

Section 2

Standard Terminology

2.1 Terms, Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Definitions

Term/Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
ACE—Areas of Conservation Emphasis	The biodiversity analysis completed by CDFW in 2010, or the latest update of that analysis. ⁸
advance mitigation	Compensatory mitigation for impacts on ecological resources (species and/or habitats) and other natural resources that is implemented prior to impacts occurring.
approved MCA	An MCA is deemed to be approved on the date that all parties, including CDFW as the regulatory agency, have signed the MCA. See also “MCA establishment.”
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEHC—California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project: A Strategy for Conserving a Connected California	A statewide assessment of essential habitat connectivity completed by consultants and commissioned by CDFW and Caltrans; the assessment used the best available science, datasets, and spatial analysis and modeling techniques to identify large remaining blocks of intact habitat or natural landscape and model linkages between them that need to be maintained, particularly as corridors for wildlife.
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code, section 21000, et seq.)
CESA	California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code, section 2050, et seq.)
CNDDDB – California Natural Diversity Database	An inventory of the status and locations of rare plants and animals in California.
compensatory mitigation	Actions taken to fulfill, in whole or in part, mitigation requirements under state or federal law, including regulatory permits, or a court mandate. ⁹

⁸ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (a)

⁹ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (b)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
conservation action	An action to preserve or to restore ecological resources, including habitat, natural communities, ecological processes, and wildlife corridors, to protect those resources permanently, and to provide for their perpetual management, so as to help to achieve one or more biological goals and objectives for one or more focal species. Conservation actions may include, but are not limited to, actions to offset impacts to focal species. ¹⁰ Compare to “habitat enhancement action.”
Conservation Easement (CE)	A perpetual Conservation Easement that complies with Civil Code 815 <i>et seq.</i> ¹¹
Conservation Easement (CE) grantee	The entity that holds the CE for the MCA site. The CE grantee must be eligible to hold a CE pursuant to California Civil Code § 815.3, authorized to hold the CE by Government Code §§ 65966 and 65967, and approved by CDFW.
conservation element	A species, natural resource, or ecological process that is identified and analyzed in an RCIS that will benefit from actions listed in the RCIS. Conservation elements include focal species and other conservation elements. See “other conservation element” and “focal species.”
conservation investment	RCIS actions that are implemented, but not for the purpose of creating credits. Conservation investments are typically funded by public agencies (e.g., grants) and nonprofit or other philanthropic organizations.
Construction Security	The financial security required by the MCA, in a form acceptable to CDFW, to be provided by the MCA Sponsor to guarantee the completion of construction and planting intended to establish habitat through creation, enhancement or restoration within the MCA site in accordance with the Development Plan.
Compliance Security	The financial security required by the MCA, in a form acceptable to CDFW, to be provided by the MCA Sponsor to guarantee their obligations under this MCA through MCA closure, including any remedial actions needed.

¹⁰ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (c)

¹¹ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (d)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
create, creation	A manipulation of the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of a site to develop ecological value and ecosystem processes that did not previously exist at the site. Creation results in a gain in ecological resource area and function. See “establishment.” Compare to “enhancement,” “preservation,” and “restoration.”
credit	The unit of measure representing the accrual, attainment, or protection of focal species, non-focal species, or other conservation elements on the MCA site.
credit release	An action by CDFW over specified credits created, pursuant to the MCA, that makes the credits available for sale or use. Credits are released as set forth in the credit release schedule of the MCA after meeting the performance-based milestones and/or the performance standards associated with the release.
credit sale	The sale of credits by the MCA sponsor to another entity through a credit purchase as noted in a Credit Receipt. Previously, or in other programs, may have been referred to as “advance credit purchase”, “credit sale without transfer” or “bulk credit purchase”. See also “credit use.”
credit use	The use, or application of credits to a permit or project in order to satisfy compensatory mitigation requirements. Considered ‘transfer of credits’ in conservation and mitigation banking. Compare to “credit sale.”
CWHR—California Wildlife Habitat Relationships	System that contains the life history, geographic range, habitat relationships, and management information for over 700 regularly occurring species of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals in the state; allows users to produce queries to generate lists of species by geographic location or habitat type and provides information on expert opinion-based habitat suitability ranks for each species within each habitat type.
Development Plan	The document attached to the MCA Template as an exhibit that is the overall plan governing construction and habitat establishment, which includes creation, restoration, and enhancement activities. Where preservation credits are proposed in an MCA, may not be necessary depending on site specific conditions and initial activities.

