

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Stakeholder Meeting

April 28, 2020



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Consulting**

Meeting Agenda



Welcome and Introductions



RCIS Background



Stakeholder Roles and Goals



Review Available Data



Species Selection Process



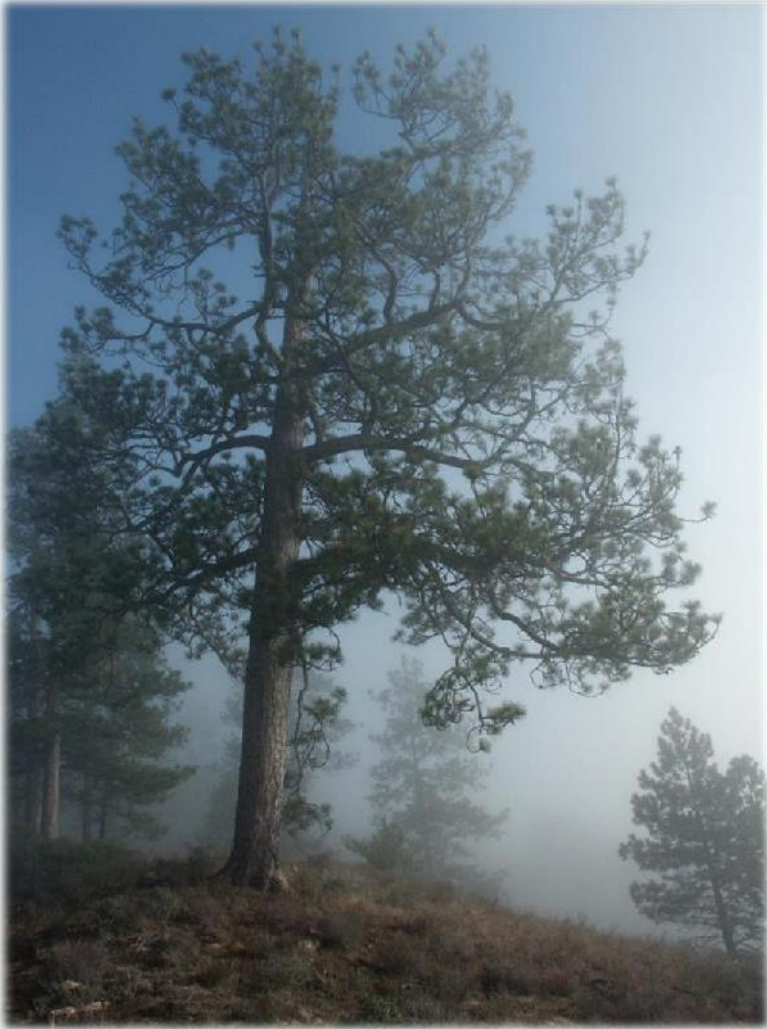
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS



