

Wildlife Connectivity Action MCA Checklists

When a sponsor proposes an MCA with a wildlife connectivity action, the sponsor must provide specific information about the wildlife connectivity action within the MCA concept, MCA framework or draft MCA in addition to what is required for the standard MCA process.

This checklist is based on the **June 2023 version** of the MCA checklist with the wildlife connectivity action requirements shown in bold. The bolded items are the wildlife connectivity action information that the sponsor shall include for CDFW to fully review, evaluate, and determine the MCA's acceptability when submitting an MCA package. The sponsor may need to use general or public data information sources to provide the requested information in the surrounding lands, especially those that are privately owned where access for biological surveys may be limited. CDFW encourages MCA sponsors to submit an MCA concept for wildlife conservation actions for CDFW to help review the credit process early on in the MCA process. Additional changes to this checklist will be reviewed during the pilot period as projects are implemented.

Checklist

This MCA checklist is part of the Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Program Guidelines (Guidelines) (Fish & Game Code, § 1856(a)), as referenced in Section 5 of the Guidelines. The following checklist includes items that are required of an MCA to be considered "complete." Each item indicates the source of the requirement in the Fish and Game Code (Sections 1850 – 1860). All references apply to the subsequent nested bullets unless otherwise indicated. The organization of this checklist follows the format used in the MCA Template.

MCA Name:

MCA sponsor:

Date submitted to CDFW:

Conditions for CDFW completeness review:

The following minimum requirements must be met before CDFW starts a completeness review:

1. The appropriate fees have been paid (Fish & G. Code, § 1857(b)).¹
2. The MCA occurs within the area of an approved RCIS that includes the requirements of Fish & G. Code, § 1856(b)(1-3).
3. If the MCA includes public lands, the public agency landowner approval letter or document is included as an attachment.
4. The MCA will not be utilized to fund or offset the costs of the design, construction, or mitigation of new Delta water conveyance facilities (Fish & G. Code, § 1855(d)).
5. The MCA Template is used, and:
 - Template edits are in track changes
 - All template language that is bracketed, bold, and italicized has been replaced with relevant information or deleted if not applicable.
6. All MCA submittals are provided as separate and clearly labeled PDFs; the MCA template is provided as a Word and PDF electronic file.

¹ See the [Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Program Guidelines: Fees \(online PDF\)](#) for the current fee schedule.

Accessibility:

All public draft MCA submittals are provided as PDFs that meet the Web accessibility standards of California Government Code 11135 and the U.S. Rehabilitation Act section 508.

MCA Framework (Optional):

An MCA sponsor may develop and submit an optional advance mitigation framework to CDFW for review and approval prior to submitting a draft MCA package. The framework option allows MCA sponsors to submit any sections of a draft MCA and/or any completed, or partially completed, MCA exhibits for CDFW review and approval.

If a sponsor is interested in developing a framework for wildlife connectivity actions, the sponsor must add the checklist items provided in **bold**, below, to the MCA Framework checklist and identify any applicable items that the sponsor has included in the framework. Any engineering designs for the MCA Framework can be conceptual designs.

MCA Template

The following minimum requirements must be met for CDFW completeness review:

Section 1

Full name of the MCA included (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(A)])

Section 2

Supporting Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(a))

- RCIS in which the MCA is located is identified and described.

Section 3

The MCA purpose and need are outlined along with any other objectives (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(d)).

- Identify and describe the conservation and habitat enhancement action(s) that will be implemented to measurably advance the conservation objectives of an approved RCIS that may be used to create mitigation credits, which can be used to offset compensatory mitigation requirements for impacts to focal species, non-focal species, and/or other conservation elements.

Section 4

MCA Site and Service Area Information

- 4.1 – Property Ownership Description**: Owner(s) of each MCA site (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(11) and (g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(F)])
- 4.2 – Contact Information**: Contact information for all applicable parties, including MCA sponsor, MCA site property owner(s), MCA land manager(s), conservation easement grantee or long-term durability agreement entity, endowment holder, and any contractors or consultants (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(1) and (g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(B)]).
 - Exhibit A – Contact Information
- 4.3 – Qualifications**: Qualifications of all applicable parties, including: MCA sponsor, land manager, conservation easement grantee (if applicable), endowment holder (if applicable), and any contractors, or consultants

(Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(1)). Both the conservation easement grantee and land manager are subject to CDFW's due diligence requirement.²

- Endowment holder provided a self-certification letter to CDFW that indicates they meet the criteria in Government Code sections 65965-65968, and they specifically meet the requirements of 65968, subdivision (e)(1-5) (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(13)).

