

75 Years of Conservation in California

75

1947 - 2022

75 Years of Conservation in California, 1947 - 2022

Governor Gavin Newsom, State of California

Secretary Wade Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Agency

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3.....	Board Members	16-17..	Bay Delta Region
4.....	Director's Message	18-19..	Central Region
5.....	At-A-Glance, Funding	20-21..	South Coast Region
6-10....	Timeline	22-23..	Inland Deserts Region
12-13..	Northern Region	24.....	Thank You
14-15..	North Central Region		

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover photo: Carpenter Valley, Kevin Starr, Truckee Donner Land Trust,
Page 11 CDFW, Page 15 Simon Williams, Page 16 CDFW, Page 19 CDFW

North Table Mountain

BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD MEMBERS

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

Keely Martin Bosler, *Member*
Director, Department of Finance

Samantha Murray, *Member*
President, Fish and Game Commission

Alina Bokde, *Vice Chair*
Public Member Appointed by the Governor

Fran Pavley, *Public Member*
Appointed by the Governor

Damon Nagami, *Public Member*
Appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly

Kathryn Phillips, *Public Member*
Appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules

John P. Donnelly, *Executive Director*

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Senator Andreas Borgeas
Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Henry Stern
Assemblymember Luz Rivas
Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan
Assemblymember Steve Bennett

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It's hard to believe 15 years have passed since we celebrated 60 years of success. The last decade and a half have emphasized the need for our work with increasing severity of drought, devastating fire, and impacts of climate change. WCB continues to protect and restore habitat throughout the state investing in habitat connectivity, wildlife corridors, and ecosystem services to address these challenges.

Natural resources policy has continued to be key at both the state and federal levels with passage of important climate change legislation in the last couple decades. More recently, efforts are underway as part of the 2018 Biodiversity Initiative that includes a goal to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030. WCB will play a key role in protecting habitat to meet this goal. In 2021 alone, WCB supported protection of over 29,000 acres. Since 1947, WCB has supported protection of over 1.78 million acres in the state.

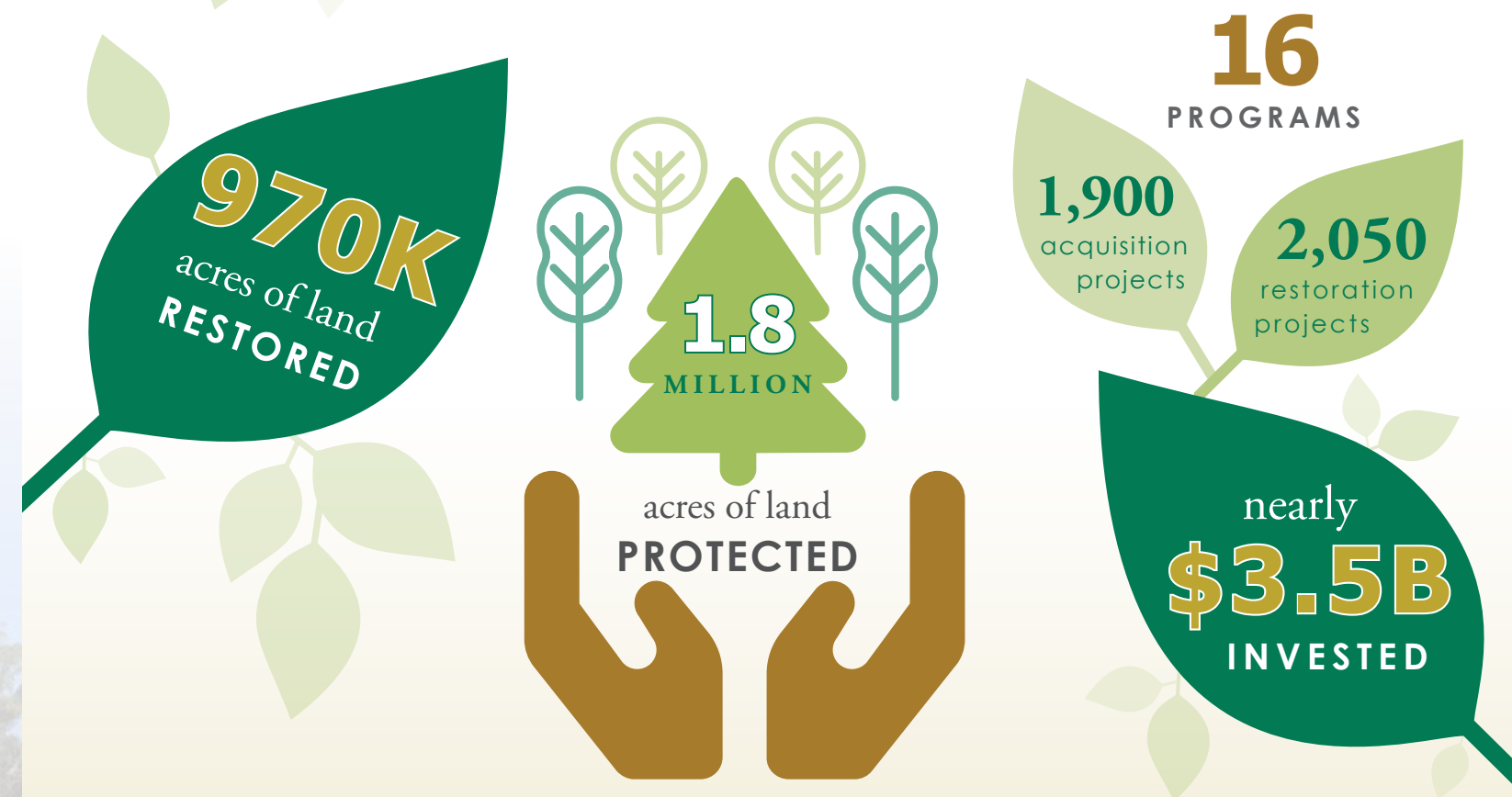
California has also seen fluctuations in resources devoted to tackling these impacts with a recession in 2008 that interrupted work in the state altogether, followed by public support for new natural resources bonds to continue the work of WCB and our partners. These resources have allowed us to continue to focus on our strategic objectives of protecting biodiversity, increasing climate resiliency, and providing access for all.