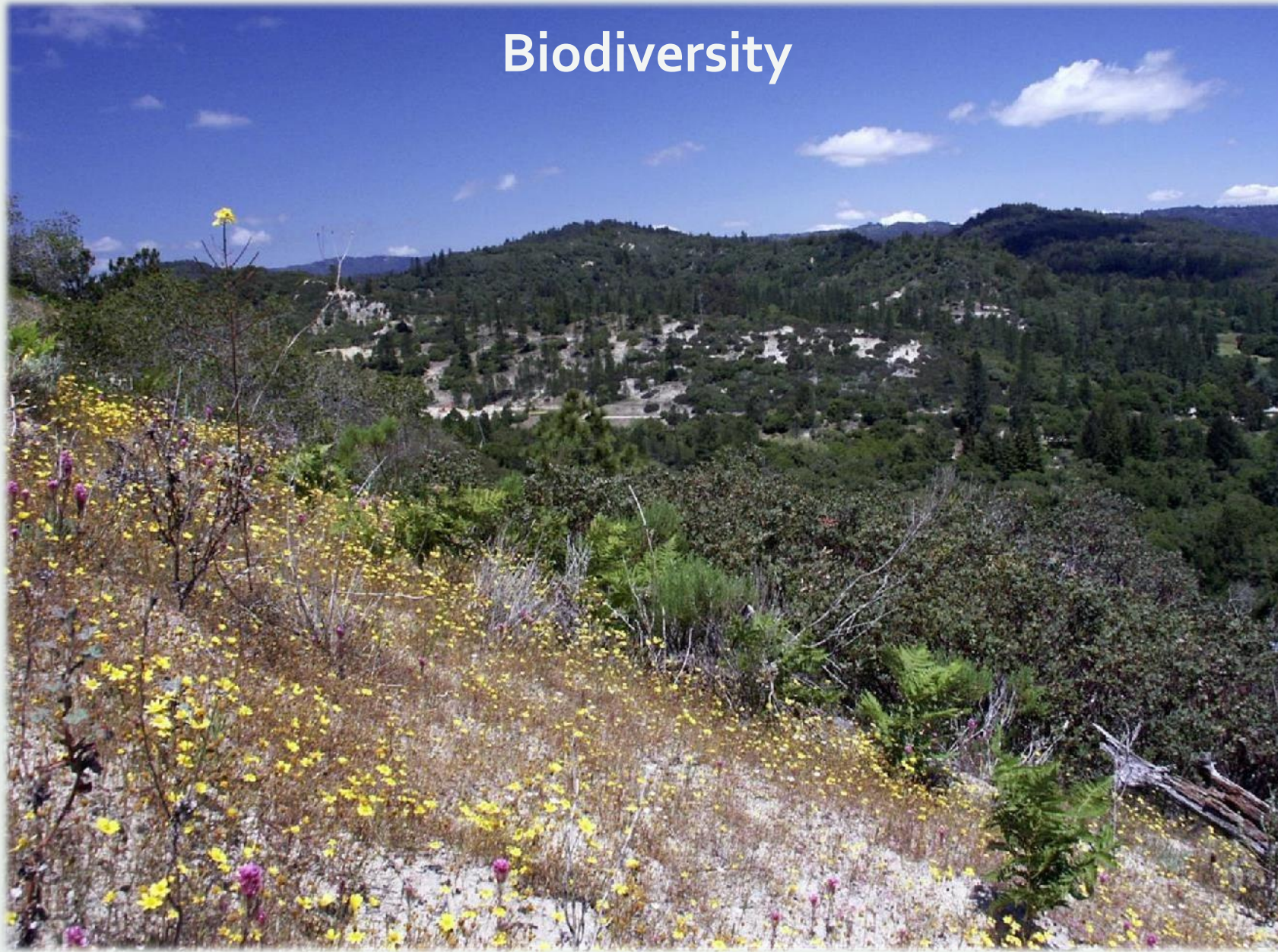
RCIS PROGRAM BACKGROUND

RCIS Program Goals

- Established under AB 2087
- Achieve more strategic, effective conservation
- Protect vulnerable and declining species
- Enhance resiliency to climate change
- Provide efficient mitigation delivery
- Be consistent with NCCPs, HCPs, Banks
- Conserve working lands
- Enhance public lands



Biodiversity



ECOSYSTEM SERVICES



Agriculture



Wildfire Risk Reduction



Recreation



Flood Risk Reduction



Regional Conservation Assessment (RCA)

Purpose: Assess conservation opportunities at an ecoregional scale



Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS)

Purpose: Develop a voluntary conservation strategy to inform conservation investments and advance mitigation



Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA)

Purpose: Provide an advance mitigation tool for use on public and private lands, to offset CESA, CEQA, LSA, & other impacts

RCIS Program Components

RCIS Essentials

- Developed by a public agency and approved by CDFW
- Voluntary, non-regulatory
- Non-binding on land use authorities
- Developed to complement HCPs, NCCPs, banks
- Intended to be done quickly
- Good for 10 years, extendable
- Required to develop mitigation credit agreements
- CDFW program but goal is to address other resource agency needs to make plans broadly applicable





Conservation Elements

- Focal Species
 - SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need
 - Native vulnerable species (e.g., climate vulnerable)
 - Special-status species
 - Wide-ranging species
 - Other Conservation Elements
 - Natural communities
 - Habitat connectivity
 - Water resources
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RCIS Components

- Ecological assessment of **focal species & other conservation elements**
 - Pressures/stressors (e.g. climate change, invasives)
 - Goals and objectives
 - **Identify conservation & enhancement actions**
 - Consistent with NCCP, HCP, RCA, and recovery plans
 - Major foreseeable development including infrastructure projects
 - Assess existing protected lands
 - Summary of banks in RCIS area
 - Opportunities for working lands conservation
-





Potential Conservation & Enhancement Actions



RCIS

IMPLEMENTATION



Implementation Overview

RCIS can inform strategic conservation as part of

- Government and private grants
- Other philanthropic endeavors
- Mitigation, including advance mitigation

Mitigation Credit Agreements

- Based on conservation & habitat enhancement actions in an approved RCIS
- Anyone may apply for an MCA
- Habitat protection, restoration *and* enhancement
- On public or private land
- Offset impacts under CESA, CEQA, LSA
- Offset permanent and *temporary* impacts
- Advance mitigation
- Excess project mitigation available as credits, which are transferable
- Consistent with CDFW's Banking Program



RCIS Program Summary

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- Designed to inform conservation for rare species and sensitive communities
- RCIS Program is voluntary, non-regulatory
- Non-binding on land use authorities
- RCA is an assessment
- RCIS identifies actions
- MCA provides credits
- More information:
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation>





SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RCIS



A Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Isn't....

- An effort to re-invent the wheel
- An effort to collect new data
- A new set of laws or regulations governing local land-use
- A new set of land-use restrictions imposed by CDFW and/or other wildlife agencies.
- A permit enabling development or restoration projects that supplants existing state, federal or local environmental regulations

