

What does it mean if a species is or isn't on the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)?

The SWAP does not provide any direct regulatory protection for SGCN. The inclusion of a species on the SGCN list means the species meets one of the criteria for inclusion within SWAP, listed below. Species on the SGCN list are eligible for [State Wildlife Grant \(SWG\)](#) funding and benefits to SGCN should be prioritized in SWG-funded projects.

The criteria for inclusion in SWAP 2025 include:

Criterion 1: Species that are listed as threatened, endangered, or candidate species in California under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA)

Criterion 2: Species for which there is a conservation concern. Species under the second criterion are identified as having either [California Species of Special Concern \(SSC\)](#) or [Fully Protected](#) designation; The SSC designation carries no formal legal protection.

Criterion 3: Species that are identified by CDFW as being highly vulnerable to climate change, experiencing population decline, and/or highly vulnerable to other stressors (e.g., pesticides, disease, habitat loss); Expert opinion and published literature were used to identify species under Criterion 3.

To learn more, visit Chapter 2, Appendix C, and Appendix I.

What's the story with plants?

While plants and algae are included in the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), plants and algae are not currently eligible for State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funding. Plants and algae are included in the SWAP because they are impacted by SWAP-identified pressures, provide habitat for SGCN, and will benefit from implementation of the SWAP conservation strategies. Should the ability to fund SWG projects for specific plant and/or algae become available in the future, the California SWAP will have already identified the plant and algal SGCN.

To learn more, visit Chapter 2, Appendix C.

Why are anadromous species in a separate chapter (Chapter 6)?

Anadromous fish begin life in the freshwater of rivers and streams, migrate to the ocean to grow into adults, and then return to freshwater to spawn. Because the geographic range of anadromous fishes may span multiple provinces, organization by province (used in Chapters 5.1 – 5.7) does not adequately address conservation needs of anadromous fish. Instead, Chapter 6 covers conservation strategies for anadromous fish that account for their movement across the landscape. Chapter 6 incorporates

both the range of habitats and the scale of movement during migratory life cycles to describe threats and strategies for anadromous species conservation.

To learn more, visit Chapter 6.

What is the value of an ecosystem approach?

CDFW uses an ecosystem and multi-species approach to conservation in SWAP 2025 that was developed for SWAP 2015. An ecosystem approach to conservation focuses on managing natural resources to ensure that species, populations, and communities of plants and animals, as well as ecosystem processes, are considered together.

An ecosystem approach benefits both game and non-game (or harvested and non-harvested) wildlife (including plants and fish), and creates co-benefits related to both ecological services (such as enhanced water quality, soil retention, and resilience to the effects of climate change) and societal values (such as open space, scenic quality, and outdoor recreation opportunities).

To learn more, visit Chapter 2.

How are the SWAP provinces defined?

At a broad scale, California was subdivided into seven provinces for analysis and conservation planning in SWAP 2025. The six terrestrial landscape/freshwater aquatic system provinces (Chapters 5.1–5.6) were described by Bailey in 1995 and are used by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The seventh marine province (Chapter 5.7) is defined by NOAA's 3-mile marine limit. Anadromous species were an exception (Chapter 6). Additionally, there is a separate appendix for Offshore Islands (Appendix G)

To learn more, visit Chapter 1 for a description of the SWAP spatial scales.

What changes did the 2025 SWAP make to the 2015 SWAP?

CDFW staff did a comprehensive review of SWAP 2015 and completed critical updates to reflect 10 years of advancement in information and data, technological advances, monitoring, and tribal partnerships on behalf of biodiversity conservation in California.

SWAP 2025 updates include:

- SGCN List – The SGCN list includes close to 1,400 species of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, mammals, and plants.
- Tribal engagement – CDFW is committed to engaging in high-value, highly leveraged conservation planning efforts with California Native American tribes. As part of this comprehensive SWAP 2025 update, the Tribal Lands Companion Plan was one of two companion plans updated.

- ▲ Updated and expanded information on pressures – CDFW focused on bolstering information regarding emerging and expanded pressures since 2015. This included new information on fire suppression and resiliency, renewable energy projects, cannabis cultivation, and emerging invasive species.
- ▲ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)/Web Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Compliance – CDFW is committed to making publicly available information accessible to all Californians. SWAP 2025 was completely revised to be compliant with WCAG 2.2 standards.

To learn more, visit Appendix B.

What is the purpose of the Companion Plans?

Many of SWAP 2025's conservation strategies include activities that are beyond CDFW's jurisdiction. In 2015, CDFW worked with partners to create the SWAP "companion plans" to provide more detailed, sector-specific collaborative approaches beyond the recommendations presented in the SWAP.

The companion plans explore solutions to the complexities of collaborative conservation actions to implement SWAP 2025. The companion plans also fulfil AFWA's emphasis on incorporating more partner engagement as a best practice in wildlife conservation planning.

Two of these companion plans were updated in 2025: the Tribal Lands Companion Plan and the Water Companion Plan.

To learn more, visit Chapter 1 and the individual Companion Plans.

Why were the Tribal and Water Management Companion Plans the only ones updated?

Due to staff capacity and our review timeline, the Tribal and Water Management Companion Plans were the only companion plans that were reviewed and updated. Most of the content remained the same for these two plans with a focus on ensuring the information was accurate.

To learn more, visit the Tribal and Water Management Companion Plans.

What is a "digital SWAP"?

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies describes a digital SWAP as a SWAP that is created, stored, and/or published in one or more electronic formats, including web-hosted SWAPs, SWAP databases, or SWAP dashboards. Many states are moving this format to allow SWAP information to be more accessible, interactive, user-friendly, and engaging. California's 2025 SWAP update will endeavor to convert and condense the 1,000+ page SWAP 2015 pdf into a SWAP 2025 website. The SWAP 2025 website will aim

to improve the display of SWAP data and allow for seamless connection between SWAP and other CDFW tools, including [BIOS](#) and [VegCAMP](#).

Please check the [SWAP website](#) for updates on the new digital SWAP.

How can conservation partners use SWAP 2025?

California SWAP is intended to serve as the blueprint for proactively conserving fish and wildlife and prevent species from becoming extinct. Conservation partners can use SWAP 2025 as a reference to identify priority species and habitats for conservation and to develop projects to implement the conservation actions in their region. Partners can also consider partnering with CDFW on federal [State Wildlife Grants](#) (SWG) by contacting [CDFW's SWG Program](#). Partners are encouraged to work with CDFW to identify shared priorities and projects that implement SWAP goals, strategies, and actions that benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and SWAP conservation targets.

How can partners share their information and data to inform future updates to or help implement California's SWAP?

Partners and the public can provide input on the draft SWAP 2025 [Draft SWAP 2025 Comment Form](#) until March 31st, 2025. Input received after this date will be considered for future updates.

CDFW will be moving to an annual update process after the completion of the SWAP 2025. CDFW will share information, once it is available, on providing input to the SWAP 2025 on the SWAP website. In the meantime, the public and partners can submit suggestions to SWAP@wildlife.ca.gov.

CDFW plans to expand its digital space to bridge the implementation gap, a critical part of making SWAP 2025 an actionable plan. CDFW looks forward to building out methods for collaboration and information sharing with the public and partners. Conservation in California will benefit from collaborations that track implementation and allow for adaptive management of SWAP projects.