SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Public Workshop: June 29, 2022

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SCCRTC
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission

RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Jodi McGraw
Consulting

Ainus Ecological

Meeting Agenda

I. Welcome and Workshop Overview
II. Background & Goals
III. Draft SCCRCIS
IV. Public Comment Process
V. Next Steps

RCIS Project Partners

Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)

- Transportation Planning Agency
- Early Mitigation/Advanced Mitigation
- Measure D – Transportation Projects

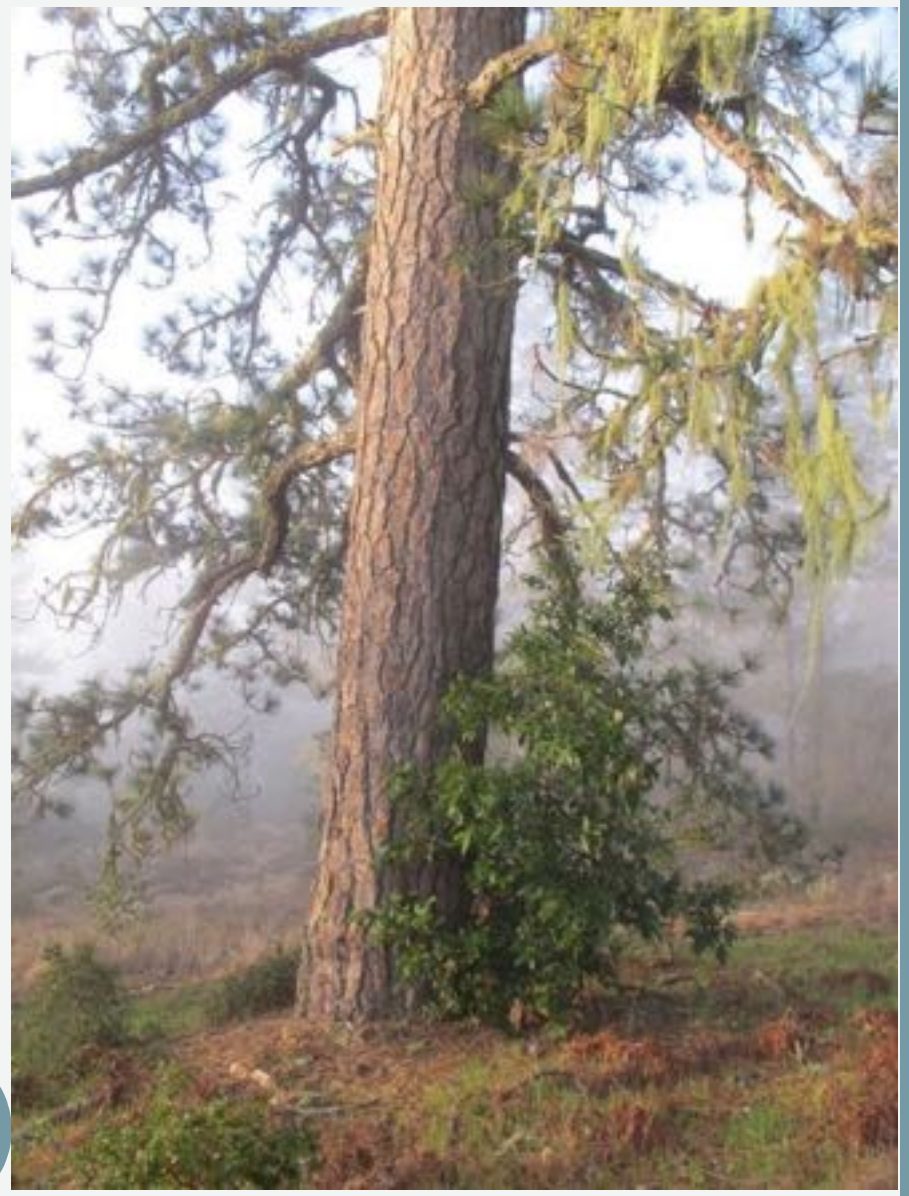
Resource Conservation District (RCD)

- Integrated Watershed Restoration Program
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Conservation Planning and Implementation

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RCIS: Background & Status

RCIS Program Goals

- Achieve more strategic, effective conservation
- Protect vulnerable and declining species
- Enhance resilience to climate change
- Provide efficient mitigation delivery (Mitigation Credit Agreements)



Implementation

RCIS can inform strategic conservation as part of

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

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

A Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Isn't….