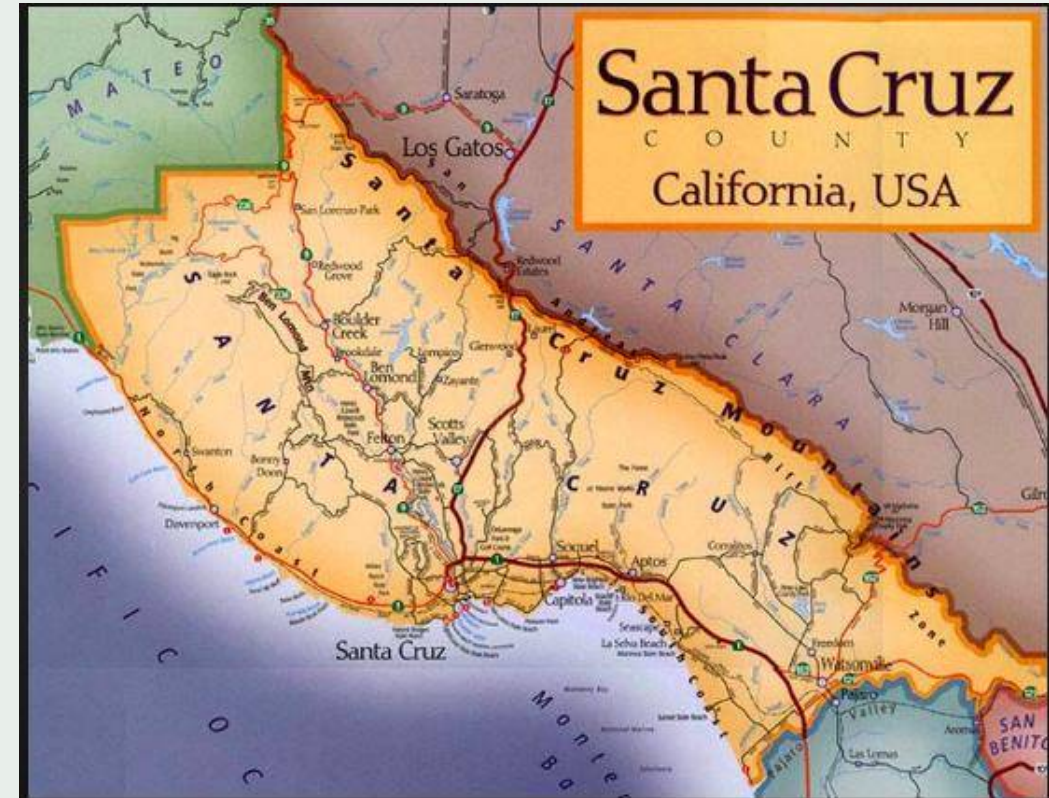
Key Approaches

- ▶ **Science Based:** uses best available information
- ▶ **Integrative:** builds on prior processes and plans for the region
- ▶ **Seamless:** links strategies for Santa Clara and Monterey
- ▶ **Locally Developed:** developed by experts in the region
- ▶ **Accessible:** contents are widely accessible and usable (incl. pithy not wordy)
- ▶ **Efficient:** developed using existing content from approved RCIS
- ▶ **Strategic:** prioritizes actions of greatest benefit (protection and restoration/enhancement)
- ▶ **Implementable:** identifies actions of high direct conservation value
- ▶ **Forward Looking:** links to current state initiatives (Stronger, Faster; Cutting the Green Tape)

Santa Cruz County RCIS will be UNIQUE because...

Building on tons of existing data and rich history of conservation planning:

- 9+ Watershed Plans,
- Integrated Watershed Restoration Program
- Conservation Blueprint
- Transportation Advance Mitigation MOU,
- SC Co Steelhead and Coho Conservation Strategy,
- Conceptual Area Protection Plans,
- City of Santa Cruz's draft HCPs,
- County Steelhead Monitoring Program,
- Depth and breadth of local biological knowledge



Santa Cruz County RCIS will be UNIQUE because...

Greater focus on ecological restoration/uplift on already protected lands vs simply acquiring more land

Linked to:

Santa Clara RCIS
(completed)

Monterey RCIS
(in process)



Questions?

Do you have any questions about:

- the RCIS Program?
- the Santa Cruz RCIS?



