



Gavin Newsom, Governor
NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD
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Final Meeting Agenda

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

January 13, 2023, 12 p.m.

Natural Resources Building, First Floor Auditorium
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Board meeting will also be available via Zoom. A recording will be posted after the meeting.

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Conference code: 506989

*If you anticipate commenting during the Public Comment period or on a particular agenda item and would like to register your name ahead of time, please complete this [Speaker Card \(Word\)](#) and email to Mary.Ahern@wildlife.ca.gov prior to the day of the meeting.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITES

Persons with disabilities needing reasonable accommodation to participate in public meetings or other CDFW activities are invited to contact the Department’s EEO Officer at (916) 653-9089 or EEO@wildlife.ca.gov. Accommodation requests for facility and/or meeting accessibility and Requests for American Sign Language Interpreters should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event. Requests for Real-Time Captioners should be submitted at least four weeks prior to the event. These timeframes are to help ensure that the requested accommodation is met. If a request for an accommodation has been submitted but is no longer needed, please contact the EEO Officer immediately

1. Roll Call

Wildlife Conservation Board Members

Charlton H. Bonham, Chair
Director, Department of Fish and Wildlife
Alina Bokde, Vice Chair, Public Member
Gayle Miller, Member
Chief Deputy Director, Policy, Department of Finance
Damon Nagami, Public Member
Fran Pavley, Public Member
Kathryn Phillips, Public Member
Samantha Murray, President
Fish and Game Commission

Joint Legislative Advisory Committee

Senator *Vacant*
Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Henry Stern
Assemblymember Luz Rivas
Assemblymember Laura Friedman – Alternate
Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan
Assemblymember Miguel Santiago – Alternate
Assemblymember Steve Bennett
Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia – Alternate

Executive Director

John P. Donnelly

Presentation Items

2. Building Wildlife-Friendly Resilience in Working Landscapes

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) approve this project as proposed; allocate \$26,000,000 from the General Fund, Budget Act of 2022, Climate Resilience; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; delegate authority to the Executive Director to make determinations of exemption and file notices as necessary to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for sub-agreements funded under this project, and authorize staff and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to proceed substantially as planned.

Project Title:	Building Wildlife-Friendly Resilience in Working Landscapes
Project Type:	Implementation
Applicant/Grantee:	Point Blue Conservation Science
Amount Recommended:	\$26,000,000
Funding Partners:	None (all in-kind provided by grantee)
Landowner(s):	TBD
County:	Statewide
Program:	Habitat Enhancement and Restoration
Funding:	General Fund
Strategic Plan:	Goals: B.1 Objectives: SI 1.2, 1.4, 2.1

LOCATION

The Building Wildlife-Friendly Resilience in Working Landscapes project (Project) would create a funding mechanism, using a block grant structure, that will be used to support a number of potential future habitat conservation and restoration projects located throughout California.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

There is strong scientific consensus that biodiversity conservation cannot be achieved through land preservation alone. Stewardship of private and public working lands, which comprise 40 percent of California, for wildlife and other biodiversity benefits is critical to stabilizing wildlife populations and preventing extinction. Many restoration and conservation projects, particularly on agricultural lands with high potential for wildlife habitat and biodiversity value, are often not completed for a number of reasons. Barriers to implementing these priority projects include a lack of match funding among economically disadvantaged land stewards, limited funding in Farm Bill and other assistance programs, burdensome logistical hurdles in securing technical and financial assistance, and geographic gaps in conservation prioritization. Additionally, many conservation opportunities are on land stewarded by minority and marginalized communities who face systemic barriers to technical assistance and funding. This results in landscapes where

habitat values are below their potential, and land stewardship that achieves the greatest co-benefits remains privileged.

The Project will provide a significant opportunity to improve conservation value of working landscapes by creating a funding mechanism that can be used to support many conservation projects that would be too small to manage as individual grants, but which cumulatively would have a positive impact on biodiversity and climate goals in California. Additionally, this block grant framework prioritizes equity building and will direct at least 50 percent of funding to disadvantaged communities and underserved individuals or communities.

