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, 2023[1].

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 website[2]. 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 8[1]. 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

North Bay Baylands
Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

Public Draft Review Meeting – August 9, 2023

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Current Status and Timeline
- RCIS Document Review
  - Overall structure
  - Incorporation of feedback to-date
- Public Review Process
  - Submit written comments to:
    - rcis@wildlife.ca.gov AND
    - info@baylandsrics.org
  - Feedback Focus Request
- Questions?

2023-2024 Schedule

Refresher: Why Prepare an RCIS?

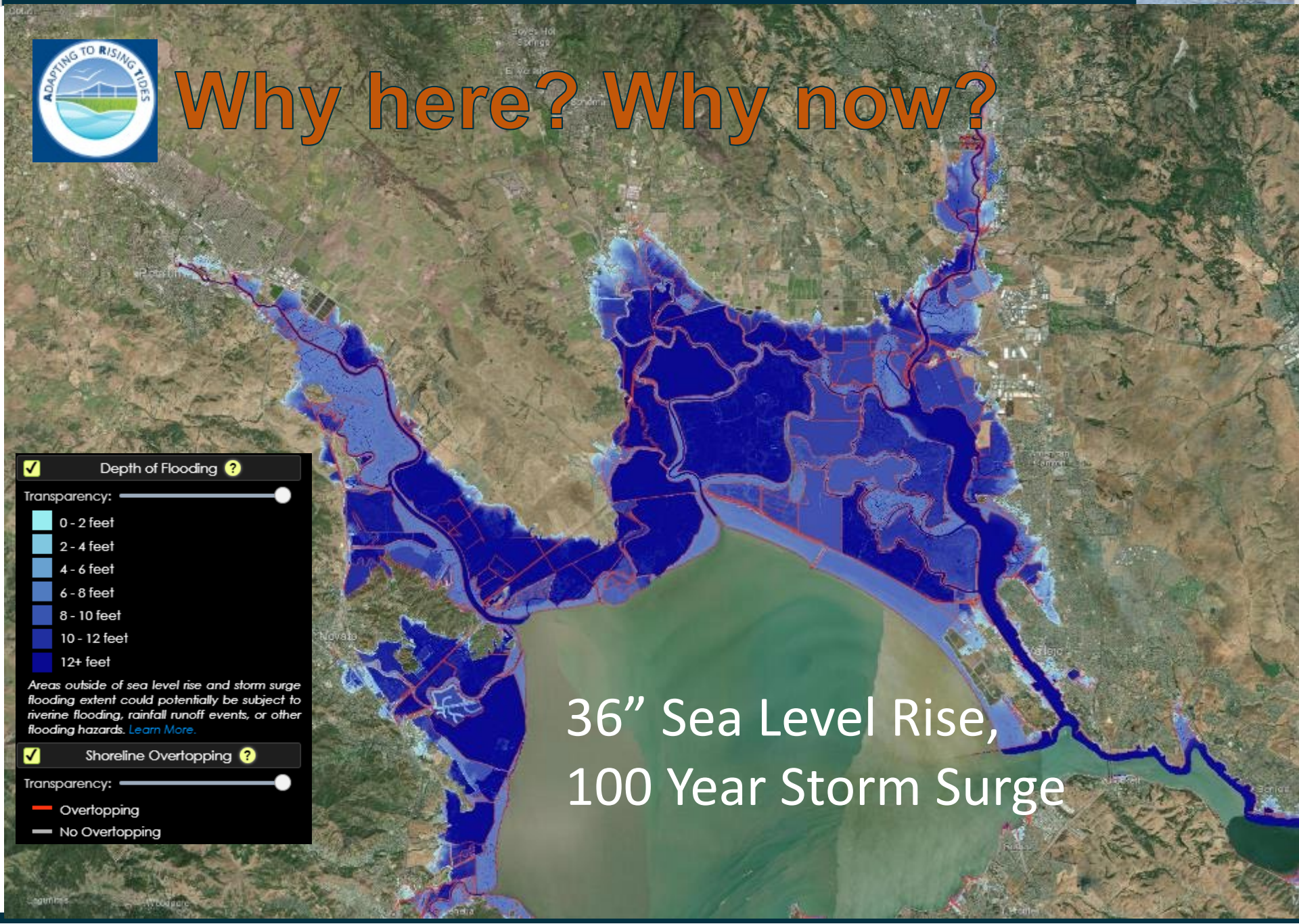
To Guide Action

To Improve Outcomes

To Enable Mitigation Credit Agreements

Photo: Camp 4, R. Janover, SLT

Why here? Why now?



North Bay RCIS Geographic Extent

- Richmond-San Rafael Bridge to Carquinez Bridge
- 10.2’ sea level rise + 100 year storm surge scenario + 1 mile buffer