We are excited to celebrate the work of WCB happening through continued collaboration and partnerships with those implementing work on the ground. We are also dedicated to expanding those partnerships and working throughout the state where the need is greatest. The importance of our work continues to be critical and timely. There is still much work to do, and we look forward to the expanded opportunities to protect fish and wildlife and provide public access to the magnificent natural resources of California.

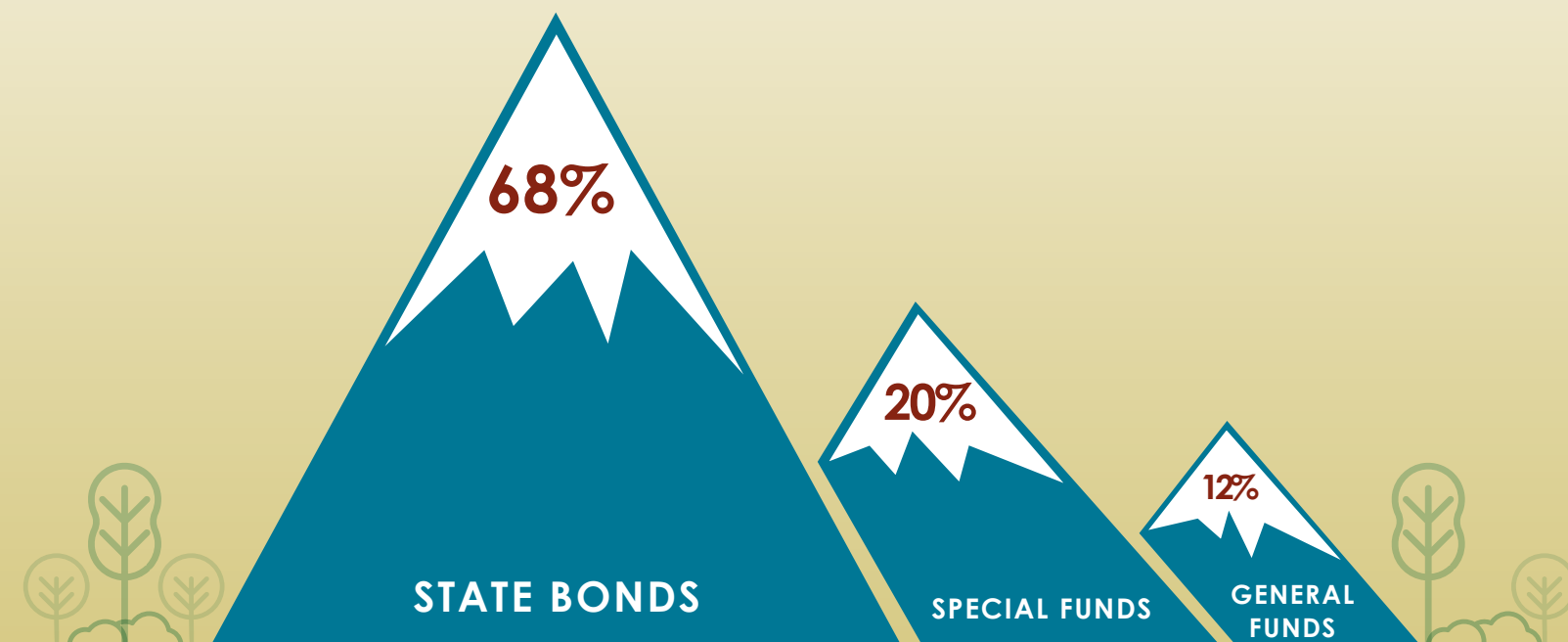


John P. Donnelly,
Executive Director

75 YEARS AT-A-GLANCE



WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?





75 YEARS OF CONSERVATION, PROTECTION & RESTORATION OF WILDLIFE HABITAT

Santa Cruz County



November 12, 1947

First meeting. Initial programs were Land Acquisition, Habitat Enhancement and Restoration, and Public Access.



1947 - 1957

Early projects included hatcheries, development of CDFW wildlife areas, and access for hunting and fishing.



1957 - 1969

1968 Ecological Reserve system established.

Funded projects to benefit threatened and endangered species.

“

Over the past 75 years, the WCB has played a central and critical role in ensuring the wellbeing of California’s wildlife. The preservation of habitat and wetlands as well as creating the crucial connectivity of protected lands has been a fundamental element of the effort to ensure that biodiversity is protected; especially in light of the dramatic effects of climate change.

Grants from the WCB have had a major impact throughout the state; from the stream flow enhancement projects on the Napa and the Santa Clara rivers to connectivity projects like the ones at Red Mountain and Mormon meadows. In the coming decades, the WCB will be essential in the task of ensuring the resiliency and the very survival of our wildlife.

