



Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Program: A New Conservation Tool

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Landscape Conservation Planning Program

CDFW's Landscape Conservation Planning Program (LCPP) provides tools for Californians to take a proactive approach to preserving California's immense and unique biodiversity and other natural resources. This includes preserving thousands of plants and wildlife, the habitats they depend on, and numerous natural and working landscapes that provide ecosystem services for people, like flood risk reduction, water quality, agriculture, fishing and hiking. By providing tools to identify and protect priority conservation and mitigation areas in advance of impacts, California's public and private entities have opportunities to preserve large areas of high-quality, connected habitat in their regions. This type of advance planning can enable more efficient and streamlined permitting approaches for infrastructure and development projects. LCPP's three main conservation tools include the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Program, Conservation and Mitigation Banking (Banking) Program, and Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS) Program.

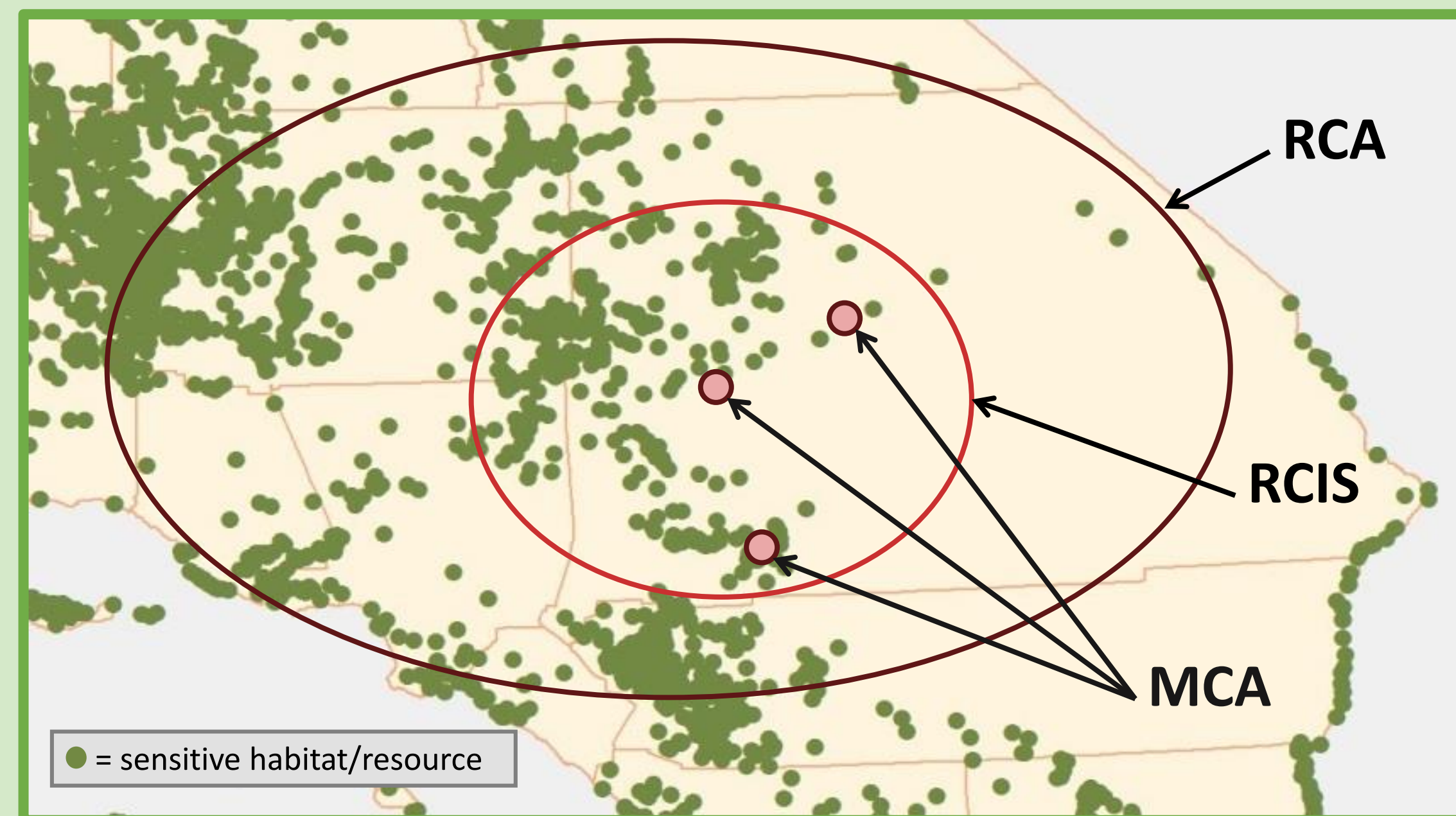


Photo by Billie Wilson, CDFW

Comparison of LCPP Conservation Tools

NCCP Program	RCIS Program	Banking Program
Regional conservation plan with commitment to preserve & actions	Regional conservation strategy with voluntary actions	Does not involve regional strategies or planning
Provides "take" permit for species	MCA credits may be used to meet permit obligations	Bank credits may be used to meet permit obligations
Public meetings and comments required	Public meetings and comments required	No public meetings or comments required
Required to meet/maintain goals & objectives & preserve habitat	Required to meet/maintain MCA performance criteria & update/revise RCIS	Required to meet/maintain bank performance criteria
Typically prepared by a land use authority	RCISs prepared by any public agency, MCAs prepared by anyone	Prepared by any individual or entity
5+ years for preparation & approval	RCIS: 1-2 years, MCA: 1-3+ years for preparation & approval	1-3+ years for preparation & approval
30-75 year duration	RCIS: 10-yr renewable MCA: until credits sold	Until credits are sold and bank is closed
Funding from grants, donations, mitigation fees	Funding from grants, investments, credit sales, donations	Funding from investments, credit sales

The Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Program



CDFW administers a new regional conservation and advance mitigation tool to guide investments in the conservation of natural resources. This includes conserving biodiversity and ecological processes, and enhancing resiliency to climate change and other threats. It can also facilitate implementation of infrastructure and other projects efficiently with positive environmental outcomes. Key aspects of this new program:

- Voluntary, non-regulatory
- Strategic regional conservation
- Protections for vulnerable and declining species