Key RCIS Terms

	Has Specific Conservation Strategy	Associated with Another CE Strategy	Eligible for Mitigation Credit Agreement	Defined in CDFW RCIS Program
Conservation Elements				
Focal Species	✓	?	✓	✓
Other Conservation Elements	✓	?	✓	✓
Non-Focal Species		✓	✓	✓
Co-benefitted Natural Resources		✓		

- Conservation Strategy
  - Collection of goals, objectives, actions, and priorities identified in the RCIS to benefit a conservation element
- Mitigation Credit Agreement
  - Agreement between CDFW and an entity that identifies the type and number of credits an entity will receive by implementing one or more RCIS actions.

North Bay Baylands RCIS Outline

1. RCIS Overview
2. Regional Conditions
3. Conservation Elements Selection and Overview
4. Conservation Strategy
5. RCIS Implementation and Adaptive Management

Appendices

Chapter 1: Overview

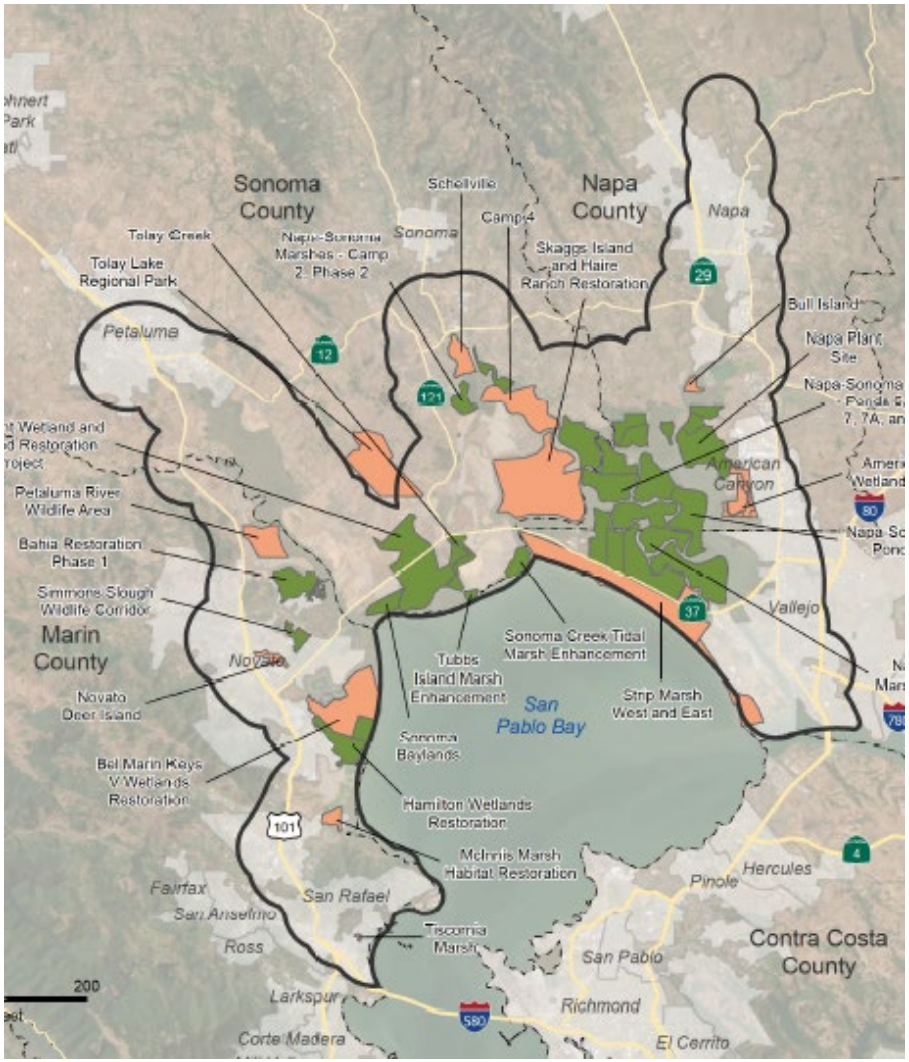
- Summarizes an RCIS
- Lays out document structure
  - Table 1-1 crosswalk to document sections based on objective
- Identifies Purpose and Agency Sponsor
- Summarizes Outreach

