



# 2020 RCIS Symposium Meeting Summary

A summary of the meeting held on November 12, 2020 to discuss best practices and foster a learning network for stakeholders involved in the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Program

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# Regional Conservation Investment Strategies 2020 Symposium Meeting Summary

## Table of Contents

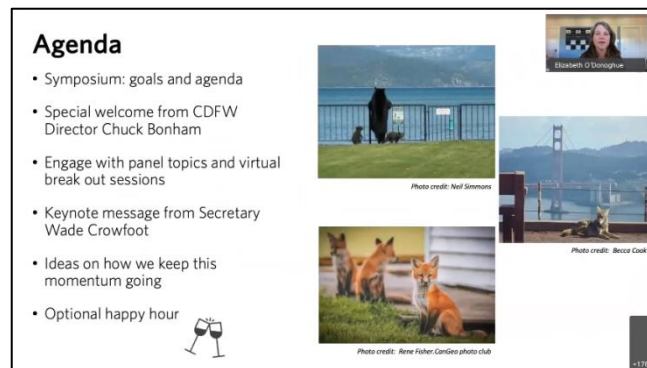
Executive Summary.....	3
Key Takeaways .....	3
Next Steps .....	4
Keynote Speakers.....	5
RCIS Program Overview – the morning session .....	6
RCIS Drivers, Opportunities and Challenges .....	7
Mitigation Credit Agreements .....	9
MCA Pilot Project Status .....	10
Opportunities for Interagency Collaboration .....	11
How to Keep the Momentum and Dialogue Going .....	13
Appendix .....	14
Appendix A – RCIS Overview Slides (optional morning session).....	14
Appendix B – Panelist Bios - Panel #1: RCIS Drivers, Opportunities and Challenges.....	20
Appendix C – Panelist Bios - Panel #2: Mitigation Credit Agreements .....	20
Appendix D – Panelist Bios - Panel #3: Opportunities for Interagency Collaboration.....	21
Appendix E – Attendee Statistics .....	22
Appendix F –Steering Committee Members.....	22
Appendix G – List of Attendees.....	23
Appendix H – Final Agenda .....	32

## Executive Summary

The third annual Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) Symposium looked somewhat different this year; as California battled with rising COVID-19 cases and shelter-in-place orders, the RCIS community chose to take the 2020 RCIS Symposium virtual. This may have facilitated an increase in attendance, drawing more than 200 people, ranging from local RCIS project proponents and state and federal resource and infrastructure agencies, to nongovernmental organizations and energy utilities, all with varying levels of interest and expertise in the RCIS program. The day began with an optional webinar on the RCIS Program including an update on the status of current projects. The afternoon Symposium featured keynote speakers, three panel discussions and two breakout sessions to allow for networking and information sharing related to RCISs and Mitigation Credit Agreements (MCAs), and to foster a community of practice.

The agenda for this year's meeting highlighted:

- The drivers, opportunities, and challenges associated with pursuing a RCIS. This panel was moderated by Shannon Lucas of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and included proponents from the Santa Cruz RCIS, San Bernardino RCIS, and Kaweah RCIS.



- The principles and value proposition of Mitigation Credit Agreements. This panel explored the key questions related to MCAs as well as the lessons learned from the pilot project currently being pursued by the West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency. This panel was moderated by Chris Beale of Resources Law Group and included panelists from CDFW, Westervelt Ecological Services, the City of West Sacramento, and GEI Consulting.
- The benefits and hurdles associated with interagency collaboration on RCISs and MCAs. This panel was moderated by Jennifer Norris of the California Natural Resources Agency and included proponents from the California Department of Transportation, CDFW, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Water Resources, and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

## Key Takeaways

Symposium attendees identified and discussed a number of key issues and topics throughout the day, including:

- Early collaboration, advance mitigation, landscape level planning and empowering local agencies were identified as key drivers for pursuing a RCIS. Motivating private landowners and other potential project proponents to conserve land remains a challenge; however, continued

dialogue, incentivizing conservation on private lands, and other solutions were identified to overcome these challenges.

- Mitigation Credit Agreements were highlighted as a significant topic of interest throughout the Symposium. The draft MCA Guidelines are currently on pause, while CDFW and project partners explore a pilot project for a levee setback improvement project under the Yolo RCIS. While there are still many questions surrounding the contents of the draft MCA Guidelines, the pilot project has been successful in identifying areas for improvement and ultimately, will inform the next iteration of the MCA Guidelines.
- The RCIS Program was recognized as a comprehensive planning process that can foster continued dialogue between state and federal agencies; however, interagency collaboration still remains a significant challenge. Ongoing conversations between state and federal agencies, as well as, creating a “crosswalk” approach between the RCIS program and other state and federal regulatory requirements were identified as potential solutions to overcoming this challenge.

