

5b. American River Salmonid Rearing Habitat Planning

Restoration – Planning

WCB Request: \$333,000

Fund Source: California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), Public Resources Code Section 80100(a)(3)

Grantee: City of Sacramento (Water Forum)

Landowner: Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks

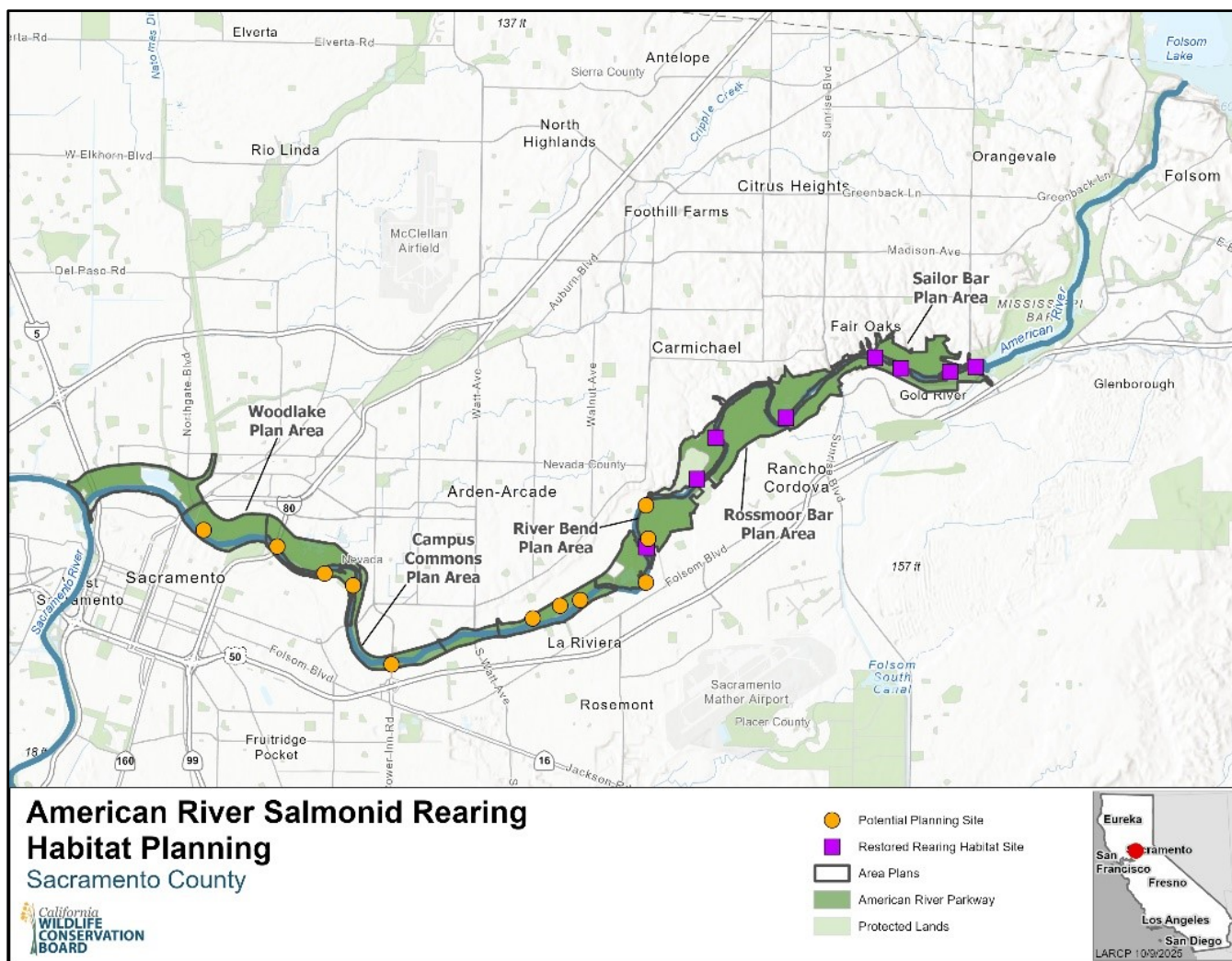
Location: Parkway-wide

Project Highlights

- Prioritization and advancement of ten juvenile salmonid rearing habitat sites to shovel-ready status.
- Habitats restored: 30 acres of riparian and off-channel refugia
- Reconnecting the American River to its floodplain, enhancing shaded-riverine aquatic habitat, and restoring ecosystem functions.
- Key species: fall-run Chinook salmon, California Central Valley (CCV) steelhead, and Pacific lamprey
- Species Plan: CCV Steelhead Recovery Plan (NMFS 2014)
- Leveraging Cutting the Green Tape to expedite environmental review and identify a permitting pathway.