TABLE 1-1: HOW TO USE THE NORTH BAY BAYLANDS REGIONAL CONSERVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY, BY OBJECTIVE TYPE

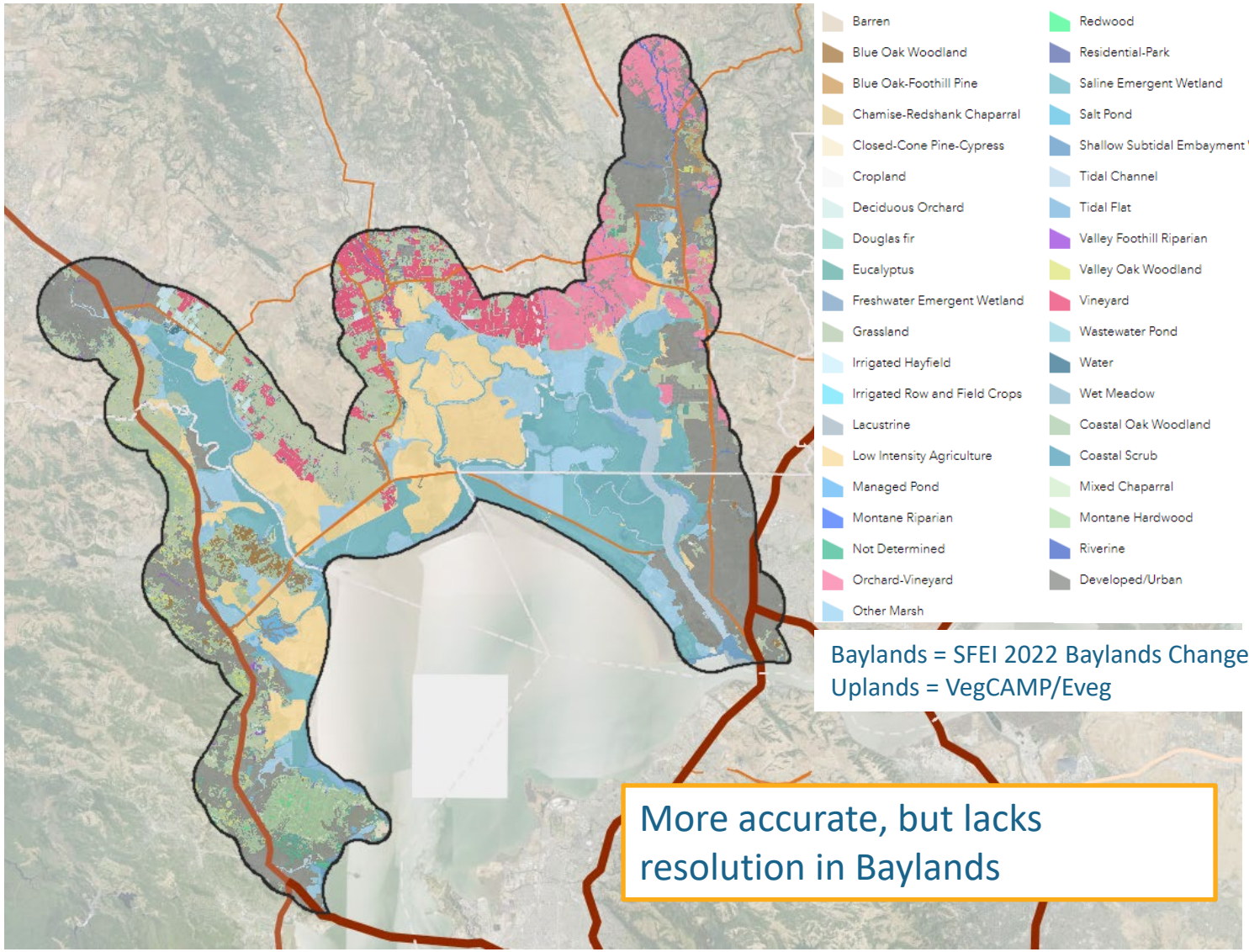
Objective Type	Potential Organizations	How to Use the RCIS	Relevant RCIS Section
Strategically acquire property for conservation purposes.	• Land trusts • Entities acquiring land for mitigation purposes	• Review figures and data portal[2] to see locations with overlapping habitat values. • Review conservation strategies for regional land acquisition priorities.	Section 2.3: Natural Communities, Biodiversity, and Connectivity Section 2.6: Land Conservation Chapter 4: Conservation Strategy
Improve effectiveness of restoration and enhancement actions.	• Land managers • Restoration project proponents	• Review climate resiliency actions and incorporate them into project designs. • Review and understand existing conditions and restoration planning efforts already underway in the region. • Align restoration project design elements with conservation element goals and objectives. • Ensure project alignment with other regional plans by reviewing the regional planning overview.	Chapter 2: Regional Conditions Chapter 4: Conservation Strategy Section 2.4: Major Infrastructure Section 2.7: Existing Conservation Plans, Studies, Policies, and Compliance Appendix G: Existing Plans and Studies
Avoid impacts on areas with high conservation value.	• Regulatory agencies • Project proponents	• Review figures and data portal for locations with overlapping habitat values. • Review Priority Conservation Areas and conservation strategies that identify high-value areas for conservation.	Section 2.3: Natural Communities, Biodiversity, and Connectivity Section 2.6: Land Conservation
Obtain funding for restoration, enhancement, stewardship, or acquisition projects.	• Landowners, including land trusts, governments, and private owners	• Demonstrate the alignment of proposed projects with RCIS actions. • Include Priority Conservation Areas and actions in funding requests.	Chapter 4: Conservation Strategy

Chapter 2: Regional Conditions

- General region description and unique factors
- RCIS boundary
- History
- Communities and demographics
- Natural communities, biodiversity and connectivity
- Major Infrastructure
- Land use
- Conservation and restoration
- Compliance with existing plans, studies, and policies
- Pressures and Stressors



Revised Vegetation Map



Baylands = SFEI 2022 Baylands Change Map
Uplands = VegCAMP/Eveg

More accurate, but lacks resolution in Baylands

Chapter 3. Conservation Elements Selection

- Selection Methodology
- Focal Species
- Other Conservation Elements
- Non-Focal Species
- Associated Elements