### Next Steps

In order to continue to foster a community of practice and to further explore the challenges and opportunities identified during the 2020 RCIS Symposium, the Nature Conservancy will host two webinars in 2021, addressing a subset of the following topics:

- **Mitigation Credit Agreements** and the Sacramento Southport Levee Improvement Project Pilot.
- **Sub regional assessments:** Aligning conservation and mitigation goals to identify opportunities for advance mitigation.
- **Stakeholder outreach:** Best practices to design an outreach strategy to include partners and expand beyond the typical collaborators to engage groups such as farmers, ranchers, timber and tribal representatives.
- **30x30 Executive Order:** How the RCIS program can advance the goals of this directive.
- **Interagency Collaboration:** Designing RCISs to address the multiple needs and deliverables across agencies.
- **RCIS: Innovative approaches** to science based/user-friendly plans. Examples include: Santa Cruz, Yolo and Monterey county plans.

Additionally in fall 2021, RCIS practitioners can look forward to another annual (potentially in-person) RCIS Symposium.

## Keynote Speakers

Local, state and federal agencies were represented across the board at this year's RCIS Symposium, with notable keynote speakers: Director Chuck Bonham from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and Secretary Wade Crowfoot from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA).



**Charlton "Chuck" Bonham** was appointed as Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2011. In his remarks, Director Bonham explained that the RCIS Program provides CDFW and the state, writ large, with an innovative tool for achieving California's ambitious conservation goals, and stressed the importance of utilizing the state's available conservation opportunities in order to blend restoration with proactive investment and land acquisition. He noted that the RCIS Program can make a difference in implementing Governor Newsom's recent [Executive Order N-82-20](#) to protect 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. He expressed excitement for the potential of the RCIS Program to facilitate wildlife connectivity. Director Bonham stated that CDFW

remains committed to continuing progress within the RCIS Program and anticipates focusing more resources on developing the RCIS Program and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCP) to support CNRA's natural resource initiatives and priorities.

***"The RCIS Program is an important tool in which we can achieve Governor Newsom's Executive Order to conserve 30% of California's lands by 2030"***

***– Chuck Bonham***

In his capacity as California's Secretary for Natural Resources, appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom in January 2019, **Wade Crowfoot** outlined a number of key priorities for CNRA: expanding equitable access to California's natural resources, building resilience against growing climate-driven threats, conserving California's rich biodiversity, and improving permitting and funding efficiencies for ecological restoration and stewardship projects.

Secretary Crowfoot joined Director Bonham in emphasizing that the RCIS Program will be an integral tool to meet the goals of the "30 by 30" Executive Order and the administration's other key priorities. In a dialogue with Jay Ziegler of The Nature Conservancy, Secretary Crowfoot stressed that to meet the demands of our communities and natural resources in the face of



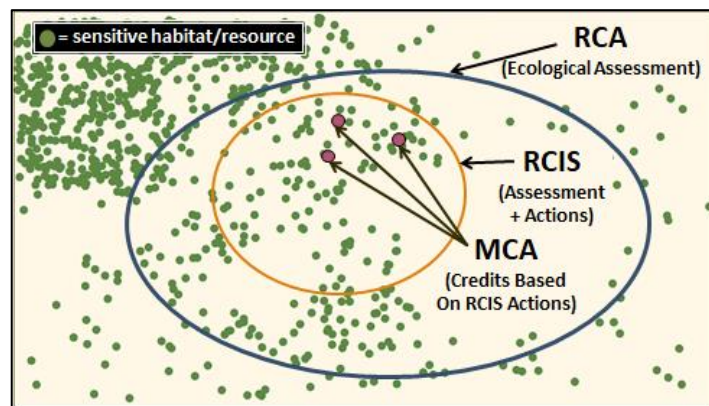
the growing climate crisis, state and federal administrations and agencies alike ultimately need to move much farther and much faster within our policies and processes to building climate resilience within California, emphasizing the need to have RCISs in place reflecting regional conservation priorities, at a much faster pace.

***“Winning slowly on climate, is losing”***  
– Wade Crowfoot

## RCIS Program Overview – the morning session

California’s Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Program is a voluntary, non-regulatory regional planning process used to assess the conditions of regional focal species, their associated habitats, and conservation status to support conservation investments and advance mitigation actions that further long-term conservation. This program went into effect on January 1, 2017 after being signed into law by former Governor Brown in late 2016. The RCIS Program is composed of three key components:

- **Regional Conservation Assessment**
- **Regional Conservation Investment Strategy**
- **Mitigation Credit Agreement**




Slide courtesy of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s  
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch (Appendix A)

The RCIS Program seeks to provide high-quality conservation outcomes, and guide conservation and infrastructure investments across the state by identifying and prioritizing the regional conservation needs of vulnerable species and natural communities, with an emphasis on habitat connectivity and climate resilience. The RCIS Program is designed to support conservation investments, to support advance mitigation investments, expedite project timelines, and generate effective conservation outcomes. There are currently nine RCISs at various stages of development throughout California, of which three have been finalized and approved, that correspond to 100 million acres of habitat conservation in the state.