Priority Metrics

- Lower American River Conservancy Program Goals: habitat and water quality
- Lower American River Natural Resources Management Plan Objectives: 1.3a, 1.4a, 1.4e
- Benefits a Justice Community: Yes, portions of the project area are within a disadvantaged community according to the DWR DAC Mapping Tool and in the top 25th percentile on CalEnviroScreen. Restoration projects will promote groundwater recharge, reduce heat effects and wildfire risk, and improve the quality of water within the Parkway.
- Tribal Partnerships: No
- Pathways to 30x30: Pathway 6, Expand and Accelerate Environmental Restoration and Stewardship; Pathway 8, Align Investments to Maximize Conservation Benefits; Pathway 10, Evaluate Conservation Outcomes and Adaptively Manage
- WCB Strategic Plan Goals and Targets B2.2, C2.3



Project Description

On the lower American River (LAR), human modifications to support flood management, gravel mining, hydropower, and water supply needs have resulted in an altered hydrology for the river. The resulting channel incision and coarsening of bed material, have lowered streambed elevations, altered depths and velocities, and reduced the magnitude and frequency of floodplain inundation important for juvenile salmonid rearing. The *American River Salmonid Rearing Habitat Planning* (Project) will advance the study, conceptual design, CEQA compliance, and a programmatic permitting strategy for up to 10 juvenile salmonid rearing habitat sites, comprising approximately 30 acres of created or enhanced habitat for native fall-run Chinook salmon and steelhead trout and restoring ecosystem and climate benefits to the American River Parkway. The Project will develop shovel-ready projects by:

- Utilizing the Ecological Floodplain Inundation Potential (EcoFIP) toolkit which includes a robust multi-parameters analysis using current LAR-specific data.
- Identifying 15-20 potential salmonid rearing habitat enhancement sites.
- Hosting three workshops with landowners to select up to 10 priority sites based on site constraints, ecological uplift, and cost.
- Developing up to 65% designs for the 10 selected sites.

- Completing baseline studies, cultural assessments, stakeholder engagement, and tribal coordination.
- Completing CEQA review and developing a permitting strategy using the state's Cutting the Green Tape initiative.

Long-Term Management

Not applicable to this Project

Project Funding

The proposed funding breakdown for the Project is as follows:

Project Task	WCB	Non-WCB Funds	Totals
Project Management	---	\$155,000	\$155,000
Site Identification and Prioritization	\$206,810	---	\$206,810
Field Studies, Landowner and Stakeholder Outreach, Designs	\$22,565	\$845,000	\$867,565
Environmental Review and Permitting Strategy	\$103,625	---	\$103,625
Total	\$333,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,333,000

Non-WCB funders include:

- Water Forum - \$155,000
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - \$845,000

Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- Liz Bellas, Director, Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks

Opposition:

- None received

Consistency with American River Parkway Plan

In accordance with Public Resources Code section 5845.5, the American River Parkway Plan Compliance Analysis will be completed for the project at the October 2025 Recreation and Parks Commission meeting.

CEQA

The Project is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies, as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions. Subject to approval of this proposal by the WCB, the appropriate Notice of Exemption will be filed with the State Clearinghouse.

State Government

- Senate: Senator Angelique Ashby, District 8; Senator Roger Niello, District 6
- Assembly: Assemblymember Maggy Krell, District 6; Assemblymember Josh Hoover, District 7

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Advisory Committee of the Lower American River Conservancy Program recommend this project as proposed and recommend WCB staff present this project the Wildlife Conservation Board for approval at a future Board meeting.