This Block Grant will support communities and individuals who have historically been excluded from conservation and stewardship assistance. To identify these communities and individuals, Point Blue will build and expand from existing legislation and policy in the following ways:

- This Block Grant will prioritize projects according to multiple criteria defined by existing state tools and policy including: Disadvantaged Communities, pursuant to Senate Bill 535, including the project location's vulnerability score as determined using California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen 4.0), which is used to help identify communities disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and with population characteristics that make them more vulnerable; low-income communities and households, pursuant to Assembly Bill 1550 which identifies census tracts with median household income less than 80% of the state median; and Underserved Communities, pursuant to Assembly Bill 841, where at least 75% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch Programs.
- Point Blue Conservation Science (Point Blue) also intends to prioritize individuals and organizations that are considered to be 'community node builders.' These individuals and groups have deep connections to members of communities who have historically been excluded from wildlife conservation initiatives. This strategy will help ensure that this block grant is growing the community of partners who have access to conservation assistance.

Project selection will be a transparent process based on a selection rubric that scores projects based on their contributions to wildlife and habitat connectivity benefits, benefits to disadvantaged communities and individuals, climate resilience, and feasibility. Point Blue will create a multi-partner external advisory committee to guarantee accountability and transparency, meeting several times a year to help us evaluate progress towards goals.

Point Blue's restoration and reporting accountability structure operates on a predictable project tracking cycle that flows from Project Design> As Built> Maintenance Report> Monitoring Results & Adaptive Management planning for the following year. Point Blue will provide documentation on projects completed and contracts awarded biannually. Project monitoring processes have been heavily vetted by relevant regulatory agencies and have been successfully implemented

with WCB and other state funders. Progress reports will document project progress, including a comprehensive annual report that will provide public transparency. In addition, Point Blue will build a landing page on its website that will communicate project progress to the public. Point Blue will leverage its 50-plus years of conservation experience to select specific projects for funding and will provide project monitoring and implementation assistance. Point Blue has over thirty years' experience successfully implementing habitat restoration practices, including community engagement, on hundreds of private and publicly managed landscapes, meeting or exceeding the goals of private, federal, state, and local collaborators. It is anticipated that many potential projects will be in partnership with local communities through Point Blue's Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed Program. Examples of potential projects that may be selected for funding include riparian plantings to restore critical habitat for thousands of species of wildlife, hedgerow plantings to create pollinator habitat on farm edges and provide vital ecosystem services, and upland wildlife habitat restoration to restore endemic blue oak woodland habitat and its associated ecosystem services.

Many of these potential projects are individually small in scale, but cumulatively, would add large value for sustaining wildlife populations and advancing California's biodiversity and conservation goals both due to direct impact of implementation, and by catalyzing additional stewardship and restoration in each region. Herbicides will not be used on any projects funded by this block grant.

This Project contributes to the goals of Pathways to 30x30 California by aligning with Pathway 6: Expand and Accelerate Environmental Restoration and Stewardship.

Prior to commencement of any project funded by Point Blue Conservation Science from this grant, any necessary environmental review required by CEQA shall be completed by the appropriate lead agency and documentation of that compliance shall be provided to WCB per the terms of the Grant Agreement. Funds from this grant may be used to fund such CEQA compliance.

If no CEQA lead agency is identified for a project, Point Blue Conservation Science will seek prior WCB review and approval before committing funds to the project. WCB intends to act as CEQA lead agency for such projects, and WCB's Executive Director will approve or disapprove such projects consistent with WCB's authority as CEQA lead agency.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Point Blue Conservation Science has adopted a Management Plan that would guide management actions for potential subject properties. If at any time during the 15-year life of each individual project, Point Blue Conservation Science 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:

Project Task	WCB	Non-WCB Funds	Total Cost
Project Coordination and Administration	\$1,816,920	---	\$1,816,920
Outreach and Planning	\$1,915,977	---	\$1,915,977
Implementation	\$19,620,717	\$2,013,000	\$21,633,717
Project Performance	\$749,006	---	\$749,006
Indirect Costs	\$1,897,380	\$3,790,000	\$5,687,380
Total	\$26,000,000	\$5,803,000	\$31,803,000

Costs associated with WCB funding include:

- Project Coordination and Administration: Project coordination, oversight, invoicing, and reporting.
- Outreach and Planning: Outreach across focal geographies, planning support, and technical assistance.
- Implementation: Project implementation including project materials/supplies and subcontractors.
- Project Performance: Analysis and reporting of ecological and social outcomes of projects supported by the grant.
- Indirect Costs: Incidental or indirect costs not to exceed 20 percent of the total direct WCB award, minus subcontractor and equipment costs.

PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Support:

- Joseph L. James/Louisa McCovey, Chairman/Environmental Director, Yurok Tribe
- Rose Marie Burroughs, Partner, Burroughs Family Orchards
- Doug Lo, Producer, Almond Orchard
- Paul Martin, Rancher/Producer, Livestock
- Grant Davis, General Manager, Sonoma County Water Agency
- Joy Baccei Director, UC Merced Vernal Pools & Grassland Reserve, University of California Merced
- Karen Buhr, Executive Director, CA Association of Resource Conservation District
- Karen Ross, Secretary, CA Dept. of Food and Agriculture
- Thad Walker, District Manager-Butte County RCD, Resource Conservation District of Butte County
- Walter T. Moore, President, Peninsula Open Space Trust
- Lynn Overtree, Executive Director, San Benito Agricultural Land Trust
- Karminder Brown, Executive Director, San Benito Resource Conservation District
- Arianne Rettinger, Director of Finance/Acting Executive Director, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz
- Paul Vienneau, Executive Director, Shasta Land Trust

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- Bob Neale, Stewardship Director, Sonoma Land Trust
- Valentin Lopez, President of the Amah Land Trust, Amah Mutsun Land Trust
- Kevin Boyer, Founding Director, Regenerative Agriculture Foundation
- Chris Rose, Executive Director, Solano Resource Conservation District
- Sarah Jarrett, Project Manager, The McConnell Foundation

Opposition:

- None received

CEQA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Pursuant to the state CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4), the approval of a block grant to Point Blue Conservation Science for potential funding of future projects to restore or enhance habitat located on public and privately-owned lands in various counties is not a project subject to the requirements of CEQA, because it is a government fiscal activity which does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. Subject to approval of this proposal by WCB, a Notice of Exemption (NOE) will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

3. Climate Smart Meadow Restoration

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$24,731,000 from the General Fund, Budget Act of 2022, Stream Flow Enhancement; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; delegate authority to the Executive Director to make determinations of exemption and file notices as necessary to comply with CEQA for sub-agreements funded under this project; and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Project Title:	Climate Smart Meadow Restoration
Project Type:	Block Grant
Applicant/Grantee:	Point Blue Conservation Science
Amount Recommended:	\$24,731,000
Funding Partners:	Sierra Meadows Partnership, Point Blue Conservation Science, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service
Landowner(s):	Various
County:	Various
Program:	California Forest Conservation
Funding:	General Fund
Strategic Plan:	Goals: B.1 Objectives: SI 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6

LOCATION

The Climate Smart Meadow Restoration project (Project) would create a funding mechanism, using a block grant structure, that will be used to support a number of potential future meadow restoration activities situated in the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascade ranges, including the following counties: Siskiyou, Modoc, Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Plumas, Butte, Sierra, Yuba, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Alpine, Mono, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Inyo, Tulare, and Kern.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Wet meadows comprise less than two percent of the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascades ecoregion of California but contribute a disproportionately large benefit to ecological services. They are hotspots for biodiversity, store and purify water, attenuate flood flows, provide refugia during and after fires, and store large concentrations of soil carbon. Meadows and their riparian areas are extremely important habitat for wildlife. Unfortunately, an overwhelming majority of Sierra meadows have been degraded, reducing the ecological benefits they provide. As the impacts of climate change increase, so do both the importance of these headwater wetlands, and the threats to their ability to function and provide vital services to humans as well as native species.

The Sierra Meadows Partnership (SMP) is a diverse coalition of public and private organizations working collaboratively with the goal to restore and protect 30,000 acres of Sierra Meadows by 2030 to address the great need to restore the vitality

and resilience of these biodiversity hotspots. To date, SMP has restored and protected over 6,000 acres of Sierra meadows and has another 9,600 acres in various stages of planning. WCB has partnered on 27 projects with SMP since 2017, including 16 restoration, 9 planning, and 2 monitoring projects. The total Project cost is \$32 million, with WCB contributing nearly \$23 million. This Project will implement and monitor many of the projects that WCB has funded.