## THE RCIS PROGRAM STATUS

RCIS	Proponent	Status
Santa Clara County	Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority	Approved
Yolo	Yolo Habitat Conservancy & DWR	Approved
Mid-Sac Valley	Reclamation District 108	Near-final*
East Bay	California State Coastal Conservancy	Near-final
Antelope Valley	Desert Mountains Conservation Authority	Post-public/substantive review
Monterey County	Transportation Agency for Monterey County	Public/substantive review
West San Bernardino	San Bernardino County Transportation Authority	In development
Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission	In development
Kaweah Subbasin	East Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency	In development



\*As of the release of this report, the Mid-Sacramento Valley RCIS has been approved. Slide courtesy of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Habitat Conservation Planning Branch and The Nature Conservancy (Appendix A).

## RCIS Drivers, Opportunities and Challenges

**Moderator:** Shannon Lucas, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

### Panel members:

- Grace Blakeslee, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (Santa Cruz RCIS)
- Jim Robins, Principle and Senior Ecologist, Alnus Ecological (Santa Cruz RCIS)
- Stephanie Standerfer, Vice Principal, Albert A. Webb Associates, Representing San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (San Bernardino RCIS)
- Mike Hagman, General Manager, Lindmore Irrigation District (Kaweah RCIS)

The first panel of the day was made up of RCIS proponents working on the Santa Cruz RCIS, the West San Bernardino RCIS, and the Kaweah Subbasin RCIS (Appendix B) to discuss the motivations, benefits and challenges associated with pursuing a Regional Conservation Investment Strategy. Panelists and Symposium attendees outlined potential solutions to overcoming these challenges. Discussions included:

### Drivers

- The RCIS Program not only provides a forum for early collaboration with state resource agencies to achieve local goals and objectives, but also provides financial and technical support to local conservation advocates in order to implement needed conservation actions. The voluntary nature of the program was also highlighted as a significant advantage, as it has been beneficial for future planning and helpful for collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies.

- Advance mitigation was underscored as a primary driver for pursuing this program, as identifying mitigation and investment needs early on in the project development process saved time, money, and resources.
- The [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) (SGMA) empowers local agencies to bring critically overdrafted groundwater basins in California to sustainable levels of pumping and recharge by 2040. Implementation of SGMA will likely require substantial fallowing and/or repurposing of productive agricultural lands. The RCIS Program was identified as a key tool in providing resources to local agencies to convert productive land into valuable conservation habitat for focal species, and to coordinate sub-basin efforts to reduce groundwater demand. The Greater Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency is actively pursuing a RCIS to help comply with SGMA.

### *Challenges*

- Diversity in political motivations, attitudes, and local buy-in remains a predominant challenge while project proponents have worked to develop their respective RCISs. Ultimately, building trust and understanding in the RCIS Program across federal, state, and local entities has been an ongoing challenge.



- Understanding the needs of different agencies with different missions and goals (e.g. transportation and resource agencies) has been a historic issue in the conservation space. The RCIS Program provides a medium for that information sharing to be facilitated, but remains as an area that can be better addressed.
- Providing financial incentives to motivate private landowners to conserve their lands has been an ongoing issue. Projects such as the Kaweah Sub-basin RCIS highlight how groundwater remains critical to private land owners' and ranchers' ability to generate income.

### *Opportunities/Solutions*

- Identifying a person and/or agency to champion the RCIS Program and help RCIS sponsors navigate the RCIS process would be helpful in propelling the program and individual RCISs/MCAs forward and to ultimately achieve the desired advance mitigation benefits.
- Shorter-term MCA contracts (i.e. 3-5 years) could incentivize private landowners to pursue conservation and/or implement a RCIS.
- Integrating the RCIS process into [Sustainable Communities Strategies](#) (SCS) to further incentivize private lands conservation. SCS implementation was mandated by [SB375 \(Steinberg\)](#), which focuses on incentivizing localized, regional planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



- Building additional value on lands through mechanisms such as carbon credits and/or biodiversity credits was also proposed as a promising solution. This will be increasingly more important as the state begins to scale up conservation in order to meet its ambitious goals (e.g. 30x30 goal, AB32 implementation and supporting policies, Sustainable Groundwater Management Act).
- Allow for a natural communities and ecosystems approach, in addition to the current focal species approach. Driving ecosystem health and restoration would be a more robust approach for species protection, especially in light of predicted habitat changes.

While each of the projects featured in this panel vary greatly in terms of regional ecology and biodiversity, the consensus was that the RCIS Program is an indispensable tool that can be used to achieve and implement broad-scale conservation, whether it be to reduce groundwater overdraft in the Central Valley, or to protect the newly listed Joshua Trees.

