicants for projects proposing on-the-ground habitat improvement must submit documentation showing that they have adequate tenure to the properties to be accessed, improved or restored for at least 25 years. Proof of adequate land tenure includes, but is not necessarily limited to:
  - Fee title ownership

- An easement or license agreement
- Other agreement between the applicant and the fee title owner, or the owner of an easement on the property, sufficient to give the applicant adequate site control for the purposes of the project and long-term management

11. Environmental Compliance and Permitting: Activities funded under this program must be in compliance with all applicable state and federal environmental laws and regulations, including CEQA, NEPA, CESA, ESA, and other environmental permitting requirements. State scientific collecting permits, CESA MOUs and federal ESA Recovery Permits must be current for staff identified to conduct work that “takes” or otherwise impacts state or federally listed species. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all permits necessary to carry out the proposed work. Applicants must identify the project’s expected permitting requirements and state what permits have been obtained or the process through which the permits will be obtained, including the anticipated timeframe for obtaining each permit. Proposals for projects that are subject to CEQA and NEPA must identify the state and/or federal lead agencies and document whether the agency or agencies have accepted the lead role. The applicant must coordinate with CDFW prior to proposal submission if CDFW is anticipated to act as CEQA lead agency for the project. Projects that fail to comply with this requirement will not be eligible for funding.
12. Data and Reports: CDFW’s intent is to improve the management of biological resources over time by incorporating adaptive management principles and processes into conservation planning and resource management. Recipients of ESCRP grants or contracts will be required to submit data and information in a format acceptable to CDFW prior to close of the grant and reports will need to be compliant with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

2021 Grant Cycle Timeline (Subject to Change)

Note that funds awarded pursuant to this solicitation will likely not be available to successful applicants until early 2021.

<b>January 22, 2021</b>	Complete project proposals due to CDFW
<b>Jan. 25 – 29, 2021</b>	Administrative review (pass/fail)
<b>Feb. 1 – March 12, 2021</b>	Responsive proposals ranked by Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Management Advisory Committee (MAC). Director selects CDFW priority projects to forward to USFWS
<b>March 15 – May 12, 2021</b>	Applicants work with CDFW Federal Assistance Program to finalize federal grant application packages. Packages submitted to USFWS by May 12 deadline.
<b>Fall 2021</b>	USFWS reviews and ranks proposals and announces grant awards
<b>Fall 2021</b>	CDFW works with applicants to prepare final Federal Assistance Packages for submission to USFWS
<b>Fall – Winter 2021</b>	USFWS reviews and approves final Federal Assistance Packages and transmits funds to CDFW
<b>~Winter 2021 – Spring 2022</b>	CDFW grant sponsors work with CDFW Payable Grants staff to execute sub-grants between CDFW and project leads. Funds become available to projects following execution of sub- grants. Projects carried out entirely by CDFW staff skip this step.

## Review Process

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

Criteria	Score
Proposal was received by the deadline	Pass/Fail
Applicant is an eligible entity	Pass/Fail
Proposal was developed in consultation with CDFW and USFWS staff	Pass/Fail
Applicant identifies CDFW grant sponsor	Pass/Fail
Proposal is responsive to this Solicitation’s priorities and represents an eligible project type	Pass/Fail
Proposal identifies source of matching non-federal funds or services totaling at least 25% of the total project cost	Pass/Fail
All proposal components have been completed in the required formats, including all proposal forms and associated documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal Narrative using the 2021 template</li> <li>• Budget Worksheet using the 2021 template (must agree with amounts listed in the narrative)</li> <li>• Statement of Qualifications (if applicable)</li> <li>• Proof of land ownership or landowner permission to conduct work (if applicable)</li> <li>• Match commitment letters (if applicable)</li> <li>• Copies of any required permits that are already approved or issued for the project (if applicable)</li> </ul>	Pass/Fail

**Technical Review:** CDFW’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members will evaluate and score proposals using the below criteria:

1. **Need:**

Maximum possible points if the project is urgently needed to avoid imminent extinction of a federally listed or candidate species.

Intermediate possible points if the project is necessary to avoid a significant decline in a federally listed or candidate species' population, distribution, or range; or to avoid or reverse a significant reduction in habitat quality.

Least possible points if the project generates scientific information needed to support recovery planning, management, and conservation actions of federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species.

2. **Relationship to Recovery Plan:**

Maximum possible points if the project is or supports the last action required to meet federal recovery plan goals.

Next most possible points if the project is the necessary next identified step from the species' federal recovery plan.

Next most possible points if the project implements a priority action from the species' federal recovery plan.

Next most possible points if the project implements an identified recovery action from an effort other than a federal recovery plan.

Least possible points if the project implements an important recovery action, although the action has not been identified in an existing plan.

3. Project will increase the statewide population, distribution, or range of federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species; or improve habitat quality over a substantial area.
4. Project actively restores, enhances, manages, or preserves a substantial portion of a federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species' habitat.
5. Proposal demonstrates substantial benefits to multiple Species of Greatest Conservation Need as identified in the [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) (see Appendix C).
6. Project objectives include the following "SMART" elements: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
7. Proposal identifies appropriate, defensible, and achievable scientific and non-scientific methodology.
8. Project includes an education and/or outreach effort AND the proposal demonstrates how the education or outreach will substantially benefit one or more federally listed, candidate, or recently recovered species.

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

**USFWS Review and Award:** USFWS Regional Office Traditional Section 6 Program staff review CDFW's list of proposals to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements of the federal program and to confirm USFWS Field Office staff were consulted by project proponents to identify priority species recovery actions. The USFWS Regional Director then makes the final selection of proposals based on the scoring criteria listed in the 2021 federal [NOFO](#) for the grant program and consideration of CDFW's ranks. The USFWS Regional Office forwards the selected grants to USFWS headquarters for approval. When approved, the USFWS Regional Director will issue a letter to CDFW announcing which proposals

have been awarded funding. The number of proposals selected will be determined by the size of the federal allotment and the budgets of the top ranked proposals.

**Final Approval Process:** Once the final list of projects to be awarded is announced by the USFWS, CDFW prepares a Federal Assistance Application (FAA) package for submittal to USFWS. CDFW grant sponsors are responsible for managing the grant from start to finish, including all sub-grants or contracts. The CDFW grant sponsor will work with any sub-grant awardees and CDFW's Federal Assistance Section to prepare the required elements of the FAA. At this time in the process, the grant proposal and budget may be updated to reflect current project status, current state overhead and salary rates, and the approved funding level. Significant changes in scope and funding are not allowed. The FAA is then submitted to USFWS for their review and approval. Once the grant is approved and funding is obligated by USFWS, CDFW commences processing of any sub-grants or contracts associated with the project. Funding is not available for use by non-CDFW applicants until a sub-grant or contract is fully executed between CDFW and the sub-grantee or contractor.

#### Proposal Forms and Templates

[2021 ESCRП Proposal Template](#)

[2021 ESCRП Budget Worksheet](#)

For questions regarding this PSN or the ESCRП program, please contact Erin Chappell at [Erin.Chappell@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Erin.Chappell@wildlife.ca.gov).