

Wetlands

Beginning in 1988, Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act requires each Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to specially address wetlands as important outdoor recreation resources. Section 303 also amends the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), authorizing wetlands as suitable replacements for LWCF lands being converted to other uses. This element includes the wetland conservation plans and processes which guide the identification of wetland conservation priorities and protection actions within California.

The LWCF Grants Manual requires that this wetlands component provide evidence of consultation with the State agency responsible for fish and wildlife resources – in this case the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG). Planning Staff solicited comments and suggestions on this Wetlands component from the chief of DFG's Comprehensive Wetland Habitat Program and received feedback that the list of wetland planning efforts below was comprehensive.

The LWCF Manual also stipulates that the wetlands component contain a listing of those wetlands types which should receive priority for acquisition, however California does not maintain a list of specific wetland types that are a high priority for conservation in California. Most of the state's work focuses in specific regions of importance carried out by one or more of the state's wetland conservation organizations. Therefore, the local and or regional wetland priorities specific to each of the wetland planning efforts described below have been included in a separate table following the descriptions below. Wetland projects submitted for LWCF consideration must be endorsed beforehand by one or more of the following organizations.

Wetland Conservation Plans and Processes

California's Wetlands

<http://ceres.ca.gov/ceres/calweb/wetlands.html>

Wetlands support ecosystems vital for the survival of many fish, aquatic life forms, birds, and plants. Wetlands improve water quality, flood control, groundwater recharge, erosion control, maintain biological diversity, and provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Only ten percent of the wetlands that existed before European settlement and only five percent of all coastal wetlands remain in California.

In response to the shrinking wetlands, government agencies have implemented legal use restrictions; acquired wetlands for protection, restoration and management; and implemented statewide wetland planning strategies and partnerships. These measures have gone far to protect the state's wetlands, but not all of them are subject to government authority, particularly those located on private lands, where recent Supreme Court decisions have reduced wetlands'

protection. California has, therefore, prioritized increasing public-private partnerships to restore and manage wetlands on private lands.

National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan

<http://www.fws.gov/policy/660fw4.html>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for preparing the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan (NWPCP), authorized by the 1986 Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (EWRA). The NWPCP's ongoing program provides decision-making guidance on acquiring important, scarce and vulnerable wetlands and establishing other non-acquisition protection measure priorities. Section 301 of the EWRA requires the Secretary of the Interior to establish, periodically review, and revise a National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan that identifies federal and state acquisition priorities for various types of wetlands and wetland interests.

The NWPCP is an ongoing program and continues to provide guidance for making decisions regarding wetland acquisition. The NWPCP applies only to wetlands that would be acquired by federal agencies and states using LWCF appropriations.

California Wetlands Conservation Policy

<http://ceres.ca.gov/wetlands/policies/governor.html>

California's Governor signed the California Wetland Conservation Policy (Executive Order W-59-93) in August 1993. The policy coordinated statewide activities for wetland preservation and protection. The Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency work together in implementing the threefold policy goals:

- Ensure no overall net loss and achieve a long-term net gain in the quantity, quality, and permanence of wetlands acreage and values in California in a manner that fosters creativity, stewardship, and respect for private property.
- Reduce procedural complexity in the administration of state and federal wetlands conservation programs.
- Encourage partnerships to make landowner incentive programs and cooperative planning efforts the primary focus of wetlands conservation and restoration.

Statewide policy initiatives, geographically based regional strategies, and an interagency wetlands task force were established to direct and coordinate the administration and implementation of the policy.

The statewide policy initiatives include a wetlands inventory, wetland planning, improved administration of existing regulatory programs, landowner incentives, mitigation banking, development and expansion of other wetlands programs, and the integration of wetlands policy and planning into other environmental and land use processes.

The California Statewide Wetlands Inventory compiles the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetland Inventory and other available data into a comprehensive wetlands data layer. This layer provides the baseline from which to monitor gains or losses to state wetlands.

California Wildlife Action Plan

<http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org/california.html>

“California Wildlife: Conservation Challenges”, prepared by California’s Department of Fish and Game (DFG), is the state’s Wildlife Action Plan, the comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy developed in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s State Wildlife Grants Program. It identifies the California wildlife species and habitats, including wetland habitats, of greatest conservation need, describes major stressors affecting the state’s native wildlife and habitats, and recommends actions to restore and conserve California’s wildlife. The plan identifies special status species of plants and animals, many of which depend on wetland habitats. Growth and development, water management conflicts, invasive species, and climate change have major consequences for these species, ecosystems, and habitats across the state. Other stressors, such as pollution, urban or agricultural runoff, recreational pressures, or human disturbance, threaten native plants and animals in parts of California. The plan recommends better integration of wildlife conservation considerations into transportation planning, local and regional planning, land-use decision-making, working with cities and counties to secure sensitive habitats and key habitat linkages, and allocating sufficient water for ecosystem uses and wildlife needs. Specific recommendations for nine wildlife regions are presented.