## Mitigation Credit Agreements

**Moderator:** Chris Beale, Attorney, Resources Law Group LLC

**Panel members:**

- Brandon Amrhein, Senior Environmental Scientist, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Travis Hemmen, Vice President, Westervelt Ecological Services
- Paul Dirksen, Flood Protection Planner, City of West Sacramento
- Vance Howard, Senior Restoration Ecologist, GEI Consulting

The RCIS Program includes a provision to allow for the creation of mitigation credits, via mitigation credit agreements (MCAs), by implementing the identified conservation or habitat enhancement actions within a RCIS. Anyone is eligible to apply for an MCA. Mitigation credits created under an MCA may be used as compensatory mitigation for permanent and/or temporary impacts identified under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), and the Lake and Streambed Alteration Program. An additional benefit of the new tool is to expand the use of advance mitigation into habitat enhancement actions. The second panel of the day included an overview of Mitigation Credit Agreements and their value proposition, and was made up of project proponents who have been working on the first MCA pilot project located in West Sacramento (Appendix C). Panelists outlined some key features of MCAs:

- Allows for advance mitigation and creates transferrable credits (i.e. MCA sponsors can use, sell, or transfer credits to another entity).
- Can be used to offset a project's impacts under CDFW's authority (e.g. CEQA, CESA, LSA).
- Potential to offset impacts to resources, sensitive species and habitats governed under other local, state, or federal agency requirements.

- MCAs offer additional options that enhance the tools currently available through HCP/NCCPs and conservation banks. CDFW views MCAs as being a viable alternative mitigation option for other agencies, and see MCAs as an additional tool in the mitigation toolkit. The MCA draft Guidelines, currently on-hold during a pilot phase, will be issued in the future and will provide guidance on the development of MCAs.
- Picture courtesy of the West Sacramento Area Flood

## MCA Pilot Project Status

The map displays the Sacramento River Delta region, highlighting the proposed Sacramento River West-South Levee. Key features include:

- Geographic Labels:** West Sacramento, Sacramento, Delta Cross Levee, Sacramento River West-South Levee, Marina Access Road, Boes Lakes, Stonegate Dr, Lake Washington Dr, W.G. Stone Lock, Port of Sacramento, Sutter Canal, and various roads like Highway 99, Highway 16, and Highway 20.
- Levee Routes:** A red line indicates the proposed levee route, while a yellow line shows the existing levee route. The proposed route follows the riverbank, passing through areas like Boes Lakes and near the Marina Access Road.
- Infrastructure:** The map shows the Delta Cross Levee, the W.G. Stone Lock, and the Port of Sacramento.
- Map Details:** The map includes a scale bar (0 to 1 mile) and a north arrow. It also shows the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and the surrounding areas.

- 10

the applicability of existing project documents, like HMMPs, as suitable substitutes for documents required by MCA Guidelines, especially if those project documents clearly address the requirements in an MCA.

- Collaboration and alignment with other agencies, particularly federal agencies (e.g. Army Corps of Engineers), is an ongoing challenge. Project proponents are actively exploring tools that can be used when only public agencies are involved in an MCA. They found that there are likely multiple pathways for state and federal agencies to collaborate around an MCA (e.g. long-term management plans, conservation easements, and endowments). The Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service are currently engaged in this pilot project and are providing advice and guidance.
- Project proponents created a multi-agency credit ledger to track the use of credits at Southport, to be used by WSAFCA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

## Opportunities for Interagency Collaboration

**Moderator:** Jennifer Norris, Deputy Secretary- Biodiversity and Habitat, CA Department of Natural Resources

**Panel members:**

- Carin Loy, Senior Environmental Planner, Caltrans
- Jeff Drongesen, Chief, Habitat Conservation Planning, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Bronwyn Hogan, Wildlife Biologist, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Kris Tjernell, Deputy Director, CA Department of Water Resources
- Laura Shively, Mitigation Banking Specialist, US Army Corp of Engineers

The third panel included a number of representatives from state and federal resource and infrastructure agencies (Appendix D), to discuss the challenges and opportunities for interagency collaboration within the RCIS Program. Panelists highlighted that one of the major goals and benefits of the RCIS Program is to facilitate strategic, large-scale landscape scale conservation planning throughout the state, and to use the program as a comprehensive planning process that reflects the suite of resources in a RCIS area, and the needs and requirements of all agencies involved. Panelists were asked to describe the impediments to interagency collaboration experienced within the Program, as well as the opportunities and how CDFW and others can address these shortcomings. Among the insights discussed:



### *Challenges*

- Federal agencies are beholden to existing rules and regulations; there has been an ongoing challenge in aligning federal regulatory requirements with state requirements. For example, the Army Corps of Engineers cannot currently sign onto an MCA. There remains a need to bridge this gap between state and federal regulatory requirements.
- Project development permitting in California requires ongoing coordination between local, state, and federal agencies to meet numerous permitting and regulatory requirements. This can often be time-intensive and expensive.
- There has been some concern that the RCIS Program and MCAs in particular, were redundant to federal programs (e.g. USFWS Habitat Conservation Plans).