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
draft Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)	A substantially complete draft of a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) that is released after January 1, 2016, to the general public, plan participants, and CDFW. ¹²
ecoregion(al), sub-ecoregion(al)	As used in this document, ecoregion means a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) section and sub-ecoregion means a portion of the USDA section or USGS Hydrological Units (assigned hydrological unit codes; HUC). USDA describes four geographic levels of detail in a hierarchy of regional ecosystems including domains, divisions, provinces, and sections. Sections are subdivisions of provinces based on major terrain features, such as a desert, plateau, valley, mountain range, or a combination thereof. May also be referred to as 'regional level.'
ecosystem process	The interactions between physical, chemical, and biological components of the ecosystem, such as dynamic river meander, tidal fluctuations, bank erosion, and sediment deposition. May also be referred to as 'ecosystem function.'
ecosystem services	The beneficial outcomes to humans from the natural environment such as supplying of oxygen; sequestering of carbon; moderating climate change effects; supporting the food chain; harvesting of animals or plants; providing clean water; recharging groundwater; abating storm, fire, and flood damage; pollinating and fertilizing for agriculture; and providing scenic views.

¹² Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (e)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
endowment fund	A financial account held in trust for the benefit of the long-term stewardship of the MCA site. The endowment fund shall be maintained and managed in accordance with Government Code §§ 65965-69568, Probate Code §§18501-18510, the MCA, and, to the extent they do not conflict with the foregoing, the endowment agreement. The endowment fund shall be invested in accordance with an investment policy statement that is designed to generate earnings and appreciate in value over the long-term. The amount of funds to be deposited are included in the Endowment Fund Analysis exhibit. The endowment fund shall be used to pay for the management, maintenance, monitoring, and reporting pursuant to the Long-term Management and Monitoring Plan. The term "endowment fund" as used in this MCA shall include the endowment deposits and all interest, dividends, gains, other earnings, additions and appreciation.
endowment holder	An entity qualified to hold the endowment pursuant to Government Code §§ 65965-65968. See "endowment fund."
enhance, enhancement	A manipulation of the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics to heighten, intensify, or improve an existing resource. Enhancement results in a gain in ecological function but may also lead to a decline in other ecological functions. Enhancement does not result in a gain in ecological resource area. See "establishment." Compare to "creation," "preservation," and "restoration."
established bank	A conservation or mitigation bank (bank) is considered established when the bank has met the bank establishment date criteria required in the banking program and the bank may begin selling or transferring credits. Also referred to as an 'approved conservation and mitigation bank'.
establish, establishment	The manipulation of the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics to develop or improve the ecological value and/or ecosystem processes on a site. Establishment may include creation, restoration and/or enhancement. See "creation," "enhancement," and "restoration." Compare to "preservation."