This Project would set up a funding mechanism for implementation of potential wet meadow restoration projects across the Sierra and southern Cascades. Through this Project, the Grantee and its partners in the SMP will apply their extensive expertise in restoration, science, implementation, and management to create a funding mechanism that could be used to potentially restore an additional 6,000 acres of meadow habitat, complete planning for an additional 4,000 acres, and identify the next 2,500 acres of priorities to begin planning to restore over the next five years. The Project will advance the practice of meadow restoration and management through strategic monitoring, research, coordination, and communications. Through the efficiencies made possible by a block grant, the Project will advance potential meadow restoration projects that will have the greatest degree of multiple benefits including to wildlife habitat, hydrologic functioning, fire refugia, and carbon sequestration. Herbicides will not be used in any of the projects within this block grant.

WCB recently funded development of the Sierra Meadow Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Plan (SM-WRAMP) to provide standardization of ecological monitoring that can be applied to meadows restoration projects across the Sierra. This Project will make use of those SM-WRAMP protocols.

Proposals for potential restoration, planning, and technical assistance projects will be solicited through a Public Solicitation Notice (PSN) advertised on the SMP email list of over 240 individuals, the CA Process Based Restoration Network email list, the SMP website, and the Point Blue Conservation Science website.

For 90 percent of subawarded funds, proposals will proceed through an open selection process. Proposed projects will be reviewed and scored by the SMP Management Board composed of 16 organizations. Proposals will be scored using a standardized rubric, based on WCB's own scoring rubric, with additional categories for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice, and Tribal Benefits. The SMP Management Board has a cumulative 200+ years of experience in meadow restoration and conservation to help ensure the most impactful projects are selected. Scores and votes for all projects will be recorded.

The remaining 10 percent of subawarded funds will be prioritized for projects developed with California Native American Tribes and tribal organizations. These projects will not compete with projects in the public PSN. It will be designed to meaningfully engage tribes in utilizing these funds for meadow conservation with direct tribal benefits. Point Blue will work with its many existing tribal partnerships and outreach to develop new ones. The SMP Management Board will use funds

from this block grant to engage with tribal entities to bring their projects forward for consideration. After a 24-month reservation period, any funds not awarded may be released to the open PSN process. California Native American Tribes will also be able to submit proposals through the open PSN process.

Point Blue Conservation Science will provide WCB with documentation on projects completed and contracts awarded, quarterly reports documenting progress, and comprehensive annual reports detailing progress that WCB can publish on its website. A final comprehensive report on all projects funded will be completed at the conclusion of the Project. Point Blue will build a landing page on its website and the SMP website that will communicate project progress openly to the public. All submitted reports will include an appendix briefly summarizing proposals received, the scores for each scoring category in the rubric, and a funding decision justification. All projects will have a land tenure agreement in place to ensure benefits are sustained for a minimum of 15 years and that allows Point Blue, WCB, and SMP access to the project site during this period for review.

The project deliverables are intended to clearly and transparently communicate project progress, completion, and success. Point Blue and SMP will produce quarterly progress reports describing work to date, obstacles to implementation, and upcoming milestones. Reporting for all individual implementation projects will include, at a minimum, as-built drawings, a summary of work completed, photo documentation, map(s) illustrating completed projects and geospatial files (e.g., shapefiles) showing project areas, and a technical report on ecological monitoring. Reporting for all individual planning projects will include, at a minimum, a summary of work completed, design drawings, photographs of the current condition of the site, a summary of environmental review and regulatory permits completed to support the project, and a technical report on baseline ecological monitoring. Reporting for all individual technical assistance projects will include, at a minimum, a summary of work completed and copies of materials produced (e.g., manuscripts, outreach materials, articles, etc.). Point Blue will produce annual reports intended for the general public that will summarize all projects selected for funding over the preceding year, and the status of those projects (progress towards completion) to provide public transparency on project achievements. Upon project completion, Point Blue will submit a Final Report which will include, at a minimum, a summary of work completed across the entire block grant project, with photo documentation, and map(s) illustrating completed individual projects.

This Project contributes to the goals of Pathways to 30x30 California by aligning with Pathway 6: Expand and Accelerate Environmental Restoration and Stewardship.