### *Opportunities/Solutions*

- Create and test a “crosswalk” approach between the RCIS program and other state and federal regulatory requirements in order to ensure compliance across all agencies. The federal At-Risk Species Program could be a good test case to consider this type of strategy.
- The Army Corps of Engineers may be able to give credits within their existing procedures (i.e. 404 credits). The Army Corps recognizes this gap and is very willing to work with RCIS project proponents to find the best solution.
- The RCIS Program aligns various permitting procedures. For example, CalTrans has a number of small, ongoing maintenance projects (e.g. replacing guardrails, repairing culverts), that all require mitigation at some level, as well as coordination with a number of different agencies. To consolidate these smaller impacts into a larger mitigation effort that contributes to a greater conservation goal is attractive from the perspective of a transportation agency.
- The RCIS Program is complementary to other advance mitigation efforts ongoing in the state (i.e. CalTrans Advance Mitigation Program) and encourages large-scale conservation where other mitigation tools (i.e. mitigation banks) do not apply. The consensus was that federal agencies do not want to lose track of the landscape-level and multi-benefit conservation that the RCIS Program was built upon.

CDFW representatives expressed that they feel the urgency and recognize the need to understand the mitigation needs of other agencies and improve the guidance from CDFW to those other agencies. By continuing to understand and define the process, CDFW can figure out how to make other state and federal requirements integrate with the RCIS program; particularly, as it pertains to MCAs and MCA Guideline development. Overall, continued dialogue between state and federal agencies was identified as the critical key to success to foster interagency collaboration.

## How to Keep the Momentum and Dialogue Going

Throughout the Symposium, practitioners identified some remaining challenges presented by the RCIS Program and suggested a number of ways to overcome these challenges, including:

- How to address projects that span across multiple RCIS boundaries; this will be important when establishing habitat/wildlife connectivity corridors. The RCIS program is a great tool that can be used to identify and establish wildlife connectivity corridors, but it is unclear how that can be achieved. Proponents suggested establishing RCISs by ecological boundaries in order to better manage across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Concern that mitigation is framed as a ‘silver bullet’ solution to achieving the state’s conservation goals, and that potential project proponents will want to pursue a RCIS for the sake of mitigation, not necessarily for the purpose of larger landscape conservation. Some suggested that agencies need to be more of a leader in their messaging on the benefits of landscape scale mitigation and conservation planning and alignment.
- Legislation, or at the very least, technical amendments to address any remaining gaps within the RCIS Program may be necessary.

The Nature Conservancy is looking forward to providing more opportunities for practitioners and state and federal agencies to connect and to continue to foster a community of practice. Practitioners can look forward to another annual RCIS Symposium in fall 2021, as well as, a series of virtual workshops throughout 2021. Topics may explore:

- **Mitigation Credit Agreements** and the Sacramento Southport Levee Improvement Project Pilot.
- **Sub regional assessments:** Aligning conservation and mitigation goals to identify opportunities for advance mitigation.
- **Stakeholder outreach:** Best practices to design an outreach strategy to include partners and expand beyond the typical collaborators to engage groups such as farmers, ranchers, timber and tribal representatives.
- **30x30 Executive Order:** How the RCIS program can advance the goals of this directive.
- **Interagency Collaboration:** Designing RCISs to address the multiple needs and deliverables across agencies.

**RCIS: Innovative approaches** to science based/user-friendly plans. Examples include: Santa Cruz, Yolo and Monterey county plans.

# Appendix

## Appendix A – RCIS Overview Slides (optional morning session)



### WHY WAS THE RCIS PROGRAM CREATED?

- Desire for faster and cheaper conservation planning
- Need for voluntary conservation planning
- Desire for more flexible advance mitigation options
- Incentivize early investment in conservation priorities



2

### RCIS PROGRAM – KEY FEATURES

- Guides regional conservation, advance mitigation
- Voluntary
- Not a permit; no conservation commitment
- Non-binding on land use authorities



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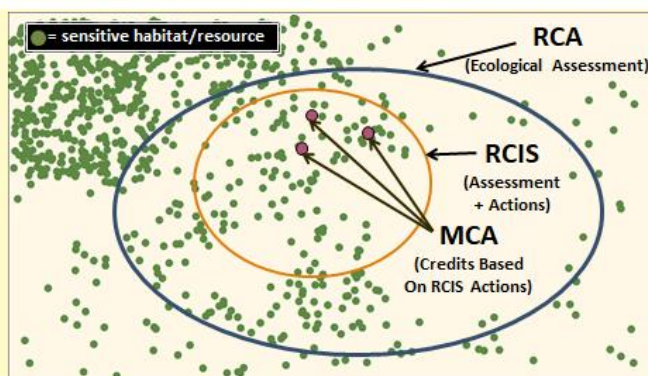
## RCIS PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- **Regional Conservation Assessment (RCA)**
  - *Ecoregional ecological assessment*
- **Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)**
  - *Regional ecological assessment with conservation and habitat enhancement actions*
- **Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA)**
  - *Advance mitigation credits to offset CESA, CEQA, LSA, & other impacts based on RCIS actions*



5

## RCIS PROGRAM COMPONENTS



6

## RCA – KEY INFORMATION

- Regional pressures and stressors, including climate change
- Areas of high biological diversity
- Areas for habitat connectivity
- Consider existing & foreseeable future development
- Best available science



6

## RCIS – KEY INFORMATION

- Existing conditions within the RCIS area
  - Including pressures and stressors
- Focal Species and other conservation elements
- Goals, objectives, actions, and priorities