Common Name	Scientific Name	Special Status	Natural Community (modified from CWHR types)	Additional Justification for Inclusion (beyond Special Status)
Western bumble bee	*Bombus occidentalis*	State Candidate Endangered	• Annual Grassland • Perennial Grassland	Umbrella species for grasslands. SWAP species. Taxonomic representative.
Green sturgeon–southern DPS	*Acipenser medirostris*	Federally Threatened	• Estuarine • Marine • Riverine • Tidal Channel • Valley Foothill Riparian	Unique estuarine and riparian lifestyle. SWAP species.
Steelhead–central California coast DPS	*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*	Federally Threatened	• Estuarine • Marine • Riverine • Tidal Channel • Valley Foothill Riparian	Steeply declining populations. Climate vulnerable. SWAP species. Umbrella species.
Chinook salmon–Central Valley fall/late fall-run ESU*	*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha* (population 13)	Species of Special Concern	• Estuarine • Marine • Tidal Channel • Riverine	The RCIS area acts as a migration route and important juvenile rearing habitat.

All Species (CNDDB, CNPS, USFWS, NMFS)
- Filter 1:
  - Sufficient data to develop a conservation strategy

→ **Species with sufficient data**
- Filter 2:
  - Protection status
  - Taxonomic representation

→ **Protected species or taxonomic representatives**
- Filter 3:
  - Range
  - Non-focal species: represented by another species or conservation element on the list

→ **Initial Draft list**
- Revised based on Technical Working Group and stakeholder input

Revised Focal Species/Conservation Elements

Focal Species	Conservation Elements	Non-focal Species	**Associated Elements**
• Western bumble bee	• Habitat Connectivity	• **Callippe silverspot**	• **Waterfowl**
• Green sturgeon	• Working lands/Agricultural baylands	• **Crotch bumble bee**	• **Shorebirds**
• CCC steelhead	• Tidal Habitats	• Western ridged mussel	• **Grasslands**
• Chinook salmon	• **Bat Habitat**	• CA freshwater shrimp	• **Diked wetlands**
• **California red-legged frog**	• **Riparian Corridors**	• Delta smelt	• **Rookeries**
• Western pond turtle	• **Freshwater Wetlands**	• Longfin smelt	
• **Burrowing owl**	• **Shallow Bay**	• Sacramento splittail	
• CA black rail	• **Hydrological Processes**	• **Pallid bat**	
• CA Ridgway's rail		• **Townsend's big-eared bat**	
• Salt marsh harvest mouse		• **Tri-color blackbird**	
• Marin western flax		• Swainson's hawk	
		• **Soft bird's beak**	
		• Saltmarsh common yellowthroat	
		• San Pablo song sparrow	

Changes **in Bold**

Chapter 4: Conservation Strategy

- Chapter guide
- Development process and definitions
- Quantitative conservation targets
- Data sources
- Regional conservation strategies
- Conservation strategies for each Conservation Element

RCIS Vegetation Communities	Total Acres	% Protected	Target %	Target Acreage
Agriculture	38,351.1	1%	50%	19,175.5
Barren	317.2	6%	50%	158.6
Blue Oak-Foothill Pin	352.0	4%	50%	176
Blue Oak Woodland	905.7	30%	50%	452.9
Chamise-Redshank Chaparral	65.7	34%	50%	32.9
Coastal Oak Woodland	7,162.1	40%	50%	3,581.1
Coastal Scrub	550.3	41%	50%	275.1
Eucalyptus	638.3	11%	50%	319.2
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	599.7	57%	90%	539.7
Grassland	22,045.3	12%	50%	11,022.6
Lacustrine	647.7	14%	50%	323.8
Managed Pond	500.7	40%	50%	250.4
Mixed Chaparral	30.0	35%	50%	14.9
Montane Hardwood	1,116.8	52%	90%	287.8
Montane Riparian	575.6	4%	50%	287.8
Other Marsh	14,095.7	68%	90%	12,668.1
Redwood	53.0	80%	90%	47.7
Riverine	1.2	2%	50%	0.6
Saline Emergent Wetland	26,200.9	78%	90%	23,580.8
Salt Pond	46.1	29%	50%	23.1
Shallow Subtidal Embayment	723.8	28%	50%	361.9
Tidal Channel	4,421.4	7%	50%	2,210.7
Tidal Flat	2,079.7	43%	50%	1,039.8
Valley Foothill Riparian	412.9	10%	50%	206.5
Valley Oak Woodland	1,457.3	20%	50%	728.6
Wastewater Pond	79.4	0%	50%	38.7
Water	227.6	3%	50%	113.8
Wet Meadow	15.8	70%	90%	14.3