Project benefits to Disadvantaged Communities include increased public access provided by restoration on public lands, increased public engagement through hands-on restoration opportunities (e.g., Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed community-based restoration model), and indirect benefits associated

with wet meadow restoration such as enhanced water quality, hydrological function, and biodiversity and climate resilience.

Prior to commencement of any project funded by Point Blue Conservation Science from this grant, any necessary environmental review required by CEQA shall be completed by the appropriate lead agency and documentation of that compliance shall be provided to WCB per the terms of the Grant Agreement. Funds from this grant may be used to fund such CEQA compliance.

If no CEQA lead agency is identified for a project, Point Blue Conservation Science will seek prior WCB review and approval before committing funds to the project. WCB intends to act as CEQA lead agency for such projects, and WCB's Executive Director will approve or disapprove such projects consistent with WCB's authority as CEQA lead agency.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

Point Blue Conservation Science will ensure Management Plans are developed as needed to guide management actions for the individual projects implemented through this block grant. If at any time during the 15-year life of the Project, Point Blue Conservation Science 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:

Project Task	WCB	Non-WCB Funds	Total Cost
Project Management	\$1,320,000	---	\$1,320,000
Restoration	\$14,503,000	\$500,000	\$15,003,000
Planning	\$5,240,000	\$260,000	\$5,500,000
Technical Assistance	\$3,065,000	\$100,000	\$3,165,000
Indirect Costs	\$603,000	\$108,000	\$711,000
Total	\$24,731,000	\$968,000	\$25,699,000

Costs associated with WCB funding include:

- Project Management: Coordination among collaborators, stakeholder communications, outreach, and grant administration.
- Restoration: Implementation and oversight of restoration activities per design plans.
- Planning: Completion and oversight of design, environmental review, preparation of permit applications, etc.
- Technical Assistance: Assess, monitor, study, and report on meadows and associated restoration opportunities.
- Indirect Costs: Incidental or indirect costs not to exceed 20 percent of the total direct WCB award, minus subcontractor and equipment costs.

PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Support:

- Helen Loffland, Meadow Species Specialist, Institute for Bird Populations
- Garrett Costello, Owner and Restoration Specialist, Symbiotic Restoration
- Sheli Wingo, Fish & Wildlife Biologist, USFWS
- Julie Fair, Director, California Headwaters Conservation, American Rivers
- Carrie Monohan, Ph.D., Program Director, The Sierra Fund
- Sandra Jacobson, Ph.D., Director, South Coast and Sierra Regions, California Trout
- Alecia Weisman, River Science Project Manager, South Yuba River Citizens League
- Jen Greenberg, Associate Environmental Planner, California Tahoe Conservancy
- Beth Christman, Senior Director of Restoration, Truckee River Watershed Council
- Jim Wilcox, Executive Director, Plumas Corp.
- Todd Sloat, President, Forest Creek Restoration
- Richard Hopson, Deputy Director, Ecosystem Management, USDA Forest Service Region 5
- Natalie Stauffer-Olsen PhD., California Staff Scientist, Trout Unlimited

Opposition:

- None received

CEQA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4), the approval of a block grant to Point Blue Point Blue Conservation Science for potential funding of potential future projects to restore or enhance habitat located on public and privately-owned lands in various counties is not a project subject to the requirements of CEQA, because it is a government fiscal activity which does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. Subject to approval of this proposal by WCB, an NOE will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

4. Climate Resilience Through Habitat Restoration

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that WCB approve this project as proposed; allocate \$19,218,000 from the General Fund, Budget Act of 2022, Climate Resilience; authorize staff to enter into appropriate agreements necessary to accomplish this project; delegate authority to the Executive Director to make determinations of exemption and file notices as necessary to comply with CEQA for sub-agreements funded under this project, and authorize staff and CDFW to proceed substantially as planned.