7

## POTENTIAL CONSERVATION & ENHANCEMENT ACTIONS

- Create/restore habitat
- Acquire and protect land
- Protect wildlife/habitat corridors
- Restore creeks and rivers
- Install wildlife crossings
- Remove fish barriers



## RCIS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- Statute (FGC 1850-1861)
- Program Guidelines (Sept. 2018)
- Outreach and Engagement
  - Local land use authorities
  - Public meeting and document review
  - Encourages stakeholder engagement



9

## RCIS POTENTIAL USES

- Conservation (e.g. grants)
- Advance mitigation (e.g. Mitigation Credit Agreements)
- Guide infrastructure development
- Possible land-use planning efforts



10

## MITIGATION CREDIT AGREEMENTS

- Anyone may apply for an MCA
- Based on conservation & habitat enhancement actions in an *approved* RCIS
- MCAs **implement** RCIS actions as mitigation credits



## MCA KEY FEATURES

- Advance mitigation, transferrable credits
- Offset impacts under CA Laws (CESA, CEQA, LSA)
- Potential to offset other local, state or federal impacts
- *Excess* project enhancements can be used as credits
- Offset permanent or *temporary* impacts
- Potential credits for wildlife crossings and fish passage



23

## POTENTIAL FUNDING & COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

- **Proposition 68** – ~ \$3M (remaining, of \$5M) to develop RCISs ([www.wcb.ca.gov](http://www.wcb.ca.gov))
- **SB 1, SB 103** – advance mitigation for transportation
- **Agencies** - transportation, water, other local agencies



27

## THE RCIS PROGRAM STATUS

RCIS	Proponent	Status
Santa Clara County	Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority	Approved
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Monterey County	Transportation Agency for Monterey County	Public/substantive review
West San Bernardino	San Bernardino County Transportation Authority	In development
Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission	In development
Kaweah Subbasin	East Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency	In development



## PILOT MCA PROGRAM

### Southport Levee Improvement Project

- 5.6 miles of new or improved levees
  - 3.8 miles of new setback levee
  - 1.8 miles of in-place improvements
- Setback levee creates 120 acres of new floodplain habitat
- On-site mitigation for Southport project impacts and advance mitigation for remainder of federal project



16



QUESTIONS  
AND  
DISCUSSION

17

FOR FURTHER RCIS PROGRAM INFORMATION

Please visit  
[www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/  
Regional-Conservation](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation)

Landscape Conservation Planning Program  
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch  
[RCIS@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:RCIS@wildlife.ca.gov)

Ami Olson, RCIS Coordinator  
(916) 531-4570



## Appendix B – Panelist Bios - Panel #1: RCIS Drivers, Opportunities and Challenges

Name	Title	Organization	Bio
Ami Olson	RCIS Program Coordinator	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Ami Olson is a Senior Environmental Scientist at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and serves as the statewide Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Coordinator.
Grace Blakeslee	Senior Transportation Planner	Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Representing Santa Cruz RCIS	Grace Blakeslee is a Senior Transportation Planner with the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission and is currently responsible for environmental planning related to the Santa Cruz RCIS as well as development of the North Coast Rail Trail.
Jim Robins	Principal and Senior Ecologist	Alnus Ecological Representing Santa Cruz RCIS	Jim Robins is the principal and owner of <i>Alnus Ecological</i> and the technical manager of the Santa Cruz County RCIS effort and brings over 15 years of regional experience in collaborative conservation as the coordinator of the Central Coast Integrated Watershed Restoration Program.
Stephanie Standerfer	Vice President	Albert A. Webb Associates, Representing San Bernardino County Transportation Authority and San Bernardino RCIS	Stephanie Standerfer has over 20 years of experience as an environmental planner and is currently working as the Program Manager for the San Bernardino County RCIS on behalf of San Bernardino County Transit Authority
Mike Hagman	General Manager	Lindmore Irrigation District Representing Kaweah RCIS	Mike Hagman is the General Manager of the Lindmore Irrigation District and Executive Director of the East Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Currently he is part of the team developing an RCIS for the Kaweah Subbasin.

## Appendix C – Panelist Bios - Panel #2: Mitigation Credit Agreements

Name	Title	Organization	Bio
Chris Beale	Attorney	Resources Law Group	Chris Beale is an attorney at Resources Law Group and works on complex natural resources management issues and advises cities, counties, and other public agencies and private landowners on state and federal natural resource protection laws, conservation planning, open space preservation, and the development of environmental mitigation strategies. Chris provided expert consultation throughout the drafting and passage of the original AB 2087 legislation.
Brandon Amrhein	Senior Environmental Scientist	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Brandon Amrhein is a Senior Environmental Scientist in CDFW's Landscape Conservation Planning Program and coordinates the Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA) portion of the RCIS Program.
Travis Hemmen	Vice President	Westervelt Ecological Services	Travis Hemmen is Vice President for Westervelt Ecological Services where he oversees business and market development, manages sales of existing banks, and analyzes market information to ensure mitigation bank viability. He has also served as President of the Ecological Restoration Business Association – the national association representing the mitigation banking industry.
Paul Dirksen	Flood Protection Planner	City of West Sacramento	Paul Dirksen is the Flood Protection Planner for the West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency and is currently the project manager of the Floodplain Restoration Project, which is the basis for the MCA pilot to develop and implement a mitigation crediting agreement for West Sacramento's Levee Improvement Program.
Vance Howard	Senior Restoration Ecologist	GEI Consultants	Vance Howard is a restoration ecologist who is working with the West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, CDFW, and others to prepare the Southport Pilot MCA.