The California Legacy Project

<http://legacy.ca.gov/>

The California Legacy Project was a Resources Agency initiative that involved a broad range of government agencies and citizen organizations. Working collaboratively, it developed a suite of tools and maps to help Californians make the important decisions about conserving and protecting the state’s working lands and natural resources. The project ended in 2004.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan
<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/>

In California, the waterfowl habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement processes set in motion by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) and other partnerships play key roles in setting wetland conservation priorities. Joint ventures and other important regional wetland conservation efforts in California include:

- Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project <http://www.scwrp.org/>
The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (SCWRP) is a broad-based partnership of public agencies, non-profits, scientists, and local communities working cooperatively to acquire and restore rivers, streams, and wetlands in coastal Southern California. Its goal is to accelerate the pace, extent, and effectiveness of coastal wetland restoration through developing and implementing a regional prioritization plan for the acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of Southern California's coastal wetlands and watersheds. The SCWRP's geographic scope is from Santa Barbara County's Point Conception to the Mexican border. SCWRP partners work together to identify wetland acquisition and restoration priorities, prepare plans for these priority sites, pool funds to undertake these projects, implement priority plans, and oversee post-project maintenance and monitoring. Among recent SCWRP accomplishments is the restoration of 570-acre Bolsa Chica, a coastal estuary adjacent to Bolsa Chica State Beach.

- San Francisco Bay Joint Venture <http://www.sfbayjv.org/> The San Francisco Bay Estuary is the nation's second largest and perhaps most biologically significant estuary on the Pacific coast. The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV) brings together public and private agencies, conservation groups, development interests, and others to restore wetlands and wildlife habitat in San Francisco Bay watersheds and along the Pacific coasts of San Mateo, Marin, and Sonoma counties. The goal of the SFBJV is to protect, restore, increase, and enhance all types of wetlands, riparian habitat, and associated uplands throughout the San Francisco Bay region to benefit birds, fish, and other wildlife.

SFBJV is accelerating the ambitious effort to restore San Francisco Bay, including high profile acquisitions and restorations of salt ponds and bayland pastures. Since 1996, SFBJV partners have protected, restored, or enhanced over 62,000 acres of wetlands, lakes, creeks, and adjacent uplands in the Bay area.

- Central Valley Joint Venture <http://centralvalleyjointventure.org> The Central Valley Joint Venture (CVJV) brings together conservation organizations, public agencies, private landowners, and other partners interested in the conservation of Central Valley bird habitat. The mission of the CVJV is to

“work collaboratively through diverse partnerships to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and associated habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, water birds, and riparian songbirds, in accordance with conservation actions identified in the Joint Venture’s Implementation Plan.” The Plan was rewritten and updated in 2006, expanding it from its original focus on waterfowl to include six bird groups: wintering waterfowl, breeding waterfowl, non-breeding shorebirds, breeding shorebirds, water birds, and breeding riparian songbirds.

- The Inland Wetlands Conservation Program (IWCP) http://www.wcb.ca.gov/Pages/inland_wetlands_conservation_program.html was created within the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) by legislation in 1990, to carry out the programs of the CVJV by awarding grants to nonprofit organizations, local governmental agencies, and state departments to restore and enhance wetlands.

Since 1992, the CVJV partners have protected, restored, and enhanced over 520,000 acres of habitat. For example, in 2008, Ducks Unlimited Inc., a CVJV partner, began its American and Sutter Basins Wetlands Project, which will protect, restore, or enhance 3,737 acres of wetlands, riparian forests, and associated uplands.

- Riparian Habitat Joint Venture <http://www.rhjb.org/> California Partners in Flight initiated the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture (RHJV) project in 1994. The vision of the RHJV is to restore, enhance, and protect a network of functioning riparian habitat across California to support the long-term viability of land birds and other species. A wide variety of other species of plants and animals will benefit through the protection of forests along the rivers, streams, and lakes.