RCIS Participants

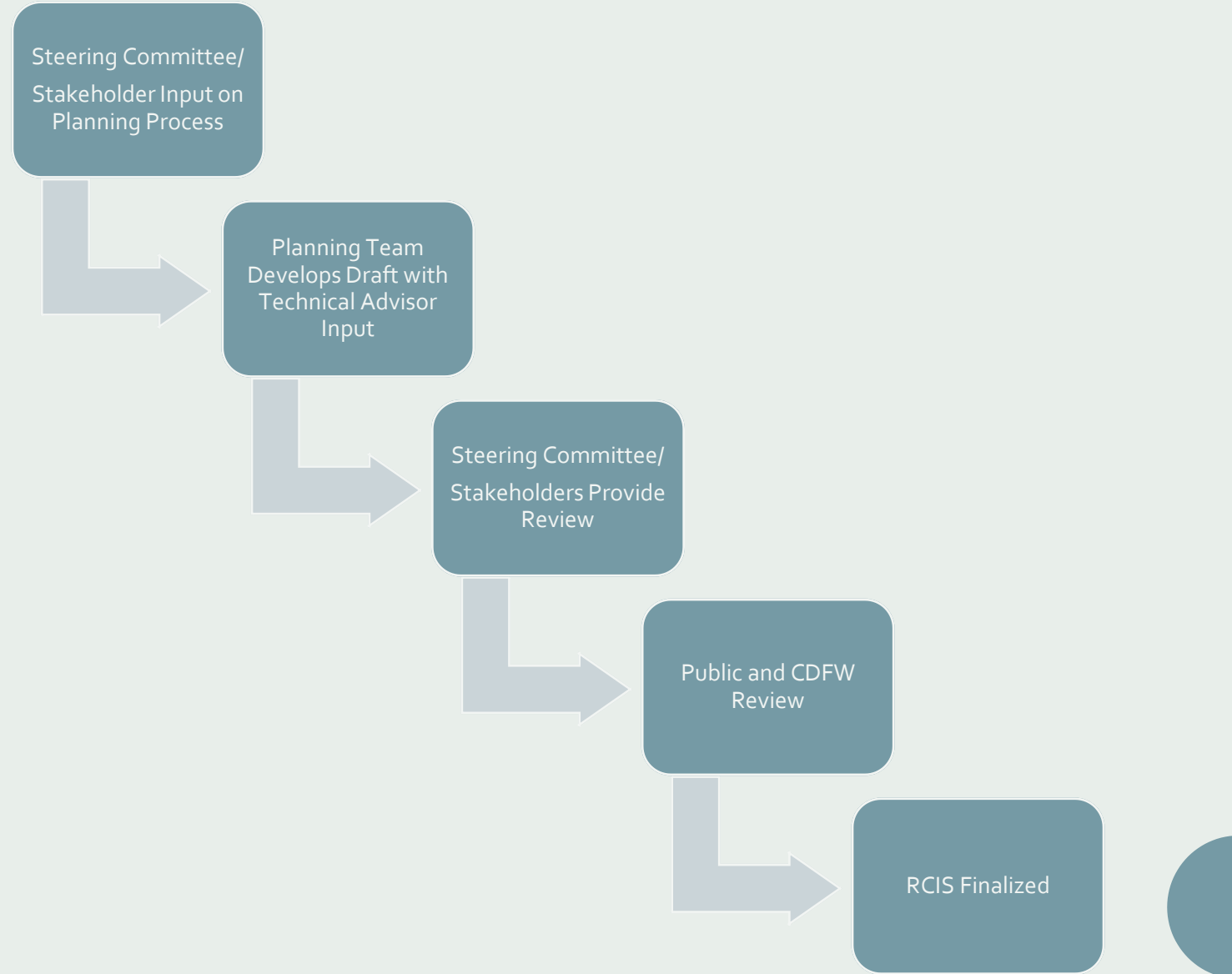




STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Roles and Engagement

Overview of Planning Process



Schedule Overview

**Characterize Existing
Conditions and
Identify Conservation
Elements**
(April –September)

**Assess Pressures and
Stressors**
**Draft Conservation
Goals, Objectives and
Actions**
(September 2020–
January 2021)

**Develop
Admin Draft RCIS**
(January – April 2021)

**Revise RCIS
Public Workshop and
Review**
(April– August 2021)

Finalize RCIS
(September -
December 2021)

Questions?

Do you have any questions about the stakeholder process?





STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE



REVIEW AVAILABLE INFORMATION