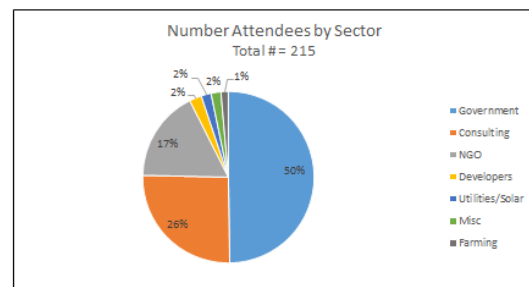
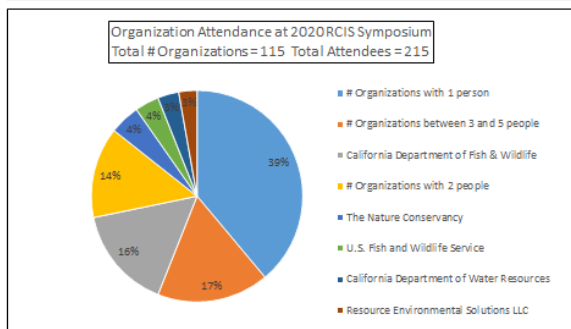
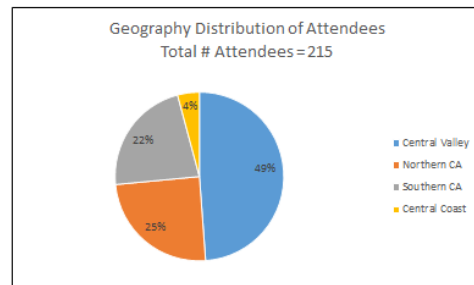
## Appendix D – Panelist Bios – Panel #3: Opportunities for Interagency Collaboration

Name	Title	Organization	Bio
Jennifer Norris	Deputy Secretary-Biodiversity and Habitat	California Department of Natural Resources	Jennifer Norris is Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat at the California Natural Resources Agency where she is responsible for overseeing our statewide biodiversity strategy, including the California Biodiversity Collaborative. She also leads our Cutting the Green Tape Initiative in support of landscape scale habitat restoration. Jennifer comes to us from the US Fish and Wildlife Service where she was most recently the field supervisor for the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office.
Carin Loy	Senior Environmental Planner, Advance mitigation Program	CalTrans	Carin Loy is a Senior Environmental Planner with the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) Advance Mitigation Program, where a primary focus of hers has been to help increase the probability and success of CalTrans advance mitigation planning and advance mitigation projects.
Laura Shively	Mitigation Banking Specialist	Sacramento District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Laura Shively is a Mitigation Banking Specialist for the Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, Regulatory Division, who is responsible for facilitating the Sacramento District's Interagency Review Team meetings, serving as a representative on the California Regional Mitigation Banking PDT, and a resource on compensatory mitigation within the Sacramento District.
Jeff Drongesen	Chief, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Jeff Drongesen is the Chief of CDFW's Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, with over 27 years at CDFW and has been involved with various programs around the state, including CEQA, CESA, NCCP, and RCIS/MCA.
Bronwyn Hogan	Wildlife Biologist	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Bronwyn Hogan is a wildlife biologist in the USFWS Regional Office in Sacramento who has been facilitating communication about the RCIS Program with FWS Staff.
Kris Tjernell	Deputy Director	California Department of Water Resources	Kris Tjernell is the Deputy Director at the CA Department of Water Resources and is responsible for advancing policies and programs that integrate and provide multiple benefits including flood management, local water supply, and ecosystem restoration.

## Appendix E – Attendee Statistics

### 2020 RCIS Symposium Attendee Statistics

<b>Morning Session (RCIS Background)</b>	Total number of attendees = 97
<b>Afternoon Session</b>	Total number of attendees = 232 (65% acceptance)
	Total # Invites Sent = 361
	Number of New People (not at previous two events) = 104 (45% of Attendees were new)
	Number of people registered = 215
	Number of people registered who did not show up = 28 (13%)