Chapter 4: Conservation Strategy

Goal – desired outcome

Objective – achieved to advance the goal

Action – specific implementation steps

Priorities (for Conservation Elements) – actions identified based on their importance for benefiting conservation

Prioritization Guidelines – principles to integrate when feasible

Regional Landscape

Goal: Sustain a functioning landscape that supports a mosaic of native species and habitats, intact ecological services and processes, resiliency to climate change stressors, and healthy ecosystem functions in the RCIS area.

RL Objective 1.1: Protect land that provides existing habitat and ecosystem values; transitional habitat and ecosystem processes; and land that may provide habitat and ecosystem function in the future because of landscape changes.

RL Objective 1.2: Restore and enhance land to improve ecological function and habitat value.

RL Objective 1.3: Improve understanding of the distribution, abundance, and condition of species and communities in the landscape.

- Water Quality
- Anadromous Fish
- Herpetofauna
- Tidal Communities

Example: Regional Tidal Communities

TIDE Goal: Promote persistence of tidal species and their habitats occurring in the RCIS area through enhancement, and restoration of complete tidal communities with interconnected habitat types and the physical processes that connect them.

TIDE Objective 1.1: Enhance suitable habitat for tidal wetland-associated species. Measure progress toward achieving this objective by the number of acres of tidal habitat enhanced and occupied by focal/non-focal species.

TIDE Objective 1.2: Restore historical, existing, and potentially restorable tidal habitats. Measure progress toward achieving this objective by the number of acres of tidal habitat and adjacent/associated acres restored and/or occupied by focal/non-focal species.

Actions Associated with TIDE Goal and Objectives	Pressures
TIDE 1.1.8: Manage perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) populations and other Refuge-prioritized invasive species (e.g., invasive Spartina sp.) using the San Pablo Bay NWR pepperweed control plan as a template for implementation (USFWS 2019a).	• Invasive Species and Pathogens • Land Conversion and Development
TIDE 1.2.1: When planning for tidal marsh restoration, include a variety of depths and focus on connecting/restoring large blocks of suitable habitat (USFWS 2013). Focus on the broad areas of tidal marsh along the shore of San Pablo Bay, the widest marshes in the Napa-Sonoma Marsh, and the baylands of Petaluma River, Sonoma Creek, and Novato Creek (Goals Project 2015).	• Climate Change • Land Conversion and Development • Disrupted Natural Hydrology and Sediment Supply Pathways
TIDE 1.2.6: Work with adjacent landowners to conserve valleys, plains, and areas with small intermittent and/or seasonal creeks with low-intensity agriculture adjacent to tidal areas for future marsh and transition zone migration (Goals Project 2015).	• Livestock, Farming and Ranching • Climate Change • Land Conversion and Development • Disrupted Natural Hydrology and Sediment Supply Pathways

Example: Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse

Pressures:

Priorities:

- Manage tidal marsh vegetation and adjacent refugia

Chapter 5: Implementation and Adaptive Management

- RCIS Approval and Implementation Process
- Advance Mitigation Planning
- Adaptive Management and Monitoring Program
- RCIS Maintenance and Responsibilities

If impacts are in Solano County, consider applicability and seek coverage under the Solano Multispecies HCP.

Purchase available credit from an existing:

- Mitigation/ conservation bank;
- Mitigation credit agreement; or
- In-lieu fee program.

See Chapter 2, Regional Conditions.