What should the RCIS Integrate?

Existing Plans

Regional/Statewide

- State Wildlife Action Plan
- Conservation Lands Network (2.0)
- 20 Recovery Plans for Federally listed species

Local

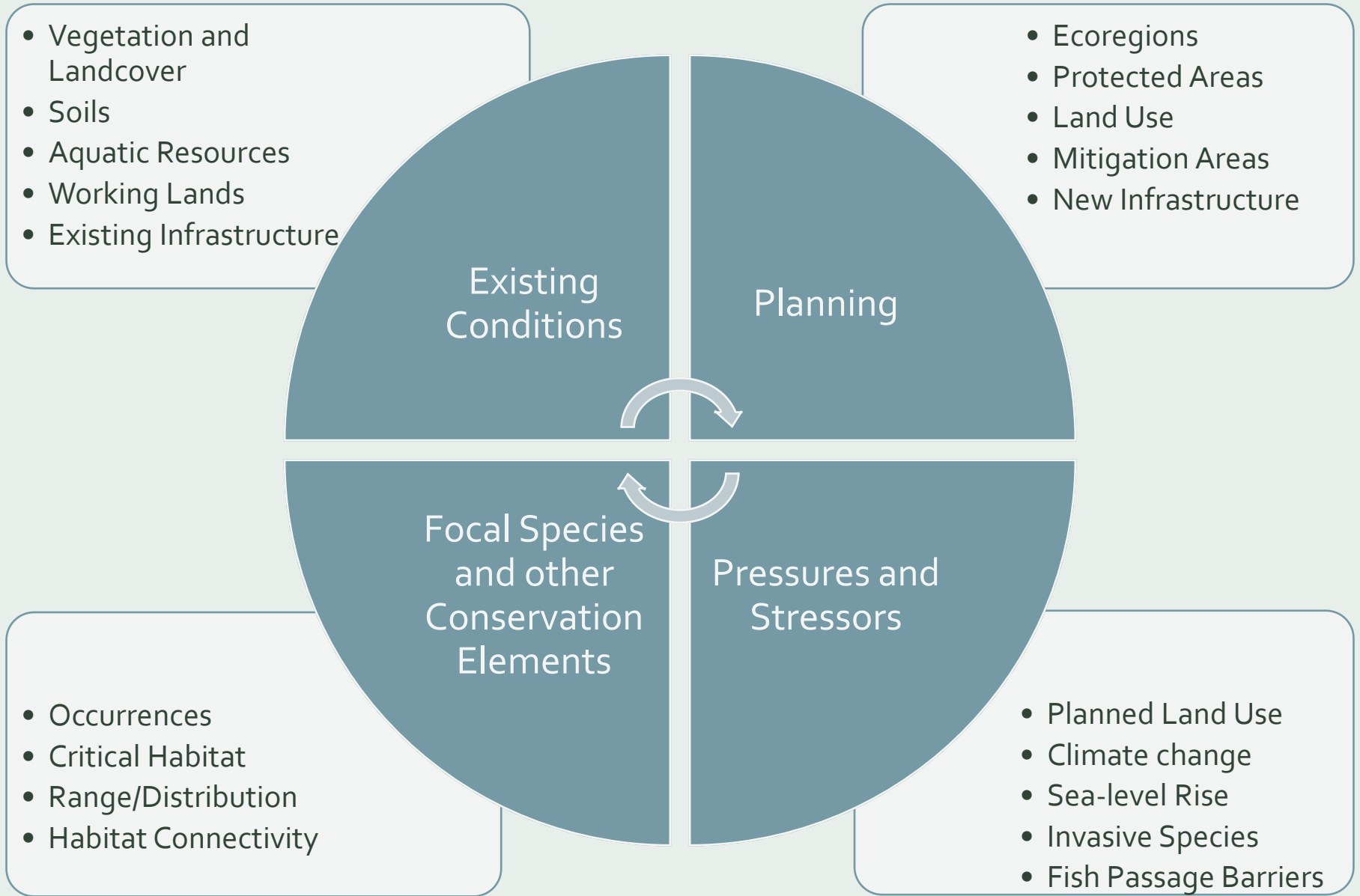
- Conservation Blueprint for Santa Cruz County
- Sandhills Conservation and Management Plan
- Conceptual Area Protection Plans (CAPPS)
 - Santa Cruz Mountains Redwoods, Santa Cruz Mountains Linkages, Sandhills, Long-Toed Salamander, Watsonville Wetlands
- Healthy Lands and Healthy Economies
- Watershed Enhancement Plans
 - Aptos Creek, Arana Gulch, San Lorenzo River, San Vicente Creek, Pinto Lake, Lower Pajaro River, Soquel Creek, Scotts Creek, Watsonville Sloughs