- 4.4 – Location Information:** Location information to identify the MCA site(s), including size and address.
 - Exhibit B – General vicinity map and site map, reference maps, including enhancement areas and a 7.5-minute United States Geological Survey map showing the proposed boundaries of the MCA.
 - Identifies public lands and permanently protected lands in the vicinity of the conservation actions or habitat enhancement actions (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(8)).
 - KMZ file showing the location of the MCA site(s).
 - Maps of the wildlife connectivity action and surrounding lands:**
 - Boundary of the wildlife connectivity action location as a KMZ file.**

² Information about the due diligence process is available on [CDFW's Endowments and Mitigation Land Management web page](#).

- Coordinates (latitude/longitude in decimal degrees).**
- Boundary of the habitat in the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action, including associated land boundaries.***
- Existing and proposed protection mechanism(s) for all the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action with labels. Maps of existing protection mechanism(s) should identify the protection mechanism(s) of lands at the time of MCA Package submission.**
- Location of known built infrastructure, natural or man-made hazards, and barriers to species dispersal on habitat in the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action.***
- Maps with labels that identify existing and proposed city or county zoning in the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action. Existing zoning maps must identify the zoning designation at the time of MCA Package submission.**
- Maps that identify the locations of all watercourses (e.g., pond, wetlands, etc.) that are in the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action. If the proposed wildlife connectivity action is connecting watercourses or removing aquatic barriers, a map(s) showing the benefit of the action to the whole watershed would be appropriate.***

- If applicable, a document describing why a conservation easement is infeasible over all or a portion of a wildlife connectivity action property, with any supporting documentation.**
- Exhibit C – Photographs, including color aerial and ground-level photographs that reflect current conditions on the site and surrounding properties (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(4) and (g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(E)]).
 - Ground-level color photographs taken onsite that reflect the current conditions of the site and surrounding properties as it relates to the existing wildlife crossing barrier(s) and proposed wildlife connectivity action. A description of each photograph should include the date, location, direction, and an explanation of what is being captured in the photograph.**
- 4.5 – Service Area:** A written description and map of the service area for each credit type, including an ecological based justification for how each service area was determined (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(I) and § 1798.5(a)(2)(D)])
 - Identifies overlapping mitigation banks and conservation banks approved by the department as a mitigation alternative and explains how available mitigation credits at those banks will be purchased or used lieu of, or in combination with, the mitigation credits created under the MCA or, if those available mitigation credits will not be purchased or used, why they will not be purchased or used (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(6)).
 - Exhibit D – Service Area Map
 - KMZ file showing the service area for each credit type.

Section 5

MCA Site Declarations and Review

- 5.1 – Land Use Consistency Declaration**: Outline that the MCA site has not been, or is not currently being used, as mitigation; is not designated or dedicated for park or open space use; and is not designated for purposes that may be inconsistent with habitat preservation (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(f) and (g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(M)]).
- 5.1 – Land Use Consistency Declaration (continued)**: If the MCA is located within the boundary of an existing NCCP, include the NCCP implementing entity approval of the creation of the MCA credits (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(k)).
 - Exhibit E – NCCP Approval Letter (if applicable)
- 5.2 – Public Funding**: Detailed description of any public funding or grants received (if applicable) (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(N)]).
- 5.3 – MCA Site Inspection by CDFW**: The MCA Sponsor and Land Manager allows representatives of CDFW to inspect the MCA site. The MCA will be inspected by CDFW prior to MCA approval.
- 5.4 – Tribal Resources**:
 - Exhibit F – Tribal Resources Summary
- 5.5 – Approvals**: List all permits, authorizations, and other approvals needed for the MCA.
 - Once obtained, copies of all permits, authorizations, and other approvals shall be provided to CDFW.
- 5.6 – Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**
 - Submit all CEQA documents related to the MCA prior to MCA approval.

- Provide the name of the Lead Agency, state clearinghouse number and type of document, and date certified.