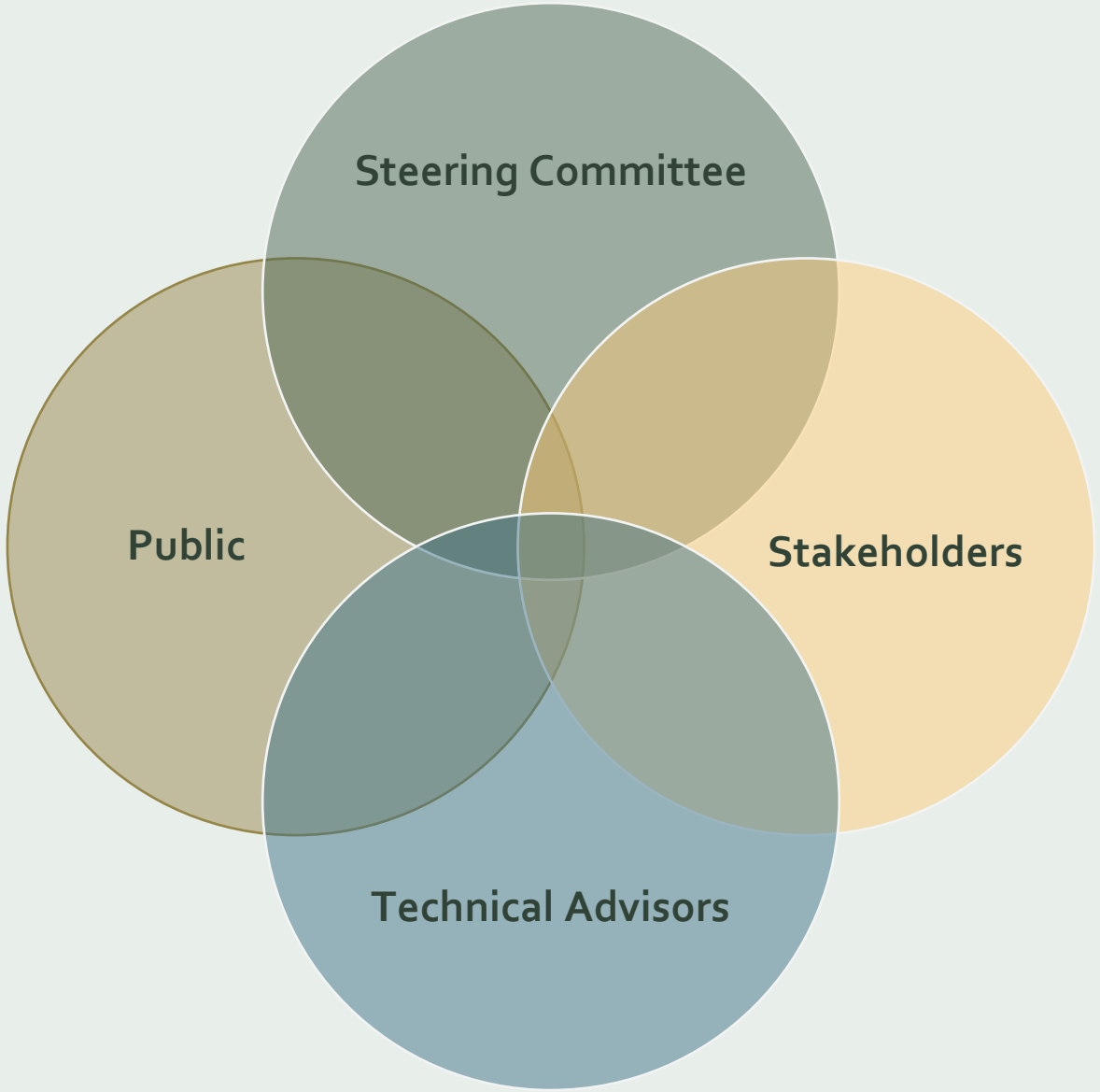
- An effort to reinvent the wheel
- An effort to collect new data
- A new set of laws or regulations governing local land-use
- A new set of land-use restrictions imposed by CDFW and/or other wildlife agencies.
- A permit enabling development or restoration projects that supplants existing state, federal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