Eric Sklar, Commissioner
California Fish and Game Commission
Former WCB Board Member

1970s

California Environmental Quality Act

1970



- Real estate expertise added
- Projects continued to emphasize fishing access, hatcheries, restoration projects, and threatened and endangered species
- Funded fishing piers throughout the state

First Earth Day

April 22, 1970



1980s

1978

- Funded continued protection of habitats including use of conservation easements as a protection tool.
- Expansion of ecological reserves
- Staff size increased to 10

1987

1990s

1990

New authority to grant and work with wide range of partners including joint ventures

1991

Inland Wetlands Conservation Program

CA Riparian Habitat Conservation Program

NCCP implemented at CDFW

1992

San Joaquin River Conservancy

1993

“

WCB has been a critical partner to getting work done on the ground. They have gone above and beyond in their willingness to support good projects and make sure that the structure of their programs is conducive to good conservation rather than making conservation fit in a box. That has resulted in amazing projects getting done and a true benefit to California and the planet. We can't thank WCB enough for all their thoughtful partnership and support of RCDs, RCD projects, and the important work of all our partners.

Karen Buhr, Executive Director
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts

WCB saw expansion of our three member Board to seven members with the addition of four public members, two appointed by the California Legislature and two appointed by the Governor. This expanded Board allows for broader conversation and reach of the work we are doing throughout the state.

Investment also continued in large-scale comprehensive conservation planning efforts throughout the state.



CDFW State Wildlife Action Plan completed

Stream Flow Enhancement Program

Forest Conservation Program

Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Program

Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Program

Oak Woodlands Conservation Program

- Staff size increased to 25
- Decade of innovation and partnerships and projects on working lands

- Increased staff size to 14
- Increased work with non-profit land trusts and private landowners

2016

2015

2014

2006

2005

2003

2002

2000s

“

As founding chairperson for the Lower American River Conservancy Program Committee, I congratulate the Wildlife Conservation Board on 75 years of fulfilling their mission- acquiring lands and creating access so that our citizens can appreciate the natural beauty of California in perpetuity. It has been a perfect fit to have WCB have oversight over the LARC, as our goals perfectly align, and the WCB staff is professional, focused and fun to work with!

Jeff Harris, City of Sacramento Council Member
Former Chair, Lower American River Conservancy Program Technical Advisory Committee

California Wildlife Foundation applauds the Wildlife Conservation Board's 75 years of conserving our state's natural capital. Informed leadership and consistent performance from John Schmidt, Al Wright, John Donnelly, and staffs, have given us a rich, green infrastructure bank and a framework to build on in coming years. Protecting California's land and water will produce economic and health benefits today and for future generations. Thank you, WCB! Press on with urgency and resolve with all of your partners.

Janet Cobb, Executive Officer
California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks Fund

”

“

The Wildlife Conservation Board has been an indispensable partner for Pacific Forest Trust’s conservation of privately owned working forests for all their public benefits. They set the standard for ecological conservation in California. The WCB has had the vision to recognize the increasing impacts of climate change on California’s globally outstanding biodiversity, and acted to protect it—especially in the Klamath-Cascade region which is the core of the state’s water supply and indispensable haven for wildlife. This is a gift to all Californians, present and future. We are inspired by their dedication to lasting conservation every day.

Laurie A. Wayburn, President
Pacific Forest Trust

20🌱0s

- 2017
 - Creation of CDFW Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Program
 - Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program**
 - Lower American River Conservancy Program**
- 2019
 - Strategic Plan Update (2019-2024)
 - Priorities include protection of biodiversity, climate resilience, and increased work in disadvantaged communities
- 2022
 - 36 staff working on biodiversity protection, climate resilience, 30 X 30 goals, and access for all

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area

“

If you looked at a map that depicted in gold all of California’s important habitat projects, both large and small, showing the mountains, rivers, valleys, vernal pools, grasslands, forests, deserts, oak woods, alluvial scrubland, wetlands, lakes, meadows and streams--that are strategically protected in partnerships with the inspired leadership of the Wildlife Conservation Board--You would say “Truly this is the Golden Age of California Conservation.” The Wildlands Conservancy is honored to call the WCB our partner in protecting California’s iconic landscapes.

David Myers, President
The Wildlands Conservancy

”

Trust for Public Land has counted on the Wildlife Conservation Board as a trusted partner to safeguard California’s precious lands and waters, and preserve habitat for wildlife. Together, we’ve brought millions of Californians closer to nature, from our coastal redwoods to the High Sierra, and from the Mojave desert to some of our most vulnerable communities in Southern California, San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Valley. After decades of triumphs and thanks to the amazing current and past staff we celebrate the Wildlife Conservation Board as not only California’s but also one of the country’s preeminent resource conservation agencies.

Guillermo Rodríguez, California State Director and Vice President - Pacific Region
Trust for Public Land

The following pages show regional maps that highlight the wildlife areas (blue dots ●) and ecological reserves (yellow dots ●) that WCB has helped establish with CDFW. The project narratives are a subset of other cooperative projects WCB has funded in each region.

Since 1947, WCB has funded over 4,000 projects throughout the state.

Vanauken Creek

In partnership with other entities including Sanctuary Forest, WCB funded a conservation easement to protect and manage 1,320 acres of forest habitat in the headwaters of the Mattole River.

Mill Creek

In partnership with other entities such as the CA Coastal Conservancy, Save the Redwoods League, and Smith River Alliance, WCB has funded numerous projects over the past few decades to conserve over 25,000 acres and to restore areas of forest and riparian habitat.

Eel and Salt River, Lone Pine

In partnership with other entities such as the Humboldt County RCD and the Wildlands Conservancy, WCB has funded numerous projects over the past few decades to restore wetland and riparian habitat, enhance stream flow, and improve public access.

