

SACRAMENTO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN
CONSERVATION ELEMENT

SECTION V

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

E. RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

GOAL: Increase population of threatened and endangered species found in Sacramento County.

INTRODUCTION

State and local biologists view most threatened (defined as likely to become endangered without special protection) and endangered (in danger of extinction) species populations as declining or stable, signaling a continuing degradation in the quality of the county's ecosystems. Expanding urban development and agricultural production are limiting successful habitat preservation and population gain efforts. In this document the term "special status" refers to threatened, endangered, and special status species.

The County's riparian environs along the Sacramento, American, and Cosumnes Rivers and other drainages provide some of the most important habitat areas for threatened and endangered species. One resident of the county's riparian area, the valley elderberry longhorn beetle which feeds only on blue elderberry, is in danger of extinction due to loss of habitat primarily from river channelization and levee stabilization. The threatened Swainson's hawk, another inhabitant of riparian areas, nests along the 32 mile stretch of the Sacramento River between Freeport up river to the county line. Fifteen nesting pairs have been observed along this stretch, the greatest concentration along the entire river. The Sacramento River system is also home to the endangered winter-run chinook salmon. This species, distinct from its fall and spring migrating cousins, dropped to only 600 individuals during the 1989 migration, compared to a presumed stable population of 2,000 during the last decade and the 60,000-120,000 spawners observed in the 1960s. Plant species, such as the California hibiscus and the Antioch Dunes evening primrose, are also severely threatened by riparian habitat destruction.

Wetland and vernal pool areas of the County provide habitat for a significant number of threatened and endangered species. The Beach/Stone Lakes area, currently being studied for National Wildlife Refuge status, is a vibrant habitat for many species in need of protection, including the giant garter snake, American white pelican, double-crested cormorant, northern harrier, and peregrine falcon. Vernal pool concentrations, found in the south central and southeastern section of the county sustain special and unique flora adapted to the ephemeral nature of these small unpretentious habitats. Several of the approximate 200 species associated with vernal pools are candidates for protection. They include, dwarf downingea, Boggs lake hedgehyssop, slender orcutt grass, and bearded popcorn flower.

There is a need to focus upon habitat requirements, restoration needs, habitat preservation, and population revitalization. Although the responsibilities for enhancing species survival should remain with state and federal agencies where staffing and expertise are available, county efforts should include preserving suitable habitat, establishing threatened and endangered species management policies for public lands, and encouraging state and federally sponsored population recovery programs.

This section describes policies and programs under two objectives:

1. Riparian and wetland environments managed with sensitivity to threatened species.
2. Habitat suitable for threatened and endangered species identified, protected, interlinked with natural corridors, and where possible reestablished with viable population of special status species.

MANAGEMENT OF RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES HABITAT

Objective: Riparian and wetland environments managed with sensitivity to threatened species and maintained to the extent feasible in a manner that avoids conflicts with privately owned land and agricultural operations.

Intent: Riparian and wetland areas of the county provide habitat for a significant number of threatened and endangered species. Yet, activities which may be detrimental to threatened species, such as active recreation, levee protection measures, and development are allowed to continue without due consideration of habitat requirements for special status species. Greater emphasis on and a stronger commitment to reversing the decline of species needs to be a priority when considering development options potentially destructive to threatened and endangered species habitat. Wildlife preserves, native grassland propagation, riparian area protection, and natural area buffer zones should be given priority over recreation, ranching, channelization, and development expansion in areas known to or having the potential to contain threatened and endangered species.

Policies:

- CO-141. Manage vegetation on public lands with special status species to encourage native species and discourage nonindigenous invasive species.
- CO-142. Public land shall be maintained to the extent feasible in a manner that avoids conflicts with privately owned lands and agricultural operations.
- CO-143. Control human access to critical habitat areas on public lands to minimize impact upon and disturbance of threatened and endangered species.

- CO-148. Habitat conservation plans shall be adopted by the county for any listed species that are year-round inhabitants of the county, are subject to significant cumulative impacts from development, and are not otherwise adequately protected by designated systems of riparian corridors, vernal pool and wetland preserves and mitigation banks, or other nature preserves or wildlife refuges.
- CO-149. Acquisition programs for acquiring open space located within natural areas shall, wherever possible, review the significance of obtaining areas known to contain threatened, endangered, and special status species.
- CO-150. To the extent feasible, plans for urban development and flood control projects shall incorporate habitat corridors connecting on-site or adjoining areas (if any) not designated for alteration.

Implementation Measures:

- A. Identify habitat suitable for rare and endangered species. (PLANNING, in conjunction with STATE and FEDERAL AGENCIES)
- B. Prepare a biannual report to the Board of Supervisors on rare threatened, endangered, special status species populations within the County. (PLANNING).
- C. Coordinate with Department of Fish and Game in planning and developing programs to encourage species propagation. (PARKS and PLANNING)
- D. Assist habitat management programs aimed at responding to declining populations of threatened and endangered species. (PLANNING and PARKS, in conjunction with STATE and FEDERAL AGENCIES)
- E. Monitor populations of threatened and endangered species with assistance of staff from the Department of Fish and Game's Natural Diversity Data Base office. (Planning and Parks, in conjunction with state agencies)