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EAST BAY
REGIONAL CONSERVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Volume 1

California State Coastal Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
AECOM

ICF

Foreword

Welcome to the East Bay Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS). The East Bay RCIS is a voluntary, non-regulatory document that provides a snapshot of existing environmental conditions in the East Bay (Alameda and Contra Costa counties) and identifies actions to protect, enhance, and restore conservation values in the region. The East Bay hosts a rich array of natural resources that provide important services to people and nature. The plants, animals, wetlands, grasslands, forests, creeks and streams in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties help clean our water and air, reduce flood risk and help adapt to sea level rise, provide local food and healthy recreation, sequester carbon to help mitigate climate change, and support a thriving economy. At the same time, the region's habitat and resources are at threat from urbanization, fragmentation, and climate stress. These are some of the values and opportunities the East Bay RCIS is designed to address.

The East Bay RCIS, enabled by AB 2087 (Levine-2016), was developed to help guide conservation investments and land use planning in the region. The East Bay RCIS was also created to enable Regional Advance Mitigation Planning investments to support conservation and infrastructure development goals through Mitigation Credit Agreements (MCAs). An entity can develop an MCA to invest in conservation or enhancement actions listed in an RCIS (Chapter 3 of the East Bay RCIS) and receive mitigation credits for future projects that the entity can then use for their purposes, transfer, or sell to others.

The State Coastal Conservancy (the state agency RCIS proponent), the Nature Conservancy, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, ICF, and AECOM worked with stakeholders from around the region to develop the document. The stakeholders included representation from resource agencies, transportation agencies, local governments, land use planners, environmental organizations, land trusts, farming and ranching interests, the development community and others (see Appendix C), all of whom can be users of the document.

The East Bay RCIS includes detailed information, compiled from best available scientific data and, including data on key species, habitats, and natural communities in the region. The East Bay RCIS is complimented by the Bay Area Greenprint (www.bayareagreenprint.org), which identifies conservation co-benefits such as clean water, flood risk reduction, carbon sequestration, priorities for tree planting, and habitat connectivity corridors. Taken together, the RCIS and the Greenprint provide guidance for investing in protecting conservation values and avoiding costly impacts to species, habitats, and environmental values.

The document is organized around four chapters:

Chapter 1, Introduction. This chapter provides a general background about the RCIS program with a focus on the East Bay RCIS including the study area, the context and purpose and need, the proponent and stakeholders, CDFW's required elements for an RCIS and organization and information specific to the study area including relevant plans and policies. Read this chapter to get a basic understanding of the document and why it was developed.

Chapter 2, Environmental Setting. This chapter identifies the East Bay RCIS study area's existing environmental conditions and built environment. The environmental conditions sections include information on ecoregions, watersheds, natural communities, focal species and sensitive species,

and conservation elements such as habitat connectivity, working landscapes and baylands. It includes foreseeable infrastructure development and a list of existing conservation and mitigation banks. It also includes a section on pressures and stressors that are impacting the environmental health of the region. As required by law, the RCIS's conservation strategy is organized around 'focal species' and natural communities to represent the suite of resources that are important to the ecological health of the region. This chapter identifies the RCIS's focal species (plants and animals) and the rationale for identifying the suite of species. Read this chapter to understand the current environmental conditions in the region that influence the RCIS's conservation strategy.

Chapter 3, Conservation Strategy. This chapter presents the East Bay RCIS's conservation goals, objectives, and priorities and conservation and enhancement actions that can be implemented to achieve the RCIS's goals and objectives. The information in this chapter can help guide conservation funding to resource-rich areas and assist infrastructure agencies and developers to avoid conflicts with species and habitats as they develop plans and projects. Importantly, MCAs must be consistent with the East Bay RCIS by implementing the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and other actions listed in this chapter to receive advance mitigation credit for focal or non-focal species. Read this chapter to find out what conservation strategies are relevant for the RCIS species and habitat.

Chapter 4 Implementation. This chapter provides guidance and suggestions for using the RCIS for various purposes. As a voluntary document, there are no requirements for implementation. That said, the RCIS is meant to be useful to various users, and once approved, MCAs can be developed to implement the conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions recommended in this RCIS to provide efficient project delivery pathways for infrastructure agencies. Thus, the Implementation Chapter provides guidance for conservation investments, advance mitigation activities (including supporting the East Contra Costa Habitat Plan and mitigation banks), the proponent's role in the RCIS and other issues. Read this chapter to get familiar with implementation opportunities. Read this chapter to find out how to use the RCIS to support your work.

Appendices. The appendices include a lot of valuable information, from a glossary of terms, to the outreach activities, to the analysis that identified the list of focal (and non-focal) species. Depending on your use of the RCIS, you may find specific appendices helpful. Read the relevant appendices to find out the supporting data and details about how we crafted this document.

Specific Uses of the Document:

The RCIS can be used by a range of entities, and for a variety of purposes. For example:

- If you are a land use planner in the region: you can use the RCIS to inform general plans, climate action plans, and areas of high conservation value.
- If you work in conservation: you can use the RCIS to locate high-priority areas to invest conservation funding, find out what conservation actions will be most impactful, and to develop MCAs that support your organization's area of focus.
- If you work for an infrastructure agency: you can use the RCIS to site and design projects to avoid impacts to habitats and species, potentially reducing risk for your plans and projects. You can also use the RCIS to develop MCAs to mitigate in advance for your future projects, potentially saving time and money on more efficient and effective mitigation. If the project is within the boundary of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan (ECCC HCP/NCCP), it is important to work directly with the ECCC HCP/NCCP Habitat Conservancy on your project and mitigation needs.

- If you invest in or develop mitigation or conservation banks: you can use the RCIS to understand future infrastructure needs and find out where to site a bank in an area that is species rich and has a high number of potential conservation actions.
- If you are interested in wildlife corridors: you can use the RCIS to identify key locations and actions to support habitat connectivity and develop an MCA or seek funding for those actions.
- If you are a land manager: If you own or manage property in an area that is important for habitat or species conservation, including rangeland or farmland, you can use the RCIS to work with public and private partners to bring funding sources to protect or enhance the property.

If you have any questions or if you would like access to the information in the RCIS, please contact California Department of Fish and Wildlife's RCIS Program (https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/planning/regional-conservation or RCIS@wildlife.ca.gov).

You can also contact the proponent, the State Coastal Conservancy's Bay Area Program (https://scc.ca.gov/projects/san-francisco-bay/) if you have specific questions about conservation in the San Francisco Bay Area.