Leavitt Lake Wood Ranch

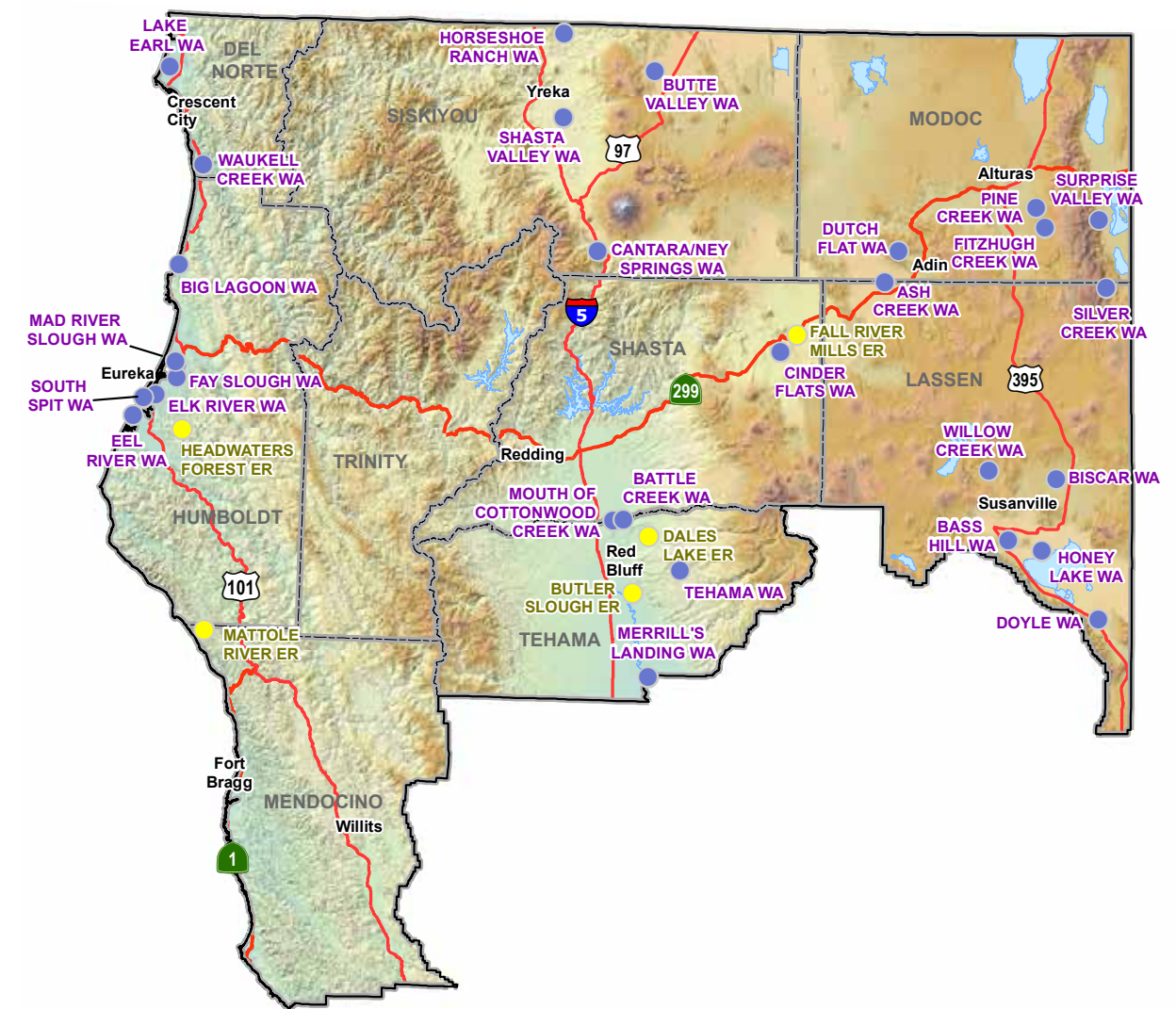
In partnership with the Wood Family and Ducks Unlimited, WCB funded a conservation easement to protect and manage 1,781 acres of actively grazed grassland habitat.

Usal Forest

In partnership with the Conservation Fund and other groups, WCB funded land purchase and conservation easements to protect many native plant communities within the redwood forest ecoregion.