HCPs (no NCCPs)

- Draft City of Santa Cruz Aquatic HCP
- Draft City of Santa Cruz Terrestrial HCP
- Interim Programmatic HCP for Mount Hermon June beetle and Ben Lomond spineflower
- Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
- PG&E Vegetation Management HCP
- Project specific HCPs
 - 13 Mount Hermon June beetle
 - 4 California red-legged frog
 - 1 Santa Cruz tarplant
 - 1 Santa Cruz long-toed salamander



Spatial Data Themes



Stakeholder Input

What additional plans should be integrated ?

What are the key spatial data available?

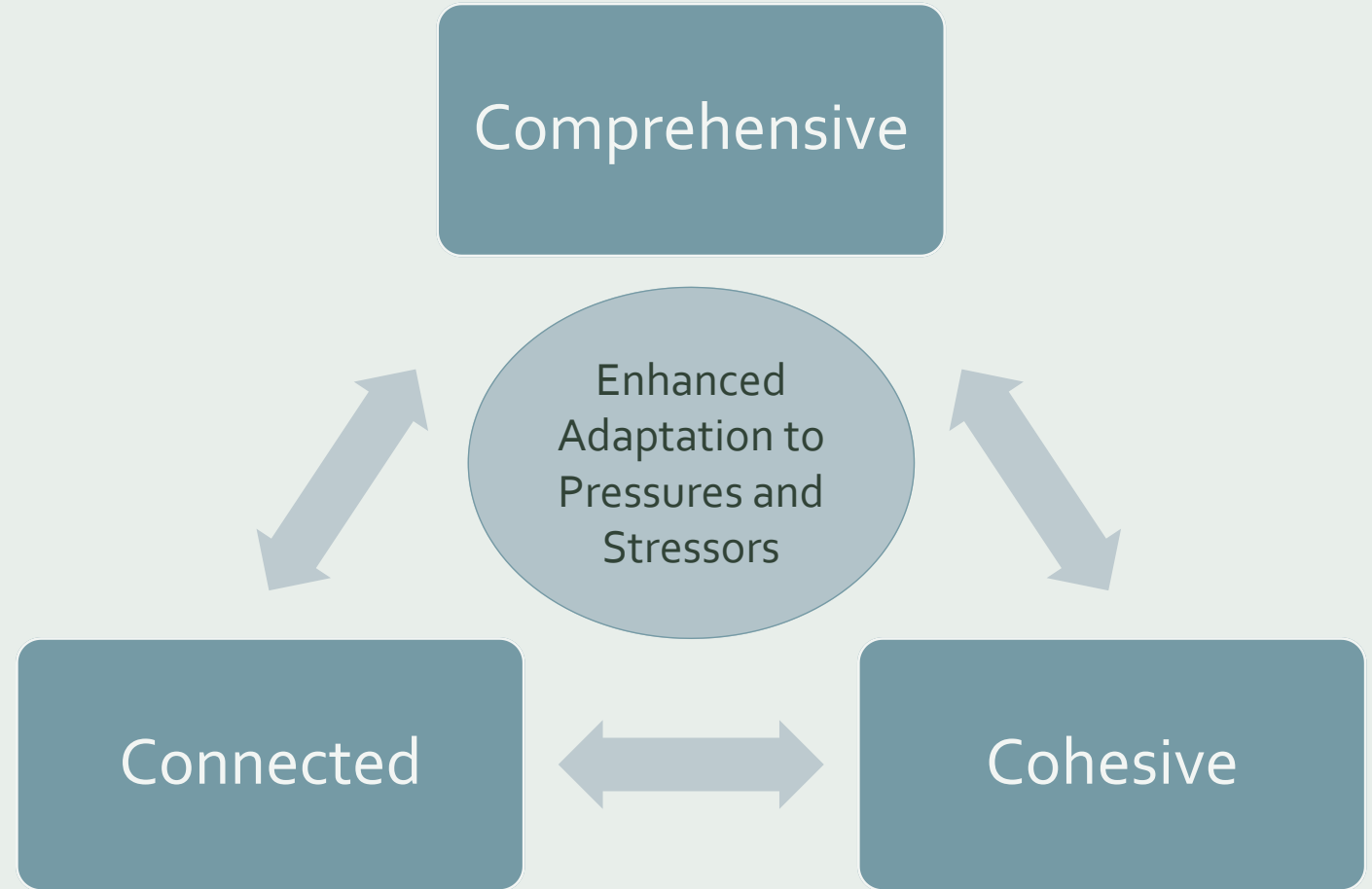




FOCAL SPECIES

Focal Species

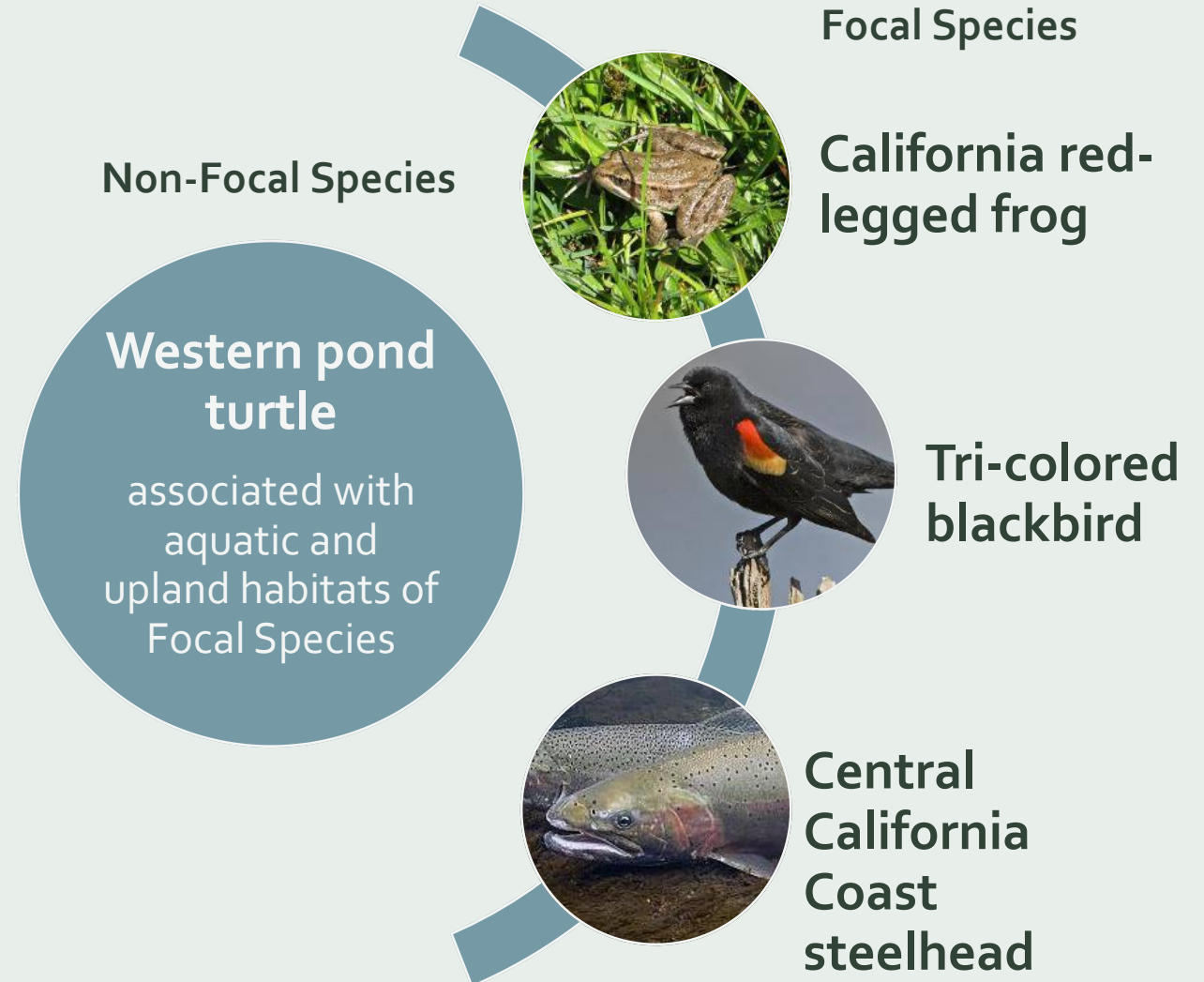
- Species that will benefit from conservation and habitat enhancement
- Sensitive species as well as other species
- Representative of:
 - all major taxonomic groups
 - unique natural communities
 - ecosystem functions
- Characterize conservation needs of Santa Cruz County
- Link Santa Cruz RCIS to Santa Clara and Monterey RCISs
- Can be subject of mitigation credit agreements