RHJV members’ projects contribute significantly to restoration of riparian habitats, especially in the Central Valley. For example, River Partners, an RHJV partner, has restored over 6,000 acres of riparian habitat along the major rivers of California since 1998, and recently planted its millionth tree.

- Pacific Coast Joint Venture <http://www.pcjb.org/> The Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV) was established in 1991. The PCJV works primarily in 18 focus areas from northern California to British Columbia, Alaska, and Hawaii. The focus areas in northwestern California include key habitats for water birds at the Eel River Delta, Humboldt Bay, and Lakes Earl and Tolowa.
- Intermountain West Joint Venture <http://www.iwjb.org/> The Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) is a public/private partnership dedicated to the conservation of bird habitat in parts of 11 western states stretching from Canada to Mexico, including northeastern California. The mission of IWJV is to facilitate the long-term conservation of key avian habitat including planning,

funding, and developing habitat projects that benefit all biological components of Intermountain ecosystems.

The joint venture's implementation plan was rewritten in 2006. Important bird habitats it identifies in California include Ash Creek, Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, Sierra Valley, the Klamath Basin, Eagle Lake, Goose Lake, Lake Almanor, Honey Lake, and Mono Lake.

- CALFED Bay Delta Program <http://calwater.ca.gov/index.aspx> The San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta formed by California's two largest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin, is a drinking water source for millions of Californians and home to hundreds of plant and animal species. It supports the bulk of the state's commercial salmon industry and irrigates much of California's farmland. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program was formed in 1995 to develop and implement a 30-year plan to restore the ecological health of the Bay and Delta, improve water supply reliability and water quality, and stabilize the Delta's foundation of levee systems. The Program is a collaboration between numerous state and federal agencies with a mission to improve California's water supply and the ecological health of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

As part of its implementation of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, the Department of Fish and Game is developing the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan. <http://resources.ca.gov/bdcp/>. The goal of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) is to help recover endangered and sensitive species and their habitats in the Delta in a way that also will provide for sufficient and reliable water supplies. The Plan is scheduled to be completed in mid 2010. The BDCP will:

- Identify and implement conservation strategies to improve the overall ecological health of the Delta
 - Identify and implement ecologically friendly ways to move fresh water through and/or around the Delta
 - Address toxic pollutants, invasive species, and impairments to water quality
 - Provide a framework to implement the plan over time
- Suisun Marsh Protection Plan http://www.bcdc.ca.gov/pdf/planning/plans/suisun_marsh_plan.pdf Suisun Marsh comprises approximately 85,000 acres of tidal marsh, managed wetlands, and waterways between San Francisco Bay and the Delta. It includes more than ten percent of California's remaining wetlands. Suisun Marsh plays an important role in providing wintering habitat for waterfowl, supports a diversity of plant communities, and provides habitats for a variety of fish and wildlife, including several rare and endangered species.

Conservation of Suisun Marsh is governed by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Suisun Marsh Protection Plan and by the Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement between agencies with responsibilities in the marsh. The objectives of the Suisun Marsh Plan are to preserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the Suisun Marsh aquatic and wildlife habitats and to assure retention of upland areas adjacent to the Marsh in uses compatible with its protection.

In recent years, Suisun's tidal marshes were restored at Hill Slough and the Blacklock site, and other restorations are being planned. A new Suisun Marsh Habitat Management, Preservation, and Restoration Plan is being prepared to carry out the Suisun Marsh Preservation Agreement and update the Suisun Marsh Protection Plan.

Wetland Priorities for Acquisition and Conservation

California Wildlife Action Plan

<http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org/california.html>

Although species of concern are listed in the Wildlife Action Plan's Wildlife Species Matrix, the Department of Fish and Game does not have information on specific wetland types that are a high priority for conservation in California.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/>

This Plan outlines its ultimate objectives in terms of the abundance and distribution of North American waterfowl populations. Its goal is to meet population objectives through the wise application of local or regional-scale habitat conservation actions guided by regional habitat conservation objectives. To accomplish this, Plan partners strive to quantitatively link regional waterfowl habitat objectives with continental waterfowl population objectives. Empirical and conceptual biological models provide means to link population and habitat objectives (see Appendix A).

The table below is a guide to California's wetland conservation organizations and their wetland priorities. Wetland projects submitted for LWCF consideration must be endorsed by one of the organizations on the following page.