Section 6

MCA Site Development, Management, and Operations

- **6.1 – Exhibit G – Natural Resources Evaluation**, including documentation of biotic and abiotic baseline conditions, including past, current, and adjacent land uses, vegetation types, species information, topography, hydrology, and soil types (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(7)).
 - **Map of the habitat types and known species locations, within in the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action, the sponsor is proposing credits for (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines- Section 3](#))**. Include a map showing the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) records within a 5-mile or species-specific radius of the habitat in the surrounding lands connected by the wildlife connectivity action or other appropriate dataset of species distribution or occurrence.
- **6.2 – Development Plan**:
 - **Exhibit H – Draft Development Plan**. As appropriate, a combined Development and Interim Management and Monitoring Plan may be submitted, and when preservation credits only are proposed (Fish & G. Code § 1856 (g)(5) and (g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(a)(2)(B)]).
 - **Map(s), including existing conditions, final site designs and construction drawings for the wildlife connectivity action. Final site designs may require CDFW review and acceptance; including the location, delineation, dimensions, types, and amounts of each credit type (see [Wildlife](#)**

[Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines- Section 4.1\).](#)

- A map clearly indicating which areas of the wildlife connectivity action will be permanently protected and which areas are proposed to be infeasible for a CE and therefore will require a long-term durability agreement. Indicate the total acreage for each type of protection mechanism***
- An explanation of the ecological suitability of the wildlife connectivity action including a brief description of the elements considered during site-selection (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines- Section 4\).](#)***
- A detailed description of how the wildlife connectivity action will be designed, constructed, implemented, and phased (as applicable) to preserve or establish habitat and the proposed avoidance and minimization measures necessary to protect species during construction (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines- Section 4.1\).](#)***
- A description of the future condition of the site, including a summary of climate, hydrology, and the species and habitats expected to be present once the performance standards for the wildlife connectivity action have been met, including the credit types and locations.***
- Identify metrics or indicators by which the proposed conservation actions or habitat enhancement actions contribute to achieving the strategy's conservation goals and objectives that

can feasibly be measured with existing technology (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(10)).

- **6.3 – Exhibit I – Interim Management and Monitoring Plan** (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798.5(a)(2)(B)]).
 - **Map(s) of the overall final site design indicating the location, delineation, dimensions, types, and amounts of each credit type for the wildlife connectivity action.**
 - **Any actions for the wildlife connectivity action that will be completed during the interim management period including the design, construction, implementation, and phasing (as applicable) to establish habitat.**
 - ***The performance standards, thresholds, or criteria that must be met during the interim management period, and if met, outline any scheduled credit releases (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 6.1).***
 - **Overall management, including schedule, maintenance and monitoring goals, specific tasks and timing of implementation, the ecological based performance standards and the RCIS metrics. *Adaptive management strategies and remedial actions to mitigate for potential issues and any unmet performance standards (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 6).***
 - ***Frequency and timing of monitoring and reporting (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 6).***
- **6.4 – Exhibit J – Long-term Management and Monitoring Plan** (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(14) and (g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798.5(a)(2)(B)]).

- **Map(s) of the overall final site design indicating the location, delineation, dimensions, types, and amounts of each credit type for the wildlife connectivity action.**
- **Overall management, including maintenance and monitoring goals, specific tasks and timing of implementation, the RCIS metrics outlined in the Development Plan. This shall include the long-term management needs (e.g., inspections, fencing, culvert cleanouts, etc.) on the site and any temporary or long-term structural management requirements (e.g., culverts) needed to ensure site functions (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 5 and Section 6).**
- **The performance standards, thresholds, or criteria that must be maintained during the long-term management period in order to verify that the site continues to provide the intended credits and/or crossings for target species (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 5 and Section 6).**
- **Adaptive management actions for reasonably foreseeable events and thresholds for evaluating and implementing adaptive management.**
- **Monitoring and reporting requirements and schedule of requirements for reporting monitoring results to CDFW, including whether the performance standards, thresholds, or criteria that are tied to the long-term effectiveness are being met (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 5 and Section 6).**
- **Funding for long-term management, such as the Endowment Fund Analysis and Endowment Fund Schedule (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 5.2).**

- **Description of the rights of access to the wildlife connectivity action and prohibited uses of as provided in the real estate instrument as approved by CDFW.**

Section 7

MCA Site Evaluation

- **7.1** – Exhibit K – Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, conducted no more than six months prior to the date the MCA is submitted. Performed in accordance with the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) Standard E1527-13 (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798.5(a)(2)(H)]).
- **7.2** – Exhibit L – Legal Description and Plat Map.³
- **7.3** – Exhibit M – Property Assessment and Warranty.⁴
 - Preliminary Title Report that is less than one year old (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798(b)(2)(L)]).
- **7.4** – Exhibit N – Real Estate Instrument: CDFW’s standard mitigation conservation easement (with red-line track-changes in a Word document) or another long-term durability instrument (if applicable); and

³ [CDFW's Land Survey Reference](#)

⁴ See template PAW available on [CDFW's Conservation and Mitigation Banking Instructions and Templates web page](#) (note: replace “bank” with “MCA site” and replace “BEI” with “MCA” in the referenced templates)

an explanation of how the long-term durability of the MCA site will be ensured (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(12)).