Mill Creek

NORTHERN REGION



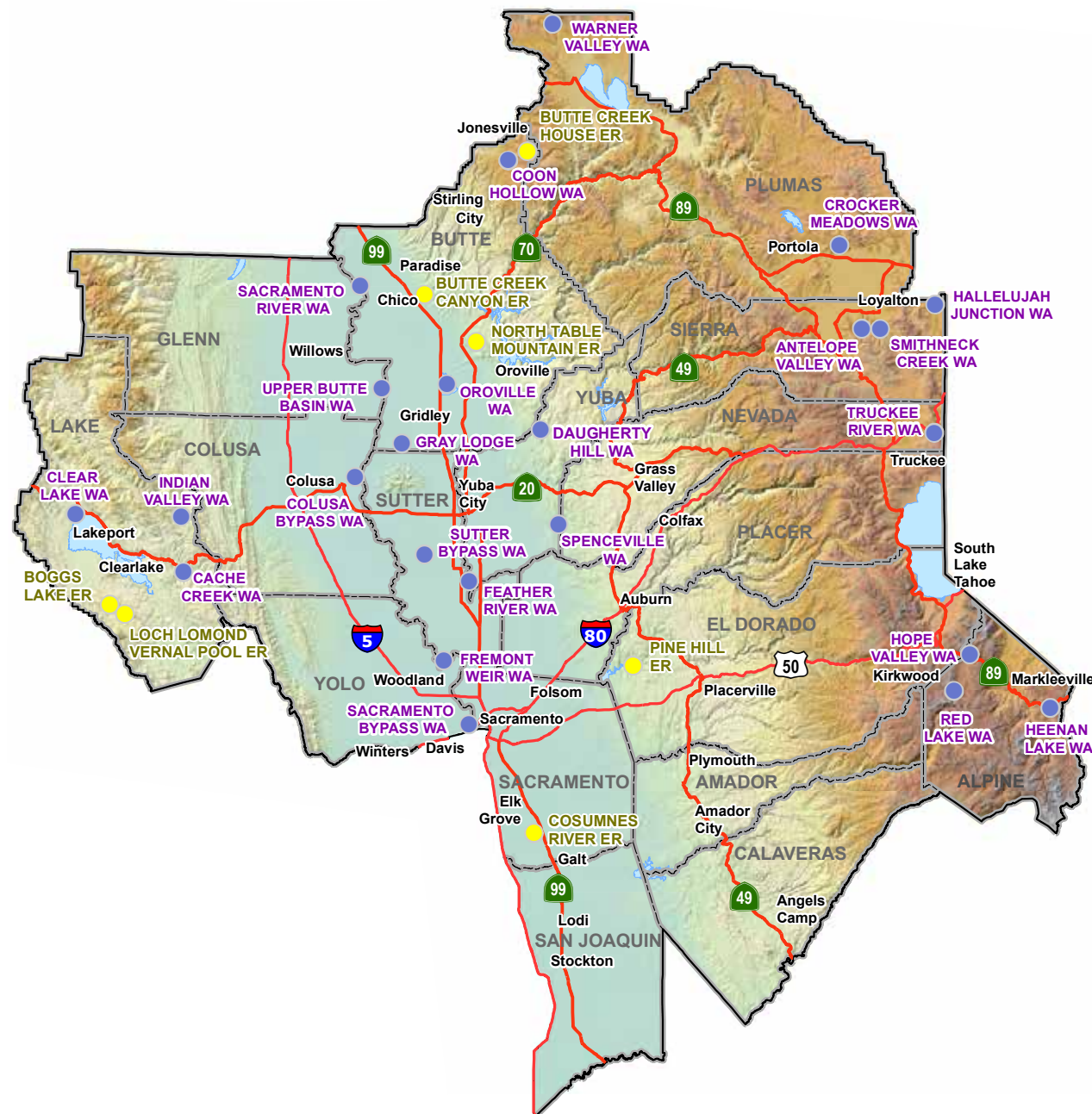
“

WCB has conserved and restored millions of acres of lands and waters on behalf of the people of California. I have had the pleasure of working with WCB on a variety of projects from large landscape acquisitions, restoring and protecting instream flows for fish, improving a public fishing access, to installing a handicap accessible wildlife viewing blind on a wildlife area.

These investments not only provide significant ecological benefits, they provide health and economic benefits and access to rural and urban communities. I am proud to partner with WCB to help people enjoy California's natural resources. WCB, in consultation with CDFW, prudently researches, evaluates and ensures investments in natural resource restoration, management and enhancement, and recreation access are fiscally responsible, beneficial and meet the intent of the funds they steward. I appreciate the many years of partnership and collaboration with WCB. Congratulations to WCB for 75 years of conservation excellence in California!

Tina Bartlett, Regional Manager, Northern Region
CA Department of Fish and Wildlife

NORTH CENTRAL REGION



Sierra Valley

In partnership with entities including California Rangeland Trust, Sierra Business Council, and the Feather River Land Trust, WCB has funded conservation easements on over 24,000 acres of important rangeland, wetland and deer migration habitat in the Sierra Valley.

Independence Lake

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy and many other entities, WCB funded land purchases, conservation easements and restoration to protect Independence Lake, its native fish and surrounding forest.

Sacramento River Wildlife Area

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, River Partners and many other entities, WCB funded land purchases, conservation easements and restoration over many years to protect and restore the Sacramento River and floodplain ecosystem from actions that may impact the river's riparian habitat areas and floodplain processes.

Carpenter Valley

In partnership with Truckee Donner Land Trust and the California Natural Resources Agency, WCB funded land purchased in Carpenter Valley to preserve alpine forests and meadows, wildlife corridors, habitat linkages, and to provide wildlife oriented public use opportunities.

Gray Lodge Wildlife Area

In partnership with CDFW, Ducks Unlimited and California Waterfowl Association, WCB has funded numerous projects the past few decades to conserve and restore wetlands and waterfowl habitat in this wildlife area.