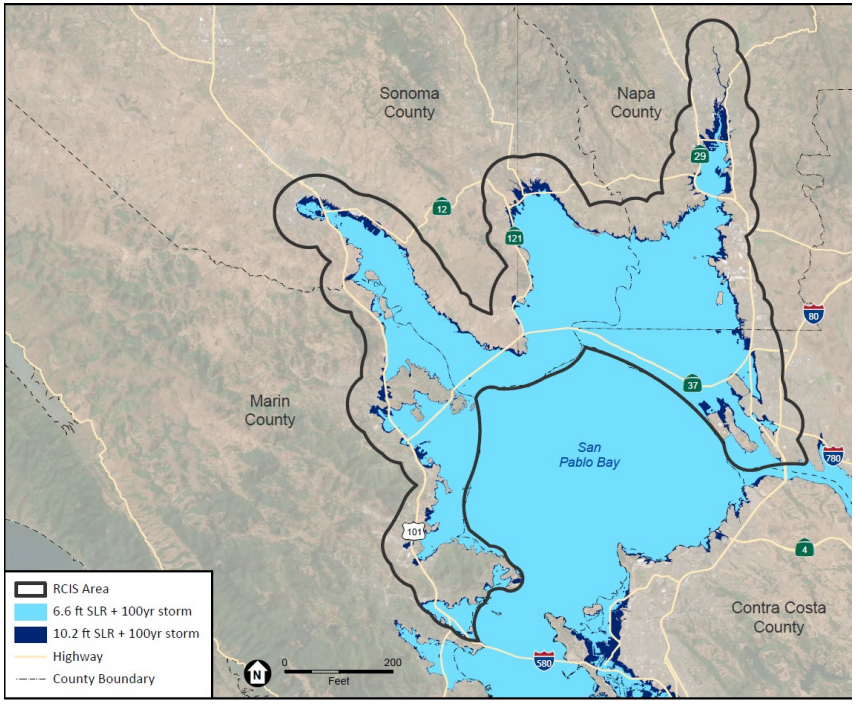
Establish and then purchase credit from:

- A mitigation credit agreement consistent with this RCIS;
- A mitigation bank; or
- An in-lieu fee program.

Develop a permittee-responsible advance mitigation solution consistent with regional plans.

Appendices

A. Sponsorship Letter
B. Public Outreach and Comments
C. Pressures and Stressors
D. Greenprint and Conservation Land Network Reports
E. Vegetation Crosswalk
F. Water Districts
G. Existing Plans and Studies
H. Policies
I. Evaluation Matrix
J. Non-focal Species



Pressure	Water Pollutants and Discharges	Disrupted Natural Hydrology and Sediment Supply Pathways	Livestock, Farming, and Ranching
Western Bumble Bee			✓
Green Sturgeon	✓	✓	✓
Salmonids	✓	✓	✓
California Red-Legged Frog	✓	✓	✓
Western Pond Turtle	✓	✓	
Burrowing Owl			✓
California Black Rail	✓	✓	
California Ridgway's Rail	✓	✓	
Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse	✓	✓	
Marin Western Flax			✓
Bat Habitat			✓
Riparian Corridors	✓	✓	✓
Freshwater Wetlands	✓	✓	
Tidal Habitats	✓	✓	
Shallow Bay	✓	✓	
Working Lands	✓	✓	
Hydrological Processes	✓	✓	✓

Public Review Process

Final Draft (early 2024)

CDFW Substantive Review (by December 1, 2023)

Public Review Comments (by September ~~9~~, 2023)

Errata: September 8, 5PM

Written Comments with:

- Name/Organization
- Page #/Section #
- (Template Available

Send to:

