



SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION STRATEGY STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP COMMENTS

The North Bay Baylands Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) held its Public Draft Review Meeting on August 10, 2023. The primary objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Provide an overview of the public draft RCIS document.
2. Answer questions regarding the document and process for submitting public comments.

On July 10, 2023, the public draft of the North Bay Baylands RCIS was released and posted on CDFW's website:

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation/RCIS>

Public comments can be submitted by emailing rcis@wildlife.ca.gov and info@baylandrcis.org by **5 p.m. on September 8, 2023**¹.

During the meeting, the project team presented slides providing a project update (Attachment 1). Attachment 2 provides a draft letter template that organizations and individuals can optionally use to submit their comments.

RCIS Review Presentation

Slides (Attachment 1) were reviewed as an overview of the North Bay Baylands RCIS. Currently, the document is available for public comment. After public and CDFW substantive comments are addressed, it will be submitted for CDFW's approval, anticipated in early 2024.

The RCIS document was reviewed, including an overview of its five chapters and appendices. Key document changes in response to feedback received at prior meetings were highlighted.

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Regional Conditions

¹ During the meeting, the deadline was incorrectly reported as September 9th. Per CDFW, comments should be submitted by 5p.m. on Friday, September 8th. This correction has been noted in the attached slides as well.



- Baseline Vegetation map was updated based on more current baylands GIS data. A revised baylands change map is expected to be released by SFEI later this year.
- Chapter 3: Conservation Elements Selection:
 - Two focal species, five other conservation elements, six non-focal species, and five associated co-benefit elements have been added since the initial draft conservation elements list in response to feedback received to date.
- Chapter 4: Conservation Strategy
 - Species habitat maps and quantitative conservation targets were updated based on the revised vegetation map.
- Chapter 5: Implementation and Adaptive Management
- Appendices. Highlighted:
 - Appendix B: Public Outreach: Will be updated to summarize comments from the public review process.
 - Appendix C: Pressures and Stressors: Includes Climate Vulnerability Assessment for conservation elements
 - Appendix D: Green print and Conservation Land Network Reports: These externally-produced reports of the RCIS area summarize data from interactive online databases.
 - Appendix G: Existing Plans and Studies: Summarizes plans and studies that are published and relevant to the RCIS. Also, includes consistency review with HCPs and Recovery Plans as required by the RCIS Program.
 - Appendix J. Non-focal species: Identifies the actions in the RCIS that benefit non-focal and associated species and habitats.

Additionally, the public review process was summarized. If desired, commenters are encouraged to submit comments using the supplied template. If not following the template, commenters are asked to include their name, organization and cite the page and section # for each comment. Comments will be accepted for all sections of the document but are particularly encouraged for the actions, priorities, and maps in Chapter 4. Comments should be submitted to rcis@wildlife.ca.gov and info@baylandrcis.org by 5 PM September 8, 2023¹.



Question and Answer

A summary of questions and comments received (orally or in the chat) during the question and answer period is provided below.

- A question was raised as to whether and how historical distribution of species was incorporated in the species mapping and referenced for restoration potential.
 - A response was provided that the maps provide a current snapshot of resources, not a prediction for the future. A range map is included, which may show a larger distribution than the current populations and serve to indicate where expansion can occur if suitable habitat is restored or created.
- One commenter noted that a number of corrections for Marin County projects will be submitted.
 - The commenter was encouraged to submit comments.
- Several commenters noted a concern over lack of avian species in the document. Suggested that the document needs to include more shorebirds or waterbirds in focal species to highlight their importance for the region.
 - A response was provided that waterfowl, shorebirds, and other avian species are included as co-benefitted species whose conservation would be achieved by actions that benefit other specified conservation elements, such as Tidal Habitats or Shallow Bay. Attendees were encouraged to review the actions identified for waterfowl and shorebirds noted in Appendix J and submit feedback on any actions or priorities that they believe are missing and inadequately covered for these important species.
- One commenter brought up the lack of analysis or criteria over the State's Wetland policy, which could allow mitigation credits/enhancement that would harm wetlands without requirement to replace wetland habitats. There was also indication that the document should require CEQA review by enabling impacting projects.
 - The presenter clarified that the RCIS is a voluntary guidance document. It is not a project, nor does it authorize projects. Negotiation of mitigation will occur through a project's permitting phase. For more information on CDFW's Mitigation Crediting



Agreement process, please refer to their website². The RCIS is a conservation snapshot of the region and impact agnostic.

- Another commenter questioned the evidence in the scientific peer reviewed literature that the mitigation actions are equivalent to the original lands that will be impacted by projects.
 - The presenter referenced the response above: that the RCIS a voluntary, conservation snapshot and does not authorize projects or mitigation. The commenter further clarified that scientific literature does not exist.
- Similarly, there was a chat comment noting that because an RCIS is to benefit infrastructure impact mitigation, any species that are not part of RCIS may benefit from not being included. In a similar way that species that are not targeted in an HCP are not covered for their take under take permits.
 - This comment was not directly addressed during the meeting, but the responses above apply. The RCIS is a voluntary guidance document describing current conservation values in a region; it differs from an HCP as it is not a regulatory pathway for take authorization.
- One commenter noted that the prioritization of working lands could conflict with other habitat restoration goals in the document.
 - A response was provided that working lands must be considered as part of the RCIS Program. The commenter was encouraged to provide a specific comment on the potential conflict and language requiring alteration.
- One commenter noted in the chat that the document doesn't reflect CDFW's most recent trapping data (presumed in reference to salt marsh harvest mouse).
- A question was raised about the RCIS boundary and how it was determined.
 - A response was provided that the boundary was based on sea level rise scenario plus a one-mile buffer.

²<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation/MCAs>
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/planning/regional-conservation>



Closing Comments

Shared as part of closing comments:

- Appreciation of effort and time taken to review document. Expressed the importance of feedback and comments that can be used to revise the document.
- Reminder that comments are welcome by September 8¹. Please send to: rcis@wildlife.ca.gov, and info@baylandrcis.org

Attachments

Attachment 1. August 10 North Bay Baylands RCIS Public Draft Review Presentation

Attachment 2. Public Comment Template



Attachment 1: August 10 North Bay Baylands RCIS Public Draft Review Presentation



Attachment 2: Public Comment Template