Building on Existing Plans

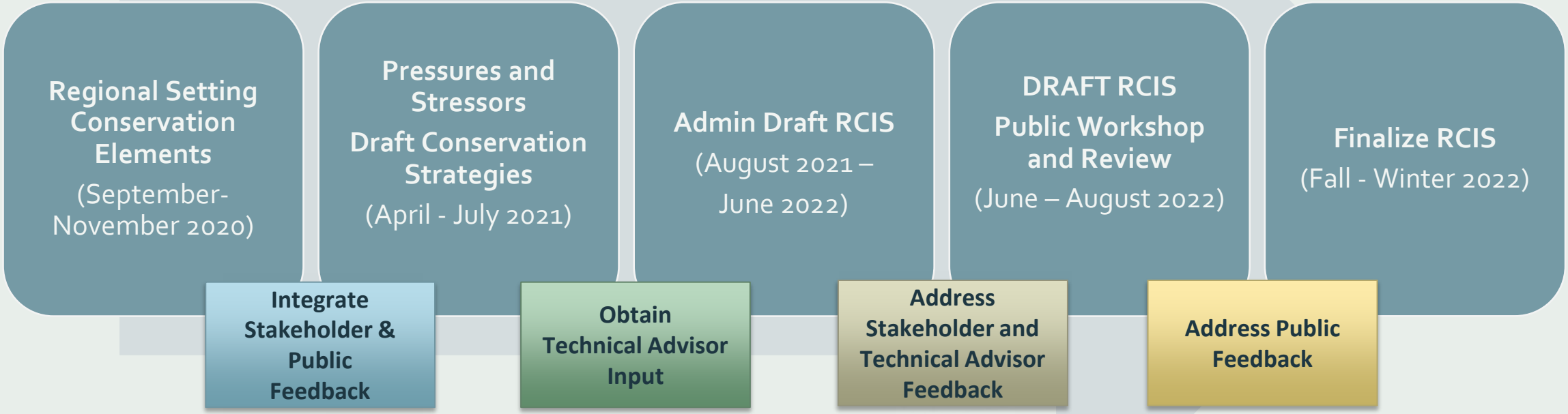
Building rich history of conservation planning and data:

- Conservation Blueprint
- 9+ Watershed Plans
- Integrated Watershed Restoration Program
- 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

RCIS Participants



Process and Schedule



Overview of Draft RCIS

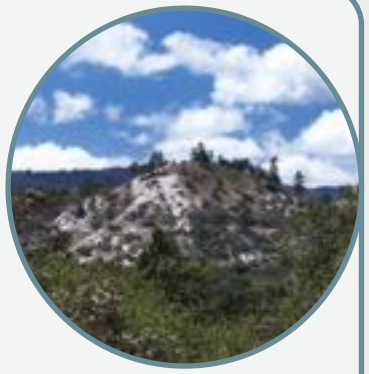
RCIS Chapters

Introduction (Chapter 1)

- Project Goals
- Program Background
- Planning Process
- Plan Participants
- Document Overview

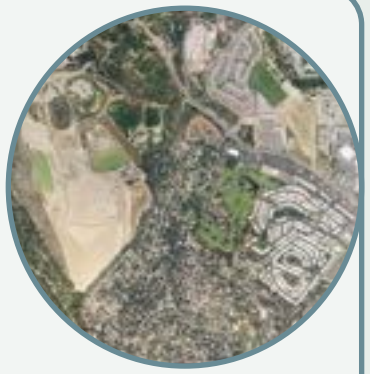
Regional Setting (Chapter 2)

- Aquatic Systems
- Terrestrial Systems
- Existing Land Use
- Planned Infrastructure and Development
- Existing Conservation Lands and Plans