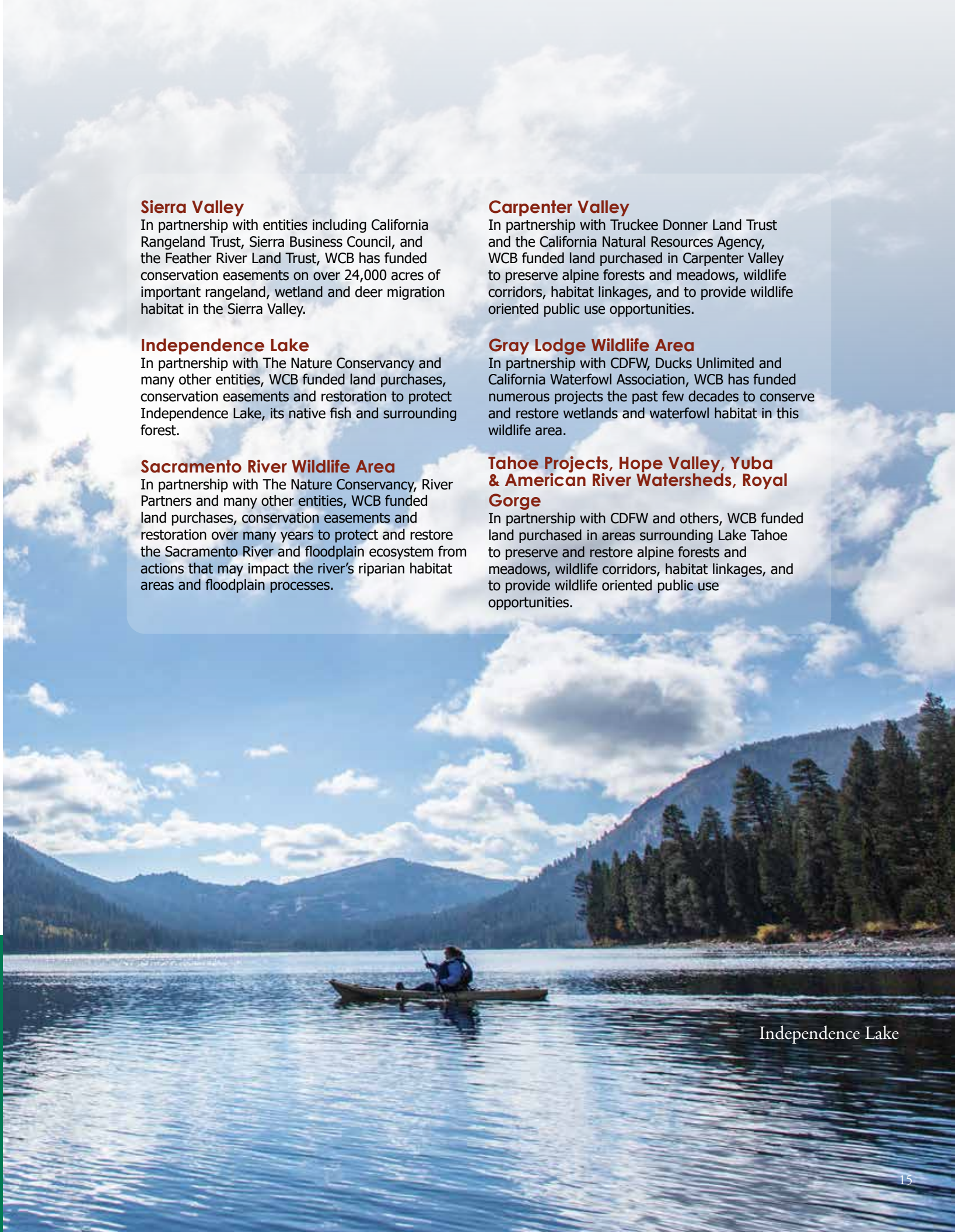
Tahoe Projects, Hope Valley, Yuba & American River Watersheds, Royal Gorge

In partnership with CDFW and others, WCB funded land purchased in areas surrounding Lake Tahoe to preserve and restore alpine forests and meadows, wildlife corridors, habitat linkages, and to provide wildlife oriented public use opportunities.

“

The successful conservation of 365,000 acres of private working lands in California held by the Rangeland Trust is due in large part to the support of and great partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Board. Under John Donnelly's leadership, the WCB team has helped ensure large landscapes consisting of California's private agricultural lands will be forever available to feed our state and nation. We know the next 75 years will have an even greater impact.

Michael Delbar, Chief Executive Officer
California Rangeland Trust



Independence Lake

Knoxville Wildlife Area

In partnership with the CA Coastal Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Resources Legacy Fund, and Land Trust of Napa County, WCB funded the conservation of over 13,000 acres of grassland and oak woodland to help maintain habitat connectivity in the Berryessa-Blue Ridge area.

Coyote Ridge

In partnership with entities including the CA Coastal Conservancy, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, WCB funded the acquisition of over 3,500 acres of serpentine grassland habitat on Coyote Ridge to help maintain habitat connectivity in the Santa Cruz Mountains Linkage.

Jenner Headlands

In partnership with Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, and the Forest Legacy Program, WCB funded the acquisition of over 5,600 acres of coastal forest habitat.

Eden Landing ER

In partnership with many entities, WCB funded planning, initial stewardship, and ongoing restoration to maintain the fish and wildlife use of the ponds and develop conditions which will allow for comprehensive long-term restoration.

Marywood Hwy 17 Crossing

In partnership with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, the CA Coastal Conservancy, and Caltrans, WCB funded a conservation easement on over 170 acres of habitat critical to maintaining wildlife movement across Highway 17 in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

In partnership with CDFW and others, WCB has funded numerous projects the past few decades to conserve and restore wetlands and waterfowl habitat at this wildlife area.

Pacifica Pier

In partnership with the City of Pacifica, WCB has funded the construction and repairs to the Pacifica Fishing Pier which is rated as one of California’s best coastal piers in terms of both fishing success and numbers of users.

BAY DELTA REGION



Coyote Ridge

“

The Wildlife Conservation Board has been instrumental in connecting California’s conservation mandates and funding with the implementing NGOs and agencies. Ducks Unlimited is proud of our strong and productive projects with WCB over the decades as we make California a better place for both wildlife and people. We look forward to facing the challenges ahead knowing that together DU and WCB will continue our proven track record of collaborative and effective conservation.