- Enhances resiliency to climate change
- MCAs can provide efficient mitigation delivery
- Consistent with NCCPs, HCPs, Banks
- Opportunities for working land conservation
- Non-binding on land use authorities

Regional Conservation Assessment (RCA)

- Biodiversity
- Rare communities
- Major existing & foreseeable land uses
- Pressures & stressors (including climate change)
- Consistency with NCCPs, HCPs, & other plans
- Existing conservation areas
- Connectivity

- Compile and analyze existing data and information
- Coordinate with stakeholders (recommended)
- Submit for CDFW review

A regional assessment to identify areas for long-term ecosystem conservation

Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS)

- Focal species
- Other conservation elements
- Major existing & foreseeable land uses
- Pressures & stressors (including climate change)
- Consistency with NCCPs, HCPs, & other plans
- Existing conservation areas, including banks
- Consideration for working lands
- Goals, objectives, & actions

- Compile and analyze existing data and information
- Consult with local agencies
- Coordinate with stakeholders (recommended)
- Publish Notice of Intent (NOI)
- Hold public meeting
- Submit for CDFW and public review

A strategy with actions to achieve regional conservation

Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA)

- RCIS actions
- Credit release schedule
- Conservation easement template
- Existing conservation areas, including banks
- Land ownership and other site-specific information
- Long-term and adaptive management templates
- Performance metrics and indicators
- Site evaluations

- Compile and analyze data and information
- Publish NOI (by CDFW)
- Submit for CDFW and public review

Credits that may be used as mitigation, including in advance of project impacts

Proposed RCISs



Map by Diane Mastalir, CDFW

*RCIS in process - submitted a Notice of Intent or held a public meeting

RCIS in Practice



Photo by Carol Witham



Photo by Eric Hunt



Photo by Genevieve Walden

Actions listed in the draft Santa Clara County, Yolo County, and Mid-Sacramento Valley RCISs that would benefit specific sensitive plant species include the following:

- Acquire land with known occurrences of focal plants species
- When appropriate, use livestock grazing to reduce non-native species competition with focal plant species
- Conduct surveys to identify additional occurrences of focal plant species
- Monitor focal species population changes relative to climate change

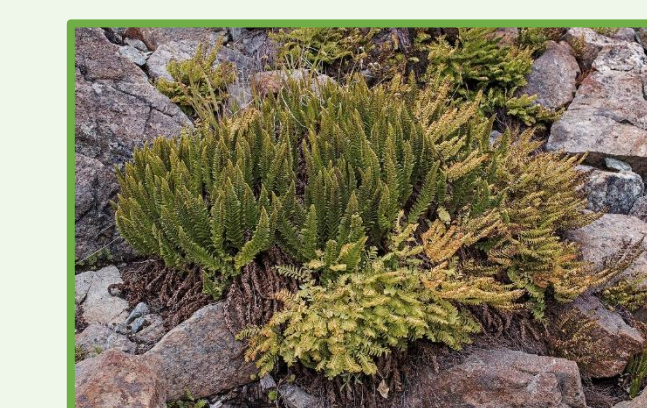


Photo by Richard Droker



Photo by Michael Doliveck



Photo by Philip Bouchard

Actions listed in the draft Santa Clara County, Yolo County, and Mid-Sacramento Valley RCISs that would benefit native plant communities include the following:

- Protect large blocks of land with serpentine soils on a range of environmental gradients
- Protect existing vernal pool complexes, including upland areas
- Use local sources of native plants in restoration projects

For further information regarding RCIS and other LCPP Programs, please visit

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