Conservation Elements (Chapter 3)

- Communities
- Focal Species
- Other Conservation Elements
- Non-Focal Species
- Co-benefited Species



Pressures and Stressors (Chapter 4)

- Habitat Loss
- Habitat Degradation
- Habitat Fragmentation
- Climate Change
- Loss of Genetic Diversity

Conservation Strategies (Chapter 5)

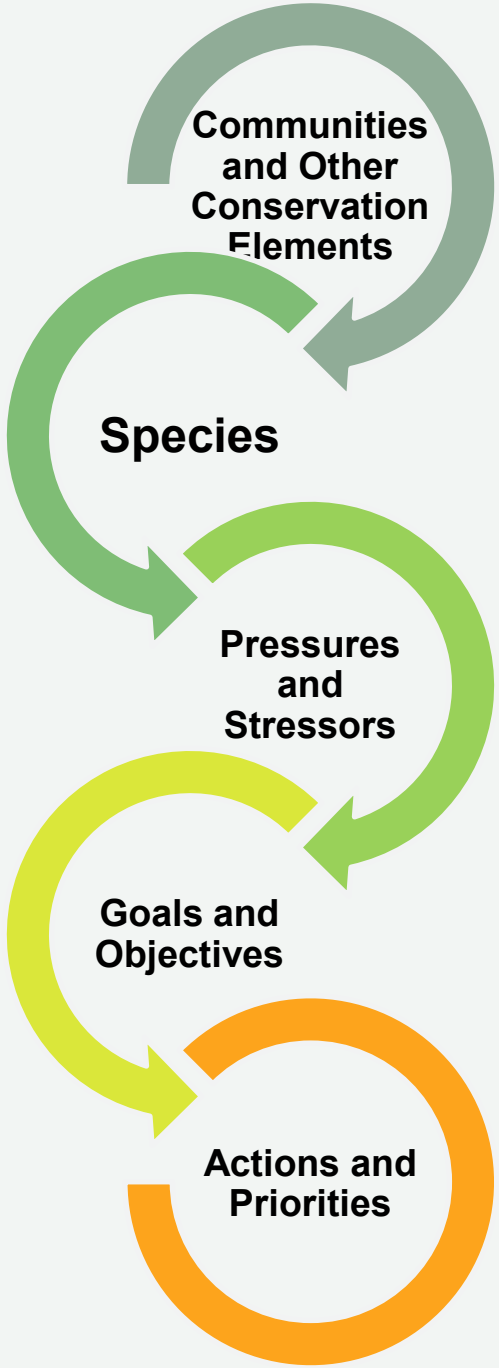
- Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Priorities
- Habitat Protection, Restoration, Enhancement, Creation, and Management, and Species Conservation

Implementation (Chapter 6)

- Mitigation Credit Agreements
- Existing Mitigation Programs
- Grants
- Conservation Finance Programs
- Coordination

Regional Setting

- Overview
- Land Use
- Existing Conservation Plans
- Natural Environment
  - Ecoregions
  - Aquatic Systems
  - Natural Communities