- If the MCA occurs within an approved NCCP area, the real estate instrument must provide perpetual protection of the land in a manner consistent with the NCCP.
- 7.5 – Exhibit O – Title Insurance**: Title Insurance (if applicable) or an explanation why Title Insurance is not needed.

Section 9

Financial Securities and Funding

- 9.1 – Security**: List all securities that will be needed (e.g., construction, performance, interim management, compliance), including what time period each security will cover, the tasks, performance-based milestones, and/or performance standards that are to be covered by each security, and the proposed form and estimated value of each security (e.g., an irrevocable standby letter of credit or cash) (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798.5(a)(2)(G)]).
 - Exhibit P – Security Analysis
- 9.2 – Long-term Management Funding** has been described as follows (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(13)):
 - Ensures that the implementation of the conservation action or habitat enhancement action will be adequately funded, and that long-term protection and management of the site will be funded in accordance with Chapter 4.6 (commencing with Section 65965) of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code; OR
 - For MCAs proposed by a state agency, other comparable funding mechanism approved by the department in accordance with an adopted statewide policy regarding

funding for long-term management and operations of mitigation sites.

- Exhibit Q – Endowment Fund Analysis: A property analysis record or other comparable economic analysis of the funding necessary to support MCA maintenance activities, such as monitoring and reporting (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(17) [referencing Fish & G. Code, § 1798.5(a)(2)(F)]).
- If the MCA is proposed on CDFW lands, outline how the full cost of the MCA is accounted for (see RCIS Program Guidelines Section 5.2.4(e)).
- Exhibit R – Endowment Fund Schedule

Section 10

Credit Type, Release, Sale and Use, and Reporting

- **10.1 – Credit Type and Quantity**: The MCA must describe the proposed type and quantity of credits to be created and the supporting rationale, including how the credits correlate to the focal species, non-focal species, and other conservation elements protected by the conservation actions or habitat enhancement actions (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(9)).
 - Each credit must be designated as either, 1) permanent preservation credits as conservation actions; 2) permanent establishment credits as conservation actions; or 3) non-permanent establishment credits as habitat enhancement actions.
- **10.2 – Credit Evaluation and Table**: The MCA must explain the methods and calculations undertaken to formulate the quantity and value of each type of credit for each focal species, non-focal species, and other conservation elements.
 - Exhibit S – Credit Evaluation

- Exhibit T – Credit Table
- **10.3 – Credit Release Schedule**: Credit Release Schedule for each type of credit, phases if applicable, and the performance-based milestones and achievement of ecological performance standards that are to be met prior to each credit release(s) (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(18)).
 - Exhibit U – Credit Release Schedule
- **10.4 – Credit Sale and Use**:
 - Terms of sale and use of credits that explain the conditions under which the proposed credits may be sold, used, or returned back to the MCA sponsor (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(15)).
 - Exhibit V – Credit Sale and Use
- **10.5 – Credit Reporting**: Explanation of how the proposed credits will be accounted for, including the specific methods proposed for reporting and maintaining a record of all credits created, released, sold, used, or returned (Fish & G. Code, § 1856(g)(15) and (f)(18)).
 - Exhibit W – Credit Receipt
 - Exhibit X – Credit Ledger

For wildlife connectivity actions, all information shall be included separate from the traditional MCA and denoted as WCA.

- **Provide the completed scoring template (see [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Appendix B) for each proposed credit type.**
- **A written justification for the proposed wildlife connectivity action credit score based on the information listed in [Wildlife Connectivity Advance Mitigation Guidelines](#)- Section 4. If the sponsor believes a specific crediting consideration element is not applicable to the proposed wildlife**

connectivity action, the sponsor should provide justification for why it is inapplicable. If any items required as justification are provided in another section of the checklist, please indicate where within the MCA checklist the required information is provided. There is no need to submit the same information twice.