Non-Focal Species

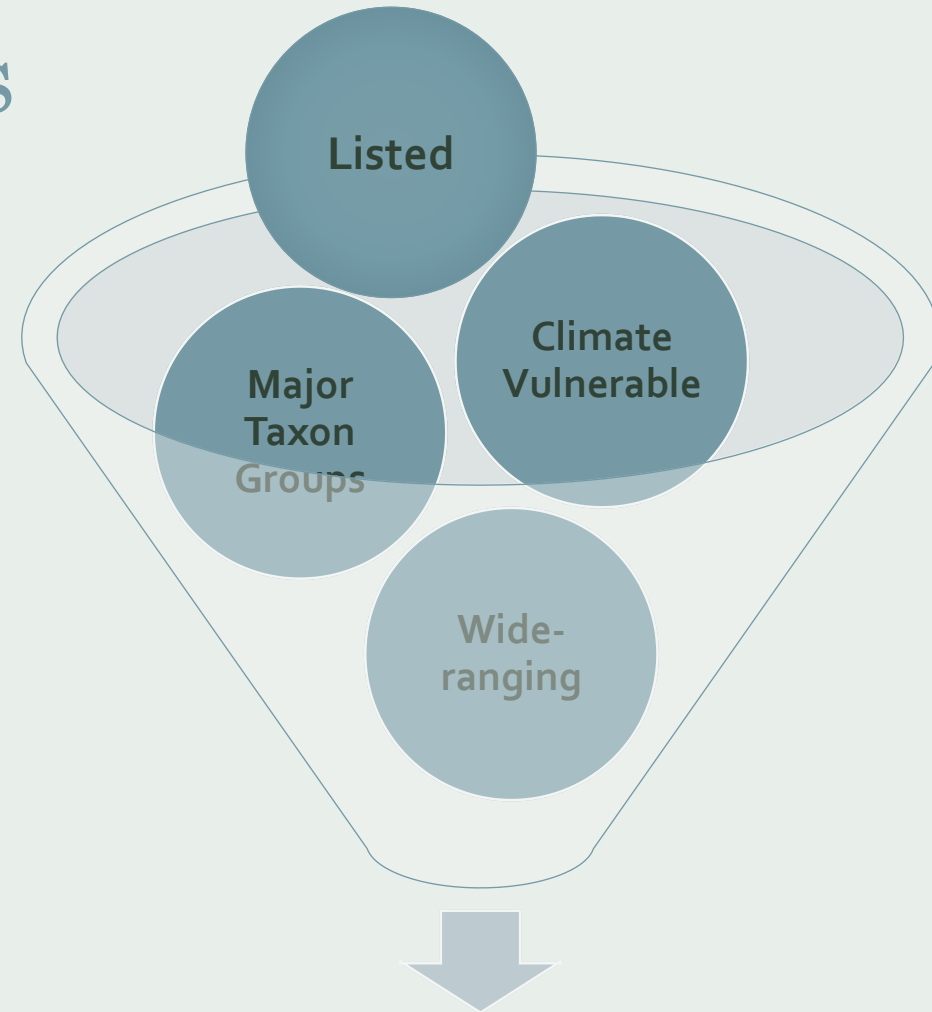
- Associated with a focal species or other conservation elements
- Will benefit from the conservation actions
- Eligible for mitigation credits in an MCA
 - Cannot be listed species