Jeff McCreary, Director of Operations
Western Region, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

CENTRAL REGION



Dos Rios

In partnership with River Partners and the Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, WCB funded the acquisition and later restoration of approximately 1,600 acres of valley floodplain and riverine habitat for protection of Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, and riparian brush rabbits, and to provide wildlife oriented public access. Subsequent to the land purchase, riparian water rights were formally dedicated to instream fish and wildlife beneficial uses.

Tejon Ranch

In partnership with a number of conservation organizations, WCB funded the acquisition of the conservation easement over 62,000 acres of an unspoiled mosaic of rugged mountains, steep canyons, oak covered rolling hills, and broad valleys in a critical connectivity zone of diverse ecosystems.

Grasslands and Los Banos Wildlife Areas

In partnership with Ducks Unlimited, CA Waterfowl Association, and the Grasslands Irrigation District, WCB funded multiple acquisitions and restoration projects in support of the Grasslands Ecological Area, representing the largest contiguous block of wetlands remaining in California, and consisting of approximately 160,000 acres, (which includes National Wildlife Refuges, the Los Banos Wildlife Area, and private wildlife habitat).

Moss Landing

In partnership with Ducks Unlimited and CDFW, WCB funded the reconfiguration of ponds and water distribution systems, removal of unwanted vegetation, and enhancement of existing public access improvements at this wildlife area.

Carrizo Plain

In partnership with the Nature Conservancy and CDFW, over many years and projects, WCB has funded the acquisition of approximately 38,900 acres for the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve including the American Ranch, North Chimineas, and South Chimineas units. This is undisturbed critical habitat for protection of threatened and endangered species, including the San Joaquin kit fox and tricolored blackbird, as well as numerous other sensitive species.

Hearst Ranch

In partnership with entities including California Rangeland Trust and the State Coastal Conservancy, WCB funded the acquisition of a very large conservation easement on Hearst Ranch to protect and maintain the scenic and natural resources of this extraordinary central coast property.

Allensworth Ecological Reserve

In partnership with CDFW, over many years and dozens of projects, WCB has funded the acquisition of undisturbed critical habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox, Tipton kangaroo rat, and blunt-nosed leopard lizard to expand Allensworth Ecological Reserve.

“

The creation of the Wildlife Conservation Board in 1947 was an incredibly visionary act. It launched just as California's post-war population boom began to reshape the state. And since then as California has transformed into a world-leading economy and the most populous state in the Union, the WCB has led the charge to ensure that transformation included the conservation of the lands and waters that make this place so special. The scope and variety of places the WCB has conserved is truly extraordinary and every Californian can enjoy the results.

Mike Sweeney, Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy

Carrizo Plain

SOUTH COAST REGION



Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve

In partnership with CDFW and River Partners, the WCB has funded acquisitions and restoration to create the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve for preservation of declining sensitive species in one of the largest blocks of land in the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program.

Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve

In partnership with entities including the Bolsa Chica Land Trust and the Bolsa Chica Conservancy, WCB has funded the conservation and restoration of marsh and shorebird habitat, as well as public access improvements including a new Interpretive Center.

Upper Devereux Slough

In partnership with entities including UC Santa Barbara, WCB funded the restoration of the upper slough and adjacent mesa to a more natural geomorphic configuration, hydrologic regime, and habitat mosaic.

Ellwood Mesa

In partnership with the Trust for Public Land, the CA Coastal Conservancy, and the City of Goleta, WCB purchased 136 acres of shoreline, riparian, vernal pool, native grassland, coastal sand dune, coastal bluff scrub, and monarch wintering habitat land for coastal public access.

San Felipe Valley Wildlife Area

In partnership with CDFW, WCB funded the acquisition of many parcels which comprise the San Felipe Valley Wildlife Area creating a landscape linkage and wildlife corridors between protected desert habitats to the east and the coastal watershed and forested areas located to the west. One of the first projects created under a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP).

Shelter Island

In partnership with the San Diego Unified Port District and the CA Division of Boating and Waterways, WCB has funded the upgrade and repair of a popular boat launch originally constructed in 1956 and upgraded in 1976.

Santa Monica Pier

In partnership with the City of Santa Monica, WCB has funded the reconstruction and repairs to reconstruction of the highly utilized Santa Monica Pier, which was partially destroyed in the destructive coastal storms of 1983.