## Appendix F –Steering Committee Members

<b>Aaron Gabbe</b>	ICF	<b>Kristen Boysen</b>	Environmental Incentives
<b>Bronwyn Hogan</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service	<b>Laura Cholodenko</b>	CA Coastal Conservancy
<b>Carin Loy</b>	CalTrans	<b>Laura Hollender</b>	Department of Water Resources
<b>Chris Beale</b>	Resources Law Group	<b>Michelle Nuttall</b>	Southern California Edison
<b>Dan Kaiser</b>	Environmental Defense Fund	<b>Mike Zeller</b>	Transportation Agency of Monterey County
<b>Gary Knoblock</b>	SD Bechtel Jr. Foundation	<b>Paul Dirksen</b>	City of West Sacramento
<b>Grace Blakeslee</b>	Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission	<b>Phil Crater</b>	CA State Waterboard
<b>Graham Chisholm</b>	Conservation Strategy Group	<b>Sam Uden</b>	Conservation Strategy Group
<b>Jodi McGraw</b>	Jodi McGraw Consulting	<b>Shannon Lucas</b>	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
<b>Josh Lee</b>	San Bernardino County Transportation Authority	<b>Stuart Kirkham</b>	CalTrans
<b>Katie Riley</b>	Environmental Incentives	<b>Travis Hemmen</b>	Westervelt Ecological Services
<b>Kenneth Kao</b>	Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission	<b>Ami Olson</b>	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife

## Appendix G – List of Attendees\*

\*This list excludes attendees who did not consent to having their information shared. Refer to Appendix E for a more accurate representation of attendees.

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# Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 1-4pm

*Virtual Event*

<b>11:00 – Noon</b> <b>(Optional)</b>	<b>RCIS Program history-</b> Strategic overview of the program, status of current projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liz O'Donoghue, Director of the Sustainable Development Strategy, The Nature Conservancy</li><li>• Shannon Lucas, Supervisor, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife</li><li>• Ami Olson, RCIS Program Coordinator, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife</li></ul>
<b>1:00 – 1:15pm</b> <b>15 mins</b>	<b>Welcome</b> <p>Liz O'Donoghue, Director of the Sustainable Development Strategy, The Nature Conservancy</p> <p>Chuck Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife</p>
<b>1:15 – 1:45pm</b> <b>30 mins</b>	<b>RCIS Motivations-</b> Drivers, Opportunities and Challenges <b>Moderator:</b> Shannon Lucas, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  <b>Panel members:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grace Blakeslee, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (Santa Cruz RCIS)</li><li>• Jim Robins, Principle and Senior Ecologist, Alnus Ecological (Santa Cruz RCIS)</li><li>• Stephanie Standerfer, Representing San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (San Bernardino RCIS)</li><li>• Mike Hagman, General Manager, Lindmore Irrigation District (Kaweah RCIS)</li></ul>
<b>1:45 – 2:05pm</b> <b>20 mins</b>	<b>Breakout Session #1-</b> Networking; discuss general understanding and key questions around RCISs  <b>Discussion Lead:</b> Michelle Nuttall, Senior Project Manager- Environmental Affairs & Sustainability, Southern California Edison

<b>2:05 – 2:35pm</b> <b>30 mins</b>	<b>Mitigation Credit Agreements- Principles, Value, Key questions and Pilot</b> <b>Moderator:</b> Chris Beale, Attorney, Resources Law Group LLC  <b>Panel members:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brandon Amrhein, Senior Environmental Scientist, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>• Travis Hemmen, Vice President, Westervelt Ecological Services</li> <li>• Paul Dirksen, Flood Protection Planner, City of West Sacramento</li> <li>• Vance Howard, Senior Restoration Ecologist, GEI Consulting</li> </ul>
<b>2:35 – 2:45pm</b> <b>10 mins</b>	<b>BREAK</b>

<b>2:45 – 3:00pm</b> <b>15 mins</b>	<b>Keynote:</b> Wade Crowfoot, California Secretary for Natural Resources <b>Introduction and Q&amp;A facilitator:</b> Jay Ziegler, TNC Director of External Affairs & Policy
<b>3:00 – 3:35pm</b> <b>35 mins</b>	<b>Interagency Collaboration on RCIS and MCA: Benefits and Hurdles</b> <b>Moderator:</b> Jennifer Norris, Deputy Secretary- Biodiversity and Habitat, CA Department of Natural Resources  <b>Panel members:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carin Loy, Senior Environmental Planner, Caltrans</li> <li>• Jeff Drongesen, Chief, Habitat Conservation Planning, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>• Bronwyn Hogan, Wildlife Biologist, US Fish and Wildlife Service</li> <li>• Kris Tjernell, Deputy Director, CA Department of Water Resources</li> <li>• Laura Shively, Mitigation Banking Specialist, US Army Corp of Engineers</li> </ul>
<b>3:35 – 3:55pm</b> <b>20 mins</b>	<b>Breakout Session #2- Reflection on MCA and Interagency Panels. What are key questions and possible solutions?</b>  <b>Discussion Lead:</b> Graham Chisholm, Senior Policy Advisor, Conservation Strategy Group
<b>3:55 – 4:00pm</b> <b>5 mins</b>	<b>Wrap Up: What's next and how do we keep the momentum going?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinars, Policy Committee, 2021 Symposium</li> </ul> Abby Ramsden, Project Director, The Nature Conservancy
<b>4:00 – 4:30pm</b> <b>30 mins</b>	<b>Optional Virtual Happy Hour:</b> <b>Networking, keeping the conservation going, fun!</b>  Francie Mitchell, The Nature Conservancy