Project Title:	Climate Resilience Through Habitat Restoration
Project Type:	Implementation
Applicant/Grantee:	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Amount Recommended:	\$19,218,000
Funding Partners:	Various Resource Conservation Districts
Landowner(s):	TBD
County:	Statewide
Program:	Habitat Enhancement and Restoration
Funding:	General Fund
Strategic Plan:	Goals: B.1 Objectives: SI 1.2, 1.4

LOCATION

The Climate Resilience Through Habitat Restoration project (Project) would create a funding mechanism using a block grant structure, that will be used to support potential future habitat conservation and restoration projects located throughout California.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Many species of California pollinators and other wildlife are in peril due, in large part, to habitat loss and climate change. Restoring habitat and reducing carbon and greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change are necessary to increase wildlife's ability to survive the effects of climate change. Increasing the pace and scale of habitat restoration and conservation across multiple land jurisdictions is critical for addressing these issues and realizing California's 30x30 conservation goals. On private lands, producers have shown leadership and innovation when it comes to land stewardship but are often hindered by lack of adequate financial incentives and technical assistance to balance production and conservation outcomes. Another important limiting factor is an adequate supply of native seed and plant materials for pollinator projects.

The Project will directly address these issues by creating a funding mechanism that can be used to scale up implementation of multiple habitat restoration projects throughout California by means of a block grant structure. As the grant recipient, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) will sub-grant to various Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) and partners to carry out the work and manage and administer the overall project, reducing the

administrative burden for WCB. The Project leverages experience and resources gained through recent technical assistance and habitat installation projects for monarchs/pollinators and carbon farm plans (funded by WCB and other sources) along with a growing number of partnerships with expert organizations, agencies, and landowners/managers. Partner organizations (e.g.: Point Blue Conservation Science, Carbon Cycle Institute) included in this proposal will support multiple RCDs in their work by providing technical assistance and guidance in planning, implementation, and monitoring capacity building, and by increasing and ensuring the availability of native plant materials.

The overall goal of the Project is to harness the knowledge, experience, and connection of RCDs with local stakeholders and the expertise of partner organizations to get as much valuable wildlife habitat restored and carbon sequestered as possible, and as efficiently as possible, within the term of the grant. More specific objectives include implementing at least 30 monarch/pollinator habitat restoration projects on working lands, 25 monarch/pollinator habitat restoration projects on non-agricultural lands, at least 5 monarch overwintering sites, at least 19 wildlife habitat restoration projects, and implementation of at least 40 carbon farm plans on working lands.

It is anticipated that herbicide use may be necessary for some projects. Herbicide will only be used when targeted herbicide use can be part of the restoration process to manage highly competitive invasive species at sites where other preparation methods are not feasible and the use is critical for the project to establish well and persist for the long term. Additionally, the grantee or subgrantee will obtain all necessary permits and approvals including complying with all federal, state, and local statutes, laws, regulations, ordinances, orders, and other governmental and quasi-governmental requirements that apply to herbicide use.

By expanding potential on-the-ground projects and emphasizing equity, science, and capacity building, the Project will directly support the state's 30x30 conservation goals and will specifically contribute to Pathway 6: Expand and Accelerate Environmental Restoration and Stewardship.

To participate in the Project, RCDs and partners must have demonstrated their project implementation capability in past projects where they worked on the ground with local stakeholders to get conservation work implemented. Applicants must submit summary project descriptions and budgets as well as information about planned or existing engagement with underserved, disadvantaged, and/or historically marginalized stakeholders including farmers, ranchers, and California Native American Tribes.

The proposed work benefits underserved communities in a number of ways:

- **Direct benefits:** 40 percent of the RCDs are already collaborating with or plan to engage with these underserved stakeholders, and CARCD expects this number to grow as project details are completed.

- **Direct and indirect benefits:** This Block Grant will prioritize projects according to multiple criteria defined by existing state tools and policy including: Disadvantaged Communities, pursuant to Senate Bill 535, including the project location's vulnerability score as determined using California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen 4.0), which is used to help identify communities disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and with population characteristics that make them more vulnerable; low-income communities and households, pursuant to Assembly Bill 1550 which identifies census tracts with median household income less than 80% of the state median; and Underserved Communities, pursuant to Assembly Bill 841, where at least 75% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch Programs. The Project will create and enhance wildlife habitat and sequester carbon on working lands and public lands in economically depressed areas.
- **Indirect benefits:** A 2021 EPA analysis shows that the most severe harms from climate change fall disproportionately upon underserved communities who are least able to prepare for, and recover from, heat waves, poor air quality, flooding, and other impacts. Moving quickly to implement the projects outlined in the proposal will make a meaningful impact, benefitting all Californians, especially the most vulnerable. RCDs are uniquely positioned to begin work without delay on this crucial effort.