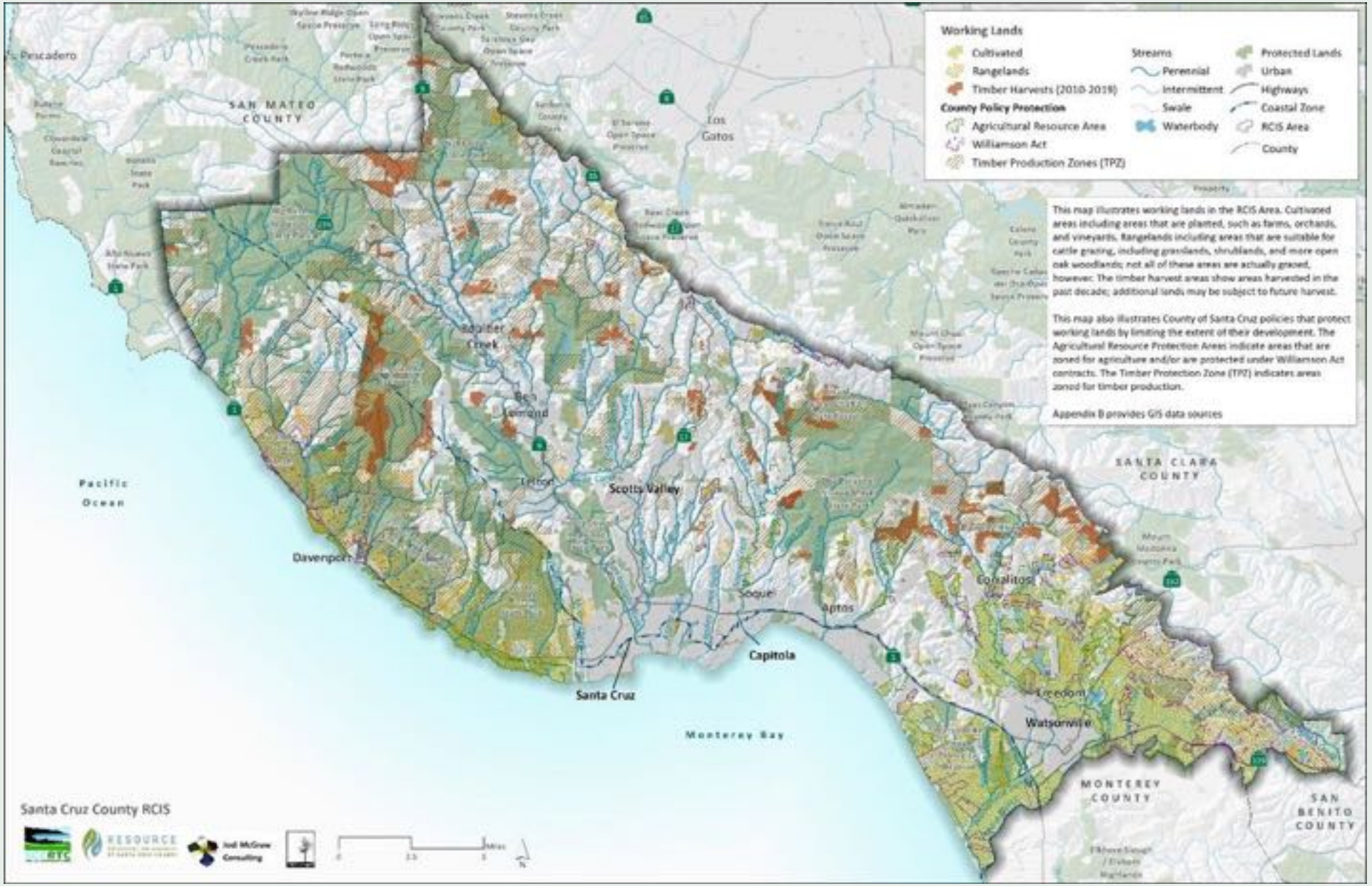


RCIS Conservation Strategy

Conservation Elements

Natural Communities

Working Lands



Habitat Connectivity

Focal Species

Considerations for Selection:

- State-listed under CESA or Federally listed under ESA
- Potential subject of mitigation credit agreements
- Taxonomic representation
- Locally unique or range limited
- Climate vulnerable
- Utilizes multiple community types

Common Name	Status
Santa Cruz tarplant (grassland)	FT, SE, CRPR 1B.1
Mount Hermon June beetle (sandhills)	FE
CCC coho salmon (riparian/riverine)	FE, SE
Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (ponds, oak woodlands)	FE, SE, SFP
Western pond turtle (riparian/riverine and adjacent uplands)	FSC, SSC
marbled murrelet (redwood forest)	FT, SE
mountain lion (connectivity, most upland)	SC

Non-Focal Species

Criteria:

- Listed (or candidate/proposed) under FESA, CESA, or Fully Protected (FGC § 3511, 4700, 5050 and 5515)
- Not a focal species

Conservation Context:

- **Not** "less important" than focal-species from a conservation perspective
- Can be included in a future MCA
- Conservation needs are addressed by strategies for focal species and/or natural communities (or other OCEs)