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
extraordinary circumstances	An event or circumstance that has a material and detrimental impact on the MCA site or on the ability of MCA sponsor to attain performance standards and: (1) was neither foreseen nor foreseeable by the MCA sponsor, property owner, or CDFW; and (2) neither the MCA sponsor nor the property owner (or anyone acting on behalf or under the control of either of them) caused or could have prevented; and (3) prevents the MCA sponsor or property owner from achieving an objective or undertaking an action required under the MCA. Extraordinary circumstances exclude mere economic hardship.
focal species	<p>Sensitive species identified and analyzed within an RCIS that will benefit from conservation actions and/or habitat enhancement actions set forth in the RCIS.¹³</p> <p>In practice, focal species have also included common species beyond sensitive species that would benefit from conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions. See also, "sensitive species" and "non-focal species".</p>
goal	A broad, guiding principle that describes a desired future condition for a focal species or other conservation element. Each goal is supported by one or more objectives with one or more actions. May also be referred to as 'conservation goal' or 'biological goal.'
habitat enhancement action	<p>An action identified in an RCIS to improve the quality of wildlife habitat, or to address risks or stressors to wildlife, that has long-term durability but does not involve land acquisition or the permanent protection of habitat, such as improving in-stream flows to benefit fish species, enhancing habitat connectivity, or invasive species control or eradication.¹⁴</p> <p>Compare to "conservation action".</p>

¹³ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (f)

¹⁴ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (g)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
HCP – Habitat Conservation Plan	Habitat Conservation Plan. A federal planning document that is required as part of an application for an incidental take permit under the federal Endangered Species Act. HCPs describe the anticipated effects of the proposed taking, how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated, and how the HCP is to be funded.
HUC	Hydrologic Unit Code
implementing entity	The organization designated in an NCCP and associated implementing agreement that is responsible for implementing the NCCP. Implementing entities can be non-profit organizations, joint-powers authorities, local governments (such as cities or counties), or others.
Interim Management and Monitoring Plan	The document attached to the MCA Template as an exhibit that describes the adaptive management, monitoring, reporting, and other activities to be implemented by the MCA sponsor during the interim management period.
interim management period	The period between MCA establishment and the point where performance-based milestones and performance standards have been met and the full funding of the appropriate financial instrument has occurred.
Interim Management Security	The financial security required by the MCA, in a form acceptable to CDFW, to be provided by the MCA sponsor, when credits are released prior to fully funding the endowment for three years. This security is based on the estimated cost to implement three years of interim management (as described in the Interim Management and Monitoring Plan).
LOC – letter of credit	A guarantee, issued by a bank, that serves as financial security to ensure performance of the MCA sponsor's obligations under the MCA and that allows CDFW, as the beneficiary of the letter of credit, to draw upon the security if CDFW determines, in its sole and absolute discretion, that the MCA sponsor or property owner is in default with respect to one or more of the obligations of the MCA.
Long-term Management and Monitoring Plan	The document attached to the MCA Template as an exhibit that provides measures intended to ensure the MCA site is managed, monitored, and maintained during the long-term management period to conserve and protect the focal species, non-focal species and/or other conservation elements covered by the MCA in perpetuity.

Term/Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
long-term management period	The period beginning upon conclusion of the interim management period and continuing in perpetuity, or for the duration of the habitat enhancement action, during which the MCA site is to be managed, monitored, and maintained pursuant to the Long-term Management and Monitoring Plan.
LSA Agreement	A Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (Fish and Game Code sections 1600, et seq.)
MCA—Mitigation Credit Agreement	An agreement between CDFW and the MCA sponsor to implement one or more conservation actions and/or habitat enhancement actions to create credits. An MCA includes the terms and conditions under which the MCA sponsor may use or sell credits in accordance with the MCA that have been released by CDFW.
MCA closure	MCA closure shall occur upon written approval by CDFW, and all requirements described in the MCA Site Closure Plan have been met. At MCA closure no further credit sales, or returns shall occur.
MCA establishment	MCA establishment shall occur upon written approval by CDFW, when all MCA establishment requirements described in the MCA have been met. The sale or use of credits may begin only after MCA establishment.
MCA site	The geographic location upon which conservation actions or habitat enhancement actions are implemented in order to create credits under an MCA. An MCA site may be composed of multiple APNs and multiple non-contiguous sites.
MCA package	An MCA package includes the draft MCA, including all of the applicable exhibits, the MCA Checklist, fees, and any necessary letters.
MCA sponsor	The person(s) or entity(ies) responsible for preparing, establishing, and operating an MCA or framework.
metric	The ecologically based units of area and habitat quality by which the net ecological benefit can be measured.
NCCP—Natural Community Conservation Plan	A plan developed pursuant to the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Fish and Game Code section 2800, et seq.) which identifies and provides for the regional conservation and management of covered species, while allowing compatible and appropriate economic activity. An NCCP allows for take of species listed under CESA, fully protected species, as well as other, non-listed species.
NOAA Fisheries	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries

Term/Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
non-focal species	Non-focal species are species that are associated with a focal species or other conservation element in an RCIS due to shared ecological needs and requirements and could benefit from implementation of conservation actions and or habitat enhancement actions for the associated focal species or other conservation element. Non-focal species do not have their own unique goals, objectives, actions, and priorities. May also be referred to as 'associated species.' See "focal species."
objective	A concise statement of a target outcome for a focal species or other conservation element. Objectives must be measurable by using standard ecologically based metrics that includes both area and quality of habitat.
other conservation element	The important resources and processes within the RCIS area, including important natural communities, habitat, habitat connectivity, ecosystem processes, and water resources. Other conservation elements are not species. See "conservation element."
party/parties	CDFW, the MCA sponsor, and the MCA site(s) property owner(s) are referred to collectively as the "parties" and individually as a "Party." All parties must sign the MCA.
performance-based milestones	Specifically identified steps in the implementation of a conservation action or habitat enhancement action, such as site protection, initiating implementation, completing implementation, or achieving performance standards. ¹⁵ See "performance standards."
Performance Security	The financial security required by the MCA, to be provided by the MCA sponsor, in a form acceptable to CDFW, to guarantee the MCA sponsor's obligations to meet performance-based milestones and performance standards in the MCA, Development Plan, and/or the Interim Management and Monitoring Plan.
performance standards	Observable or measurable physical or biological attributes that are used to determine if a conservation action or habitat enhancement action has met its objectives. ¹⁶ May have previously or in other programs been referred to as 'success criteria.' "See performance-based milestones."

¹⁵ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (h)

¹⁶ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subsection (i)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
permanently protect	Permanent protection means both: (1) recording a CE, in a form approved in advance in writing by CDFW, or establishing perpetual protection of land in a manner consistent with an overlapping draft or approved NCCP that prevents development, prohibits inconsistent uses, and ensures that habitat for focal species is maintained, and (2) providing secure, perpetual funding for management of the land, monitoring, legal enforcement, and defense. ¹⁷
preserve, preservation	The removal of a threat to, or preventing the decline of, ecological resources by an action in or near those ecological resources. Preservation includes activities commonly associated with the protection and maintenance of ecological resources through the implementation of appropriate legal and physical mechanisms. Preservation does not result in a gain of resource area or functions. Credits for preservation must include permanently protected land. Compare to "creation," "enhancement," "establishment," and "restoration."
pressure	A pressure is an anthropogenic (human-induced) or natural driver that could result in changing the ecological conditions of a focal species or other conservation element. Pressures can be positive or negative depending on intensity, timing, and duration. Negative or positive, the influence of a pressure to the target focal species or other conservation elements is likely to be significant. Compare to "stressor".
priority	A list of actions (e.g., land acquisition, preservation, or habitat establishment) or locations that are identified in an RCIS as important for benefiting and contributing to the conservation of focal species and other conservation elements within an RCIS area. May also be referred to as 'conservation priority' or 'biological priority.'
Property Assessment and Warranty (PAW)	The written property evaluation that provides a summary and explanation of each recorded and unrecorded lien or encumbrance on, or that has interest in, the MCA site, including each exception listed in the preliminary title report covering the MCA site.