The Project will report and account for projects the following ways:

- Contracts include Scope of Work that lays out activities and deliverables that RCDs and other subgrantees commit to, BMPs employed, etc.
- RCDs and other subgrantees will provide progress reports along with invoices on a monthly or quarterly basis that explain activities performed by task and relate them to their specific deliverables.
- RCDs and other subgrantees will complete progress reports. CARCD will summarize progress reports to provide to WCB along with invoices, at least quarterly.
- CARCD has committed to provide periodic narrative reports to WCB (biannually) on overall project progress and benefits using Project Tracker or another agreed upon tracking and reporting tool.
- CARCD will convene regular calls with grantees and partners to share updates and information to keep CARCD, subgrantees, and subcontractors up to date on progress.
- The proposal ensured that tools and protocols that track and demonstrate impacts of projects are deployed:
 - COMET will be used to track and demonstrate GHG reduction/sequestration
 - Point Blue, Xerces, and MJV will coordinate on consistent protocols for monitoring and reporting wildlife impacts

- Project Tracker, required of all RCDs, is available to the public and offers transparency

CARCD has extensive experience administering block grants and has managed block grants from the following funders:

- Wildlife Conservation Board (2 block grants)
- Bechtel Foundation
- U.S. Forest Service – International Programs
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Monarch Joint Venture
- Resource Legacy Fund
- CAL FIRE
- California Department of Food and Agriculture
- U.S. Forest Service
- NRCS

Because of their satisfaction with CARCDs' block grant management, several of the funders listed above have renewed existing block grants or added new ones, and CARCD is being approached by other agencies to collaborate on new block grants. CARCD is building capacity by adding staff and streamlining systems and will be ready to take on the additional work.

Prior to commencement of any project funded by CARCD from this grant, any necessary environmental review required by CEQA shall be completed by the appropriate lead agency and documentation of that compliance shall be provided to WCB per the terms of the Grant Agreement. Funds from this grant may be used to fund such CEQA compliance.

If no CEQA lead agency is identified for a project, CARCD will seek prior WCB review and approval prior before committing funds to the project. WCB intends to act as CEQA lead agency for such projects, and WCB's Executive Director will approve or disapprove such projects consistent with WCB's authority as CEQA lead agency.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

CARCD has adopted a Management Plan that guides management actions for the Project, including management of all properties restored with grant funds. If at any time during the 15-year life of the Project, CARCD 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:

Project Task	WCB	Non-WCB Funds	Total Cost
Project Management and Administration	\$1,957,920	\$105,500	\$2,063,420
Implementation	\$9,269,607	\$1,187,620	\$10,457,227
Monitoring, Maintenance, & Reporting	\$1,963,252	\$301,570	\$2,264,822
Technical Assistance	\$2,701,661	\$1,583,849	\$4,285,510
Consultation – Partners	\$2,266,965	\$37,780	\$2,304,745
Outreach and Education	\$1,253,595	\$135,048	\$1,388,643
Total	\$19,413,000	\$3,351,367	\$22,764,367

Costs associated with WCB funding include:

- Project Management and Administration: Project management and administration by CARCD and participating RCDs.
- Implementation: Habitat installation labor and materials - RCDs.
- Monitoring, Maintenance, & Reporting: Monitoring, maintenance, and reporting - RCDs.
- Technical Assistance: Technical assistance, planning, and design – RCDs.
- Consultation – Partners: This line item covers various aspects of multi-RCD and multi-project support that will be carried out by partners Carbon Cycle Institute, Point Blue, Monarch Joint Venture, Xerxes, Great Valley Seed, and Heritage Growers.
- Outreach and Education: Outreach and education – RCDs.

PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Support:

- Brittany Jensen, Executive Director, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Devin Best, Executive Director, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District
- Manuel J. Oliva, Chief Executive Officer, Point Blue Conservation Science
- Lucas Patzek, Ph.D., District Manager, Napa Valley Resource Conservation District
- Jessa Kay Cruz, Senior Pollinator Conservation Specialist, Xerxes Society

Opposition:

- None received

CEQA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4), the approval of a block grant to CARCD for potential funding of potential future projects to restore or enhance habitat located on public and privately-owned lands in various counties is not a project subject to the requirements of CEQA, because it is a government

fiscal activity which does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. Subject to approval of this proposal by WCB, an NOE will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.



Adjourn