Example: Santa Clara County RCIS



Focal and Non-Focal Species Selection Process

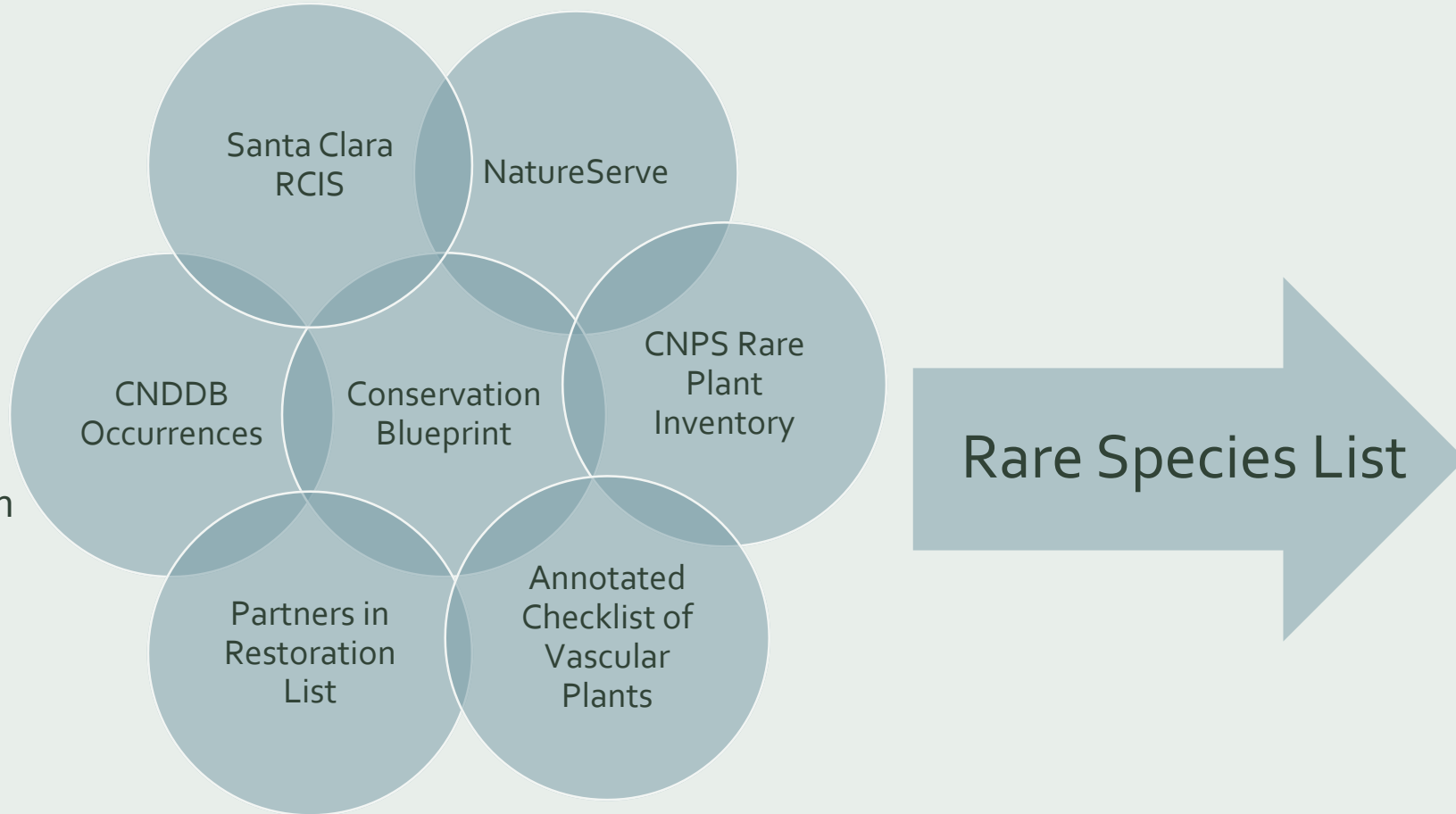
1. Assemble list of rare species
2. Revise based on stakeholder review
3. Apply RCIS selection criteria
4. Draft focal and non-focal species list
 - Species meeting criteria will exceed the RCIS's capacity
 - We will need to be strategic
5. Finalize focal and non-focal species list
 - Input from stakeholders and technical advisors



Focal and Non-Focal Species List

Identify Rare Species

- Efficiently compile a list of rare and endemic species
- Use best available scientific information
- Utilize existing data sources
- Refine based on stakeholder and technical advisor review



Rare Species Summary

Taxonomic Group	ESA and/or CESA (incl. FP)	Other Special Status (FSC, SSC, or CNPS List)	Statusless	Total	Endemic
Plants	16	76	23	115	17
Invertebrates	5		25	30	17
Fish	5	1	4	10	0
Amphibians	4	2	1	7	0
Reptiles	1	5	3	9	0
Birds	13	18	18	49	0
Mammals	2	8	7	17	1
Total	46	110	81	237	35

Important: Focal species may include non-rare species

Stakeholder Input

Review draft rare species list

- What is missing and should be considered?
- What should be removed from consideration?
- What other changes should be made?





*SPECIES for
CONSIDERATION*

.....

And then some...

POTENTIAL SPECIES



Fish



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- Tidewater goby
- Coho salmon
- Steelhead
- Pacific lamprey
- Sacramento sucker
- Monterey roach
- Speckled dace
- Resident stickleback

Amphibians



- California tiger salamander
- Santa Cruz Long-toed salamander
- California red-legged frog
- Foothill yellow-legged frog
- Pacific giant salamander
- Black salamander

Wildlife



Reptiles

- Southwestern pond turtle
- San Francisco garter snake
- Northern California legless lizard
- California mountain kingsnake
- Blainville's horned lizard

Mammals

- Mountain lion
- Santa Cruz kangaroo rat
- San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat
- American badger
- Pallid bat

Birds

- Tricolored blackbird
- Burrowing owl
- Western snowy plover
- White-tailed kite
- Osprey
- California black rail



Invertebrates



- Mount Hermon June beetle
- Zayante band-winged grasshopper
- Ohlone tiger beetle
- Monarch butterfly
- California brackishwater snail
- Western bumblebee
- California fairy shrimp
- Opler's longhorn moth
- Santa Cruz teleman spider

Plants



- Manzanitas (Hooker's, Pajaro, Bonny Doon, etc.)
- Spineflowers (Robust, Monterey, Ben Lomond, etc.)
- Tarplants (Santa Cruz, Congdon's)
- Scotts Valley polygonum
- Santa Cruz wallflower
- Clover's (Santa Cruz, saline, headland, etc.)
- Monterey Pine
- White –rayed pentachaeta
- Deceiving sedge



NEXT STEPS



Next Steps

Stakeholder Review (by mid-May)

- Initial species list
- List of existing plans
- List of spatial data
- Additional participants

Technical Advisor Outreach (May-June)

Stakeholder Review (August)

- Draft Existing Conditions
- Draft Focal Species and Other Conservation Elements



More Information

For more information about the RCIS Program, go to

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

For more information about the Santa Cruz RCIS, please contact:

- Jim Robins, jrobins@alnus-eco.com
- Grace Blakeslee, gblakeslee@sccrtc.org



THANK YOU!