Species	Status
Ben Lomond spineflower	FE, CRPR 1B.1
Monterey spineflower	FT, CRPR 1B.2
Scotts Valley spineflower	FE, CRPR 1B.1
robust spineflower	FE, CRPR 1B.1
Santa Cruz cypress	FT, SE, , CRPR 1B.2
Santa Cruz wallflower	FE, SE, CRPR 1B.1
white-rayed pentachaeta	FE, SE, , CRPR 1B.1
Scotts Valley polygonum	FE, SE, , CRPR 1B.1
Pacific Grove clover	SR, 1B.1
Santa Francisco popcorn flower	SE, 1B.1
Monarch butterfly	*Proposed FE*
Ohlone tiger beetle	FE
Zayante band-winged grasshopper	FE
Western bumble bee	SC
tidewater goby	FE, SSC
CCC/SCCC steelhead - central California coast DPS	FT
California tiger salamander	FT, ST
Foothill yellow-legged frog	ST, SSC
California red-legged frog	FT, SSC
San Francisco garter snake	FE, SE,FP
Tricolored blackbird	ST, SSC
Golden eagle	FP
Swainson's hawk	ST
Western snowy plover	FT, SSC
White-tailed kite	FP
American peregrine falcon	FD, SD,FP
Bald eagle	FD, SE,FP
California brown pelican	FD, SE,FP
ringed-tailed cat	FP

Co-Benefited Species

Criteria:

- Special-status or rare species
- Not listed (under CESA or ESA)
- Not a focal or a non-focal species
- Unlikely to require compensatory mitigation or be covered under a future MCA

156 Species

- 75 plants
- 25 invertebrates
- 5 fish
- 3 amphibians
- 5 reptiles
- 29 birds
- 15 mammals

See Table 2-15 of Environmental Setting

Pressures and Stressors

Pressures are anthropogenic and natural factors that create degraded ecological conditions, which are known as **stressors**

Pressure	Stressors
Development (residential, commercial, public infrastructure)	· Reduction in habitat · Fragmentation of habitat · Degradation of habitat (by promoting invasive species, introducing pollutants etc.)
Mining	· Reduction in habitat · Fragmentation of habitat · Degradation of habitat
Agriculture (e.g., vineyards)	· Reduction in habitat · Fragmentation of habitat · Degradation of habitat (by promoting invasive species, introducing pollutants etc.)
Fire Exclusion	· Unnatural succession in the absence of fire can eliminate, fragment, or degrade habitat for species adapted to earlier successional conditions · Fire exclusion can promote wildfires outside of the natural range of variation of the natural fire regime, including less frequent, larger, more intense fires, including canopy fires rather than ground fires.
Recreation	· Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation due to o Soil disturbance o Erosion on steep slopes o Promoting the invasive and spread of exotic plants o Promoting spread of pathogens · Direct trampling of rare plants and animals
…	…

Conservation Strategies

G.O.A.P.

GOALS: What we want to achieve/desired future conditions

OBJECTIVES: Conservation tools and the targets

- Protect habitat
- Restore/Enhance (and Create) Habitat
- Manage Pressures/Stressors (e.g., fire, exotics, recreation, pollution)
- Conduct Species-Specific Conservation (introductions, seed banking, surveys)

ACTIONS: the steps to achieve the objective

PRIORITIES: what actions should be done first (what specific projects, where to work, etc. in the next 10 years)