- rcis@wildlife.ca.gov AND
- info@baylandsrics.org

Feedback Focus Request: Chapter 4

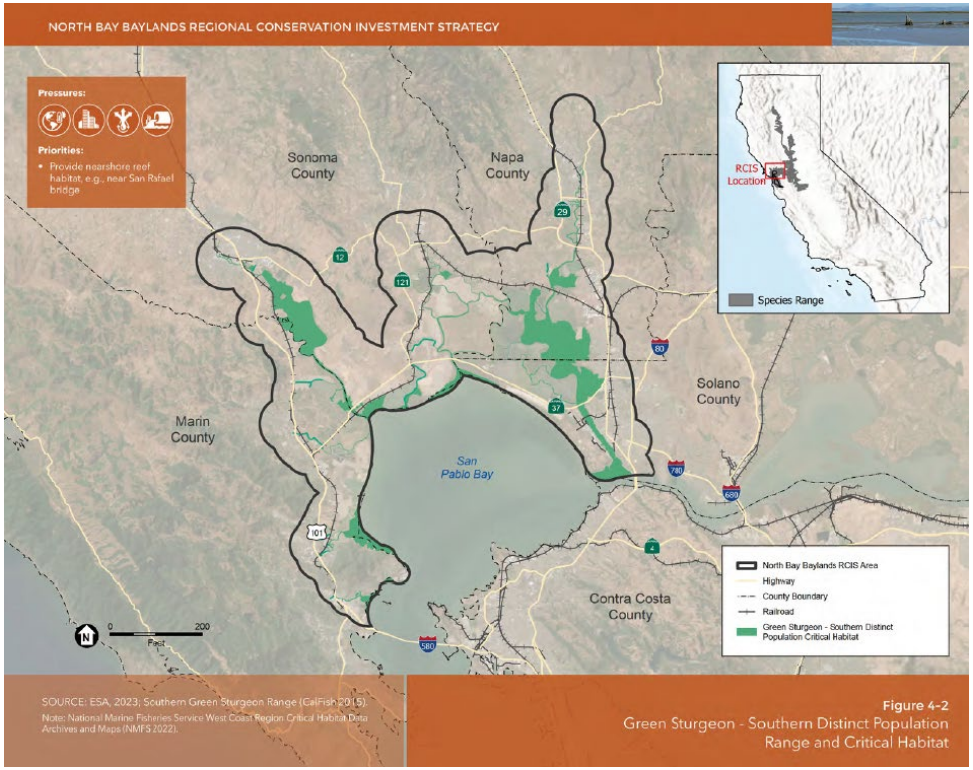
1. Actions
(Ch. 4 Tables)

Example: Regional Landscape Actions, Table 4-3

Actions Associated with RL Goal and Objectives
RL 1.1.1: Acquire parcels through fee title purchase or conservation easement. Focus on parcels with habitats that are critical for climate change adaptation and resilience (e.g., diked baylands) which are currently unprotected by other means. Priorities include lands and coastal waters consistent with the San Francisco Bay Conservation Lands Network (50% by 2050; BAOSC 2019), California's 30x30 initiative (30% by 2030; CNRA 2022), and goals in the Baylands Goals Report (Goals Project 1999, 2015).
RL 1.1.2: Promote zoning and urban planning policies that restrict inappropriate development of natural lands. Target natural lands include: • Irreplaceable landscapes (CLN 2019) • Diverse network of natural community and species habitat types • Lands rated by ACE to have high climate resilience (CDFW 2018b) that advance principles of functioning ecosystems (Goals 2015). • Working lands (i.e., rangelands, farms, and forestlands that provide livelihoods) that provide ecological value
RL 1.1.3: Plan for long-term stewardship, funding, management, and monitoring of conserved lands. Integrate historical ecology, current conditions, and future climate change scenarios into planning and design decisions (e.g., transportation, utility, municipality projects).

2. Maps
(Ch. 4 Maps)

Example: Green sturgeon Figure 4-2



Please Send Written Feedback

- Include:
  - Name/Organization
  - Page #/Section #
  - (Template Available)
- Send to:
  - rcis@wildlife.ca.gov

  AND
  - info@baylandsrics.org

Or Mail

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch
ATTENTION: North Bay Baylands RCIS Comments
P.O. Box 944209 Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Questions?

Public Draft Review Meeting – August 9, 2023

Attachment 2: Public Comment Template

North Bay Baylands Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Feedback for Draft Regional Conservation Strategy

Name:

Organization:

Page #	Section #/ Title	Comment