California's Wetland Conservation Organizations	Ecological Areas of Focus	Organizational Objectives
Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project	Tidal wetland ecosystems, stream corridors, riparian areas	Acquire privately-owned tidal wetland ecosystems
		Develop comprehensive restoration plans
		Plan and implement restoration
		Acquire private parcels in tidal wetland ecosystems that are primarily publicly owned
		Develop restoration plans for tidal wetland ecosystems
		Develop plan and implement enhancement
		Acquire large areas of wetland or riparian habitat or floodplain or areas that add to an existing preserve of contiguous wetland habitat or stream corridor
		Provide focused assessment of watershed functioning, stressors, priorities, and identification of specific projects
		Plan and implement priority projects to preserve or restore ecological functioning of stream corridors as identified in watershed assessment or planning document. This can include urban stream restoration projects that are a priority in the watershed
		Acquire smaller wetland areas, riparian habitat or floodplain not contiguous with an existing preserve
		Develop comprehensive watershed management plans
		Plan and implement restoration projects to restore ecological functioning of stream corridors that are not part of a broader watershed planning/management effort
San Francisco Bay Joint Venture	Bay habitats, seasonal wetlands, creeks and lakes	Secure, restore, and improve wetlands, riparian habitat, and associated uplands by applying incentives and using non-regulatory techniques
		Strengthen, promote new funding sources
		Improve habitat management on public and private lands through cooperative agreements and incentives
		Support monitoring and evaluation of habitat restoration projects, research to improve future restoration projects.
Central Valley Joint Venture	Seasonal, permanent and semi-permanent wetlands, riparian areas, rice and agricultural cropland	Protect in perpetuity existing wetland habitats.
		Secure adequate power and water supplies for wetland management.
		Restore and protect in perpetuity former wetlands.
		Enhance all existing wetlands.
		Enhance waterfowl habitat on agricultural lands.
		Project, enhance or restore habitat and water needs of six bird groups including: wintering waterfowl; breeding waterfowl; wintering shorebirds; breeding shorebirds; waterbirds; and riparian songbirds.

California's Wetland Conservation Organizations	Ecological Areas of Focus	Organizational Objectives
Riparian Habitat Joint Venture	Riparian areas	Identify and develop technical information based on sound science for a strategic approach to conserving and restoring riparian areas in California.
		Promote and support riparian conservation on the ground by providing guidance, technical assistance and a forum for collaboration.
		Develop and influence riparian policies through outreach and education.
Pacific Coast Joint Venture	Tidal/coastal wetland ecosystems, riparian areas, former agricultural cropland	Ensure the long-term maintenance of habitat values and natural ecological processes in coastal wetland ecosystems.
Intermountain West Joint Venture	Aspen woodland, grassland, dry forest, sagebrush steppe, riparian areas, aquatic-wetland, agricultural cropland	Facilitate the long-term conservation of key avian habitat including planning, funding, and developing habitat projects that benefit all biological components of Intermountain ecosystems
		To protect 1.5 million public and private acres through facilitation of conservation easements, management agreements, incentive programs, and stewardship programs.
		To restore and enhance 1 million acres of wetland habitat through direct habitat improvement programs.
		To enhance all bird habitat through direct habitat improvement programs, public education, and cooperation with partners.
		Protect, restore, enhance and/or maintain key Intermountain bird populations and their habitats on a variety of land ownerships.
		Facilitate partnerships which are voluntary and non-regulatory for private and other landowners at various scales.
		Work across political boundaries to assist with the formation of nontraditional cooperative efforts.
		Maintain a biological planning effort which is based on the best science available, employs an adaptive approach, and guides a practical approach to project development.
		Foster a monitoring and evaluation program that centers on program evaluation, project tracking, and applied science needs.

California's Wetland Conservation Organizations	Ecological Areas of Focus	Organizational Objectives
CalFed Delta-Bay Program	Stream corridors, riparian areas, agricultural cropland, tidal wetland ecosystems	To improve California's water supply and the ecological health of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.
		To improve and increase aquatic and terrestrial habitats and improve ecological functions in the Bay-Delta to support sustainable populations of diverse and valuable plant and animal species.
		To provide financial and technical assistance for watershed activities that help achieve the mission and objectives of CALFED, and to promote collaboration and integration among community-based watershed efforts.
		Through seminars train graduates equipped with the skills and technology transfer network to make significant improvements in the management of key California watersheds
		Address toxic pollutants, invasive species, and impairments to water quality
Suisun Marsh Plan of Protection	Riparian areas, tidal wetland ecosystems	Preserve and enhance managed seasonal wetlands
		Implement a comprehensive level protection/improvement program
		Protect ecosystem and drinking water quality, while restoring habitat for tidal marsh-dependent sensitive species