¹⁷ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (j)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
RCA—Regional Conservation Assessment	Information and analyses that document the important species, ecosystems, ecosystem processes, protected areas, and linkages within an ecoregion to provide the appropriate context for nonbinding, voluntary conservation strategies and actions. Those assessments include information for the identification of areas with the greatest probability for long-term ecosystem conservation success incorporating co-benefits of ecosystem services, such as the benefits of carbon cycling, water, and agricultural lands. An RCA may be used to provide context at an ecoregional or sub-ecoregional scale to assist with the development of an RCIS. An RCA is nonbinding, voluntary, and does not create, modify, or impose regulatory requirements or standards, regulate the use of land, establish land use designations or affect the land use authority of, or the exercise of discretion by, any public agency. The preparation of an RCA is voluntary. ¹⁸
RCA or RCIS area	The geographic area encompassed by an RCA or RCIS.
RCA or RCIS proponent	The public agency or group of public agencies developing an RCA or RCIS for review and approval by CDFW and who is responsible for the technical and administrative updates of an RCA or RCIS. RCIS proponents may additionally include federally recognized tribes.

¹⁸ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (k)

Term/Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
RCIS—Regional Conservation Investment Strategy	Information and analyses to inform nonbinding and voluntary conservation actions and habitat enhancement actions that would advance the conservation of focal species, habitat, and other natural resources, including other conservation elements and non-focal species, and to provide nonbinding, voluntary guidance for the identification of wildlife and habitat conservation priorities, investments in ecological resource conservation, or identification of locations for compensatory mitigation for impacts to species and natural resources. RCISs are intended to provide scientific information for the consideration of public agencies, are voluntary, and do not create, modify, or impose regulatory requirements or standards, regulate the use of land, establish land use designations, or affect the land use authority of or exercise of discretion by, any public agency. The preparation and use of regional conservation investment strategies for this guidance is voluntary. ¹⁹
recovery plan	A document published by USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, or CDFW that describes the status of a listed species and the actions necessary to recover the species so that it can be removed from either the federal or the California list of endangered or threatened species.
remedial action	Any measures needed to remedy any failure to achieve the performance standards or any injury or adverse impact to the MCA site.
restore, restoration	A manipulation of the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of a site with the goal of returning natural and historic functions to a former or degraded resource. Restoration results in a gain in resource area. See “establishment.” Compare with “creation,” “enhancement,” and “preservation.”
sensitive species	Any special-status species identified by a state or federal agency. ²⁰ See also, “focal species” and “non-focal species.”
service area	The geographic area(s) where impacts species or habitats covered by an MCA or bank may be mitigated by credits from that MCA or bank.
SCV	Survey of California Vegetation

¹⁹ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (l)

²⁰ Fish & G. Code, § 1851, subdivision (n)

Term/Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
SGCN – species of greatest conservation need	Species of greatest conservation need are selected, for each state, to indicate the status of biological diversity in the state, specifying at-risk species that have the greatest need for conservation. The latest SGCN list for the state of California is found in the California State Wildlife Action Plan 2015 Update, or most current version.
species of special concern	Species of special concern is an administrative designation and carries no formal legal status. The intent of designating species of special concern (SSCs) is to: 1) focus attention on animals considered potentially at conservation risk by CDFW, other state, local and federal governmental entities, regulators, land managers, planners, consulting biologists, and others; 2) stimulate research on poorly known species; and 3) achieve conservation and recovery of these animals before they meet CESA criteria for listing as threatened or endangered.
stressor	Stressor is a degraded ecological condition of a focal species or other conservation element that resulted directly or indirectly from a negative impact of pressures, such as habitat fragmentation. Compare to “pressure”.
sub-ecoregion	See “ecoregion, sub-ecoregion.”
SWAP– California State Wildlife Action Plan	The California State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a CDFW publication developed to address the highest conservation priorities of the state, providing a blueprint for actions necessary to sustain the integrity of California's diverse ecosystems. Companion plans are considered part of the SWAP.
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
VegCAMP – Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program	The CDFW Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program that develops and maintains California's expression of the National Vegetation Classification System.