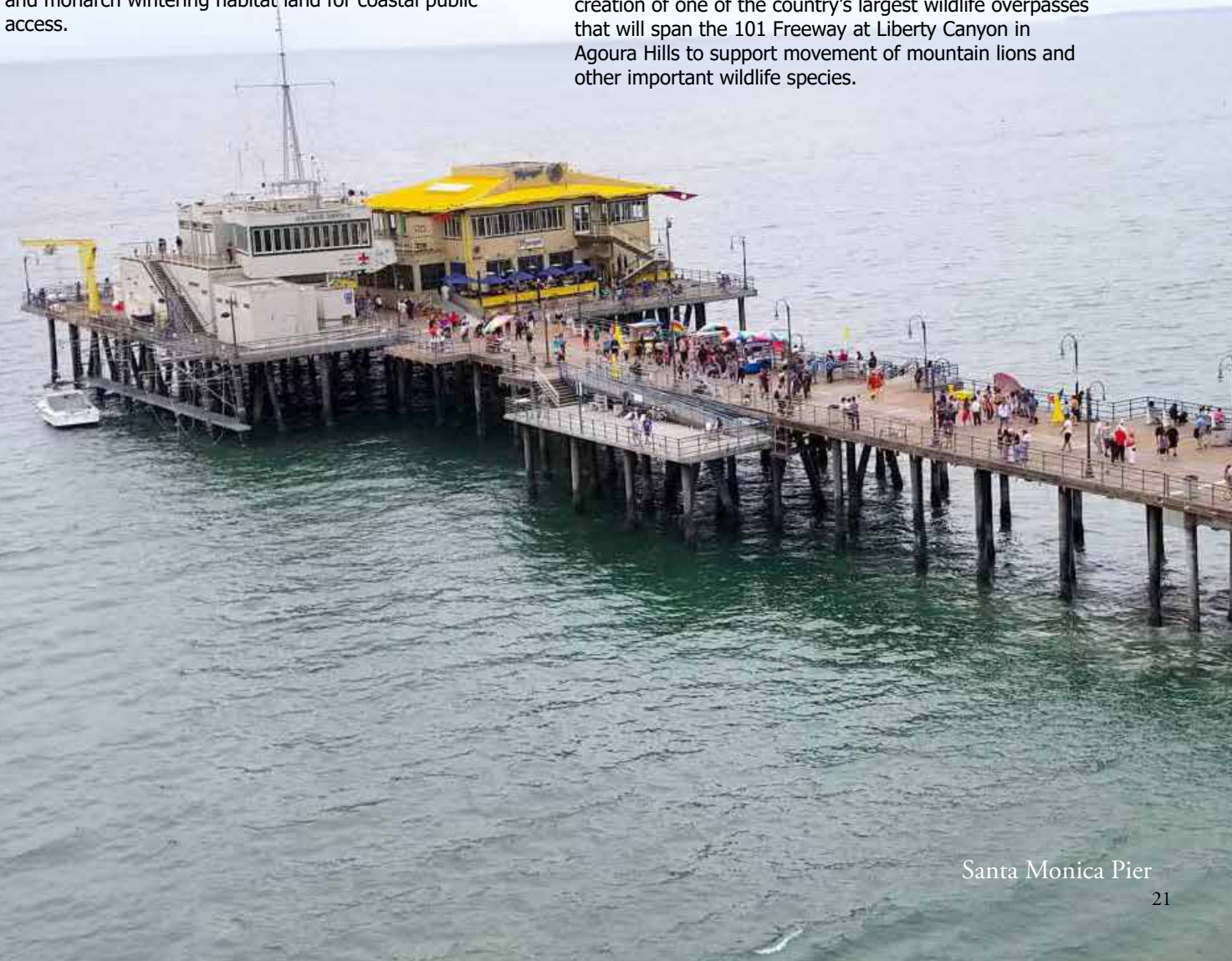
Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing

In partnership with the National Wildlife Foundation, Annenberg Foundation, CDFW, CA State Coastal Conservancy, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, CalTrans, and National Park Service, WCB has funded creation of one of the country's largest wildlife overpasses that will span the 101 Freeway at Liberty Canyon in Agoura Hills to support movement of mountain lions and other important wildlife species.

“

Little did I know as I fished from the San Clemente Pier as a kid that WCB funded that project many years ago. My time on the pier gave me an appreciation for the natural world and contributed to my future career in fisheries and wildlife. All these years later I have a full appreciation for the amazing contribution that the WCB makes to California wildlife conservation. For three-quarters of a century the WCB has provided funds to protect millions of acres of habitat from beaches to mountain tops for wildlife conservation. In addition, the WCB funds projects to allow people to access natural areas, enabling the public to enjoy our natural world. It's comforting to know that California lands and waters conserved through the efforts of the WCB will continue providing places where wildlife can persist and thrive for future generations.

Ed Pert, Regional Manager, South Coast Region
California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Santa Monica Pier

Palisades Ranch

In partnership with the Mojave Desert Land Trust, WCB funded the purchase of the Palisades Ranch in 2018 and the development of a conceptual restoration and design plan for the property to identify restoration measures for critical hydrological processes and important wildlife habitat health.

Santa Rosa Mountains

In partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission, and the CDFW, WCB funded the purchase of 17 parcels to strategically link together public and private lands in the Santa Rosa Mountains to create a landscape-scale preserve to create Peninsular Bighorn Sheep foraging corridors and prevent habitat fragmentation.

Mormon Meadows

In partnership with entities including the Wilderness Land Trust, WCB has funded the acquisition of high desert essential habitat for the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the greater sage-grouse and important deer habitat.

Imperial Wildlife Area

In partnership with CDFW and California Waterfowl Association, WCB has funded numerous projects the past few decades to conserve and restore wetlands and waterfowl habitat in this wildlife area.

San Jacinto Wildlife Area

In partnership with CDFW and others, WCB has funded numerous projects to acquire land and develop land management plans in this area.

Mormon Meadows

“

It's been a real honor for me, a native Californian, to work with the Wildlife Conservation Board. With the leadership from the board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Fish and Game Commission, it is no wonder that this state is a model for the nation when it comes to conserving species, habitat, and providing access to recreation now and far into the future. We are honored to partner with the board and the commission using Wildlife

Restoration Act grant funding to add more than 60,000 acres to the state's Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves since 1942. Additionally, through endangered species and coastal wetland grants, we've been able to acquire and restore nearly 70,000 acres with more than \$263 million in federal contributions to conserve species and habitats.

Paul Souza, Pacific Southwest Regional Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service

INLAND DESERTS REGION





The Wildlife Conservation Board and its staff want to provide a heartfelt thank you to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and all of our partners for all the work that's been implemented to support fish and wildlife over the last 75 years. We are collectively making a difference in California and have so much more good work to do. We look forward to continued and expanded partnerships as we move forward.



wcb.ca.gov