Example: Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Priorities

Goal	Objective	Action	Priorities
SAND-G1: Promote persistence and ecological integrity of sandhills communities, the rare species they support, and the ecological processes that sustain them.	SAND-O1: Protect at least 2,270 additional acres of sandhills habitat and 81 additional acres of sand parkland habitat to achieve the 75% and 90% target for conservation of these communities (Table 5-3). Measure progress toward this objective based on the acres of habitat protected.	SAND-A1: Protect habitat through fee title acquisition or conservation easements to permanently protect habitat from conversion and other degradative land uses.	Prioritize properties that: · feature sand parkland and Sandhills chaparral communities, which support the rare species and diverse assemblages of locally unique species; · are identified as priorities in prior plans including the Sandhills Conservation Management Plan (McGraw 2004), or sites that meet the criteria used to prioritize habitat; · former sand quarries that feature restoration potential: sandhills quarries are large, adjacent to protected lands, often support the endemic species, and therefore have high potential to expand and connect their populations and contribute to recovery; · can facilitate species adaptation to climate change, including: o feature climate refugia (e.g., north-facing slopes); o a range of land facets due to variable topography and soils; and/or o can help connect existing protected habitat to facilitate species migration.
	SAND-O2: Restore and or enhance sandhills habitat to promote natural structure and native species composition and ecosystem functions where they have been degraded or eliminated through prior land use (e.g., mining, development, or agriculture). Measure progress toward this objective based on the acres of habitat restored or enhanced.	SAND-A2: Restore habitat that has been degraded by prior land use including sand mining, by addressing altered soils, exotic plants, altered disturbance regimes, and incompatible recreation impacts including erosion, to recreate native plant sandhills community structure, promote diverse native plant assemblages, and increase suitability of habitat for rare species, with an emphasis on the native sand parkland and Sandhills chaparral assemblages that support the rare species and unique biodiversity.	Prioritize the following areas for restoration: · Habitat that, if restored, can support rare sandhills species, to expand their distribution and abundance; · Areas that can connect or buffer existing protected sandhills habitat; · mined sandhills habitat, as sandhills quarries are adjacent to existing protected lands, support (or can be restored to support) rare species populations, and are very large, and thus can greatly increase sandhills habitat and expand and connect rare species populations; · areas essential to the maintenance of rare species populations, especially the critically endangered Zayante band-winged grasshopper and Ben Lomond wallflower, which have experienced extirpations and have limited areal extent; · areas that are permanently protected, or where restoration actions will otherwise be durable (i.e., maintained); · areas that can buffer and expand existing sandhills habitat, including areas where sandhills communities have experienced encroachment at the ecotones and in transitional soils, but where disturbance can reset succession and restore plant community structure and species composition.

RCIS

Implementation

Implementation

- Approaches
- Coordination and Collaboration
- Resources including Funding Sources
- Monitoring and Adaptive Management Strategies
- Evaluation and Reporting
- Updates

RCIS Public Review and Feedback

RCIS Chapters

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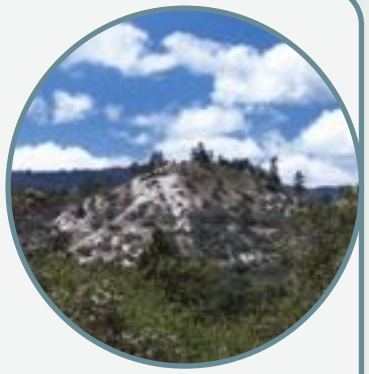

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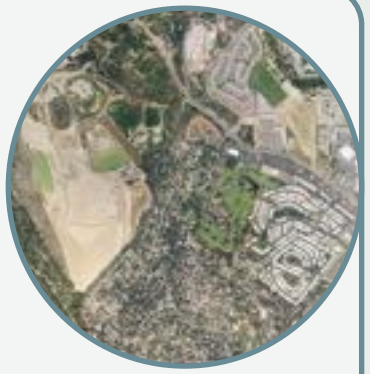

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Coordination

How to Provide Feedback

- **Email**: rcis@wildlife.ca.gov ***and***

  rcis_santacruzcounty@sccrtc.org

- **Mail:** California Department of Fish and Wildlife

  Habitat Conservation Planning Branch

  P.O. Bos 944209

  Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

  Attention: Santa Cruz County RCIS Comments

- **Timeline:** Comments due August 16, 2022

Discussion Topics

1. Do you have any questions about the conservation strategies or their implementation over the next 10 years?
2. Do you have any questions on how the document will be used and its relevance to the community?
3. Do you have any additional clarifying questions to aid in your review of the RCIS?

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More RCIS Information

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

- rcis_santacruzcounty@sccrtc.org
- www.sccrtc.org/rcis
  - Prior presentations

For more information about the RCIS Program, go to

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


THANK YOU!