

Natural Community Conservation Planning Act Definitions

(Fish and Game Code § 2805)

2805. The definitions in this section govern the construction of this chapter:

(a) "Adaptive management" means to use the results of new information gathered through the monitoring program of the plan and from other sources to adjust management strategies and practices to assist in providing for the conservation of covered species.

(b) "Candidate species" has the same meaning as defined in Section 2068.

(c) "Changed circumstances" are reasonably foreseeable circumstances that could affect a covered species or geographic area covered by the plan.

(d) "Conserve," "conserving," and "conservation" mean to use, and the use of, methods and procedures within the plan area that are necessary to bring any covered species to the point at which the measures provided pursuant to Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) are not necessary, and for covered species that are not listed pursuant to Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050), to maintain or enhance the condition of a species so that listing pursuant to Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) will not become necessary.

(e) "Covered species" means those species, both listed pursuant to Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) and nonlisted, conserved and managed under an approved natural community conservation plan and that may be authorized for take. Notwithstanding Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, or 5515, fully protected species may be covered species pursuant to this subdivision, and taking of fully protected species may be authorized pursuant to Section 2835 for any fully protected species conserved and managed as a covered species under an approved natural community conservation plan.

(f) "Department assurance" means the department's commitment pursuant to subdivision (f) of Section 2820.

(g) "Monitoring program" means a program within an approved natural community conservation plan that provides periodic evaluations of monitoring results to assess the adequacy of the mitigation and conservation strategies or activities and to provide information to direct the adaptive management program. The monitoring program shall, to the extent practicable, also be used to meet the monitoring requirements of Section 21081.6 of the Public Resources Code. A monitoring program includes all of the following:

(1) Surveys to determine the status of biological resources addressed by the plan, including covered species.

(2) Periodic accountings and assessment of authorized take.

(3) Progress reports on all of the following matters:

(A) Establishment of habitat reserves or other measures that provide equivalent conservation of covered species and providing funding where applicable.

(B) Compliance with the plan and the implementation agreement by the wildlife agencies, local governments, and landowners who have responsibilities under the plan.

(C) Measurements to determine if mitigation and conservation measures are being implemented roughly proportional in time and extent to the impact on habitat or covered species authorized under

the plan.

(D) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan in meeting the conservation objectives of the plan.

(E) Maps of land use changes in the plan area that may affect habitat values or covered species.

(4) A schedule for conducting monitoring activities.

(h) "Natural community conservation plan" or "plan" means the plan prepared pursuant to a planning agreement entered into in accordance with Section 2810. The plan shall identify and provide for those measures necessary to conserve and manage natural biological diversity within the plan area while allowing compatible and appropriate economic development, growth, and other human uses.

(i) "Person" has the same meaning as defined in Section 711.2.

(j) (1) "Plan participant," prior to approval of a natural community conservation plan and execution of an implementation agreement, means a signatory to the planning agreement.

(2) Upon approval of a natural community conservation plan and execution of an implementation agreement, "plan participant" means the permittees and any local agency that is a signatory to the implementing agreement.

(k) "Unforeseen circumstances" means changes affecting one or more species, habitat, natural community, or the geographic area covered by a conservation plan that could not reasonably have been anticipated at the time of plan development, and that result in a substantial adverse change in the status of one or more covered species.

(l) "Wildlife" has the same meaning as defined in Section 711.2.

(m) "Wildlife agencies" means the department and one or both of the following:

(1) United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(2) National Marine Fisheries Service.

Natural Community Conservation Planning Act Findings

(Fish and Game Code § 2820, 2821)

2820. (a) The department shall approve a natural community conservation plan for implementation after making the following findings, based upon substantial evidence in the record:

(1) The plan has been developed consistent with the process identified in the planning agreement entered into pursuant to Section 2810.

(2) The plan integrates adaptive management strategies that are periodically evaluated and modified based on the information from the monitoring program and other sources, which will assist in providing for the conservation of covered species and ecosystems within the plan area.

(3) The plan provides for the protection of habitat, natural communities, and species diversity on a landscape or ecosystem level through the creation and long-term management of habitat reserves or other measures that provide equivalent conservation of covered species appropriate for land, aquatic, and marine habitats within the plan area.

(4) The development of reserve systems and conservation measures in the plan area provides, as needed for the conservation of species, all of the following:

(A) Conserving, restoring, and managing representative natural and seminatural landscapes to maintain the ecological integrity of large habitat blocks, ecosystem function, and biological diversity.

(B) Establishing one or more reserves or other measures that provide equivalent conservation of covered species within the plan area and linkages between them and adjacent habitat areas outside of the plan area.

(C) Protecting and maintaining habitat areas that are large enough to support sustainable populations of covered species.

(D) Incorporating a range of environmental gradients (such as slope, elevation, aspect, and coastal or inland characteristics) and high habitat diversity to provide for shifting species distributions due to changed circumstances.

(E) Sustaining the effective movement and interchange of organisms between habitat areas in a manner that maintains the ecological integrity of the habitat areas within the plan area.

(5) The plan identifies activities, and any restrictions on those activities, allowed within reserve areas that are compatible with the conservation of species, habitats, natural communities, and their associated ecological functions.

(6) The plan contains specific conservation measures that meet the biological needs of covered species and that are based upon the best available scientific information regarding the status of covered species and the impacts of permitted activities on those species.

(7) The plan contains a monitoring program.

(8) The plan contains an adaptive management program.

(9) The plan includes the estimated timeframe and process by which the reserves or other conservation measures are to be implemented, including obligations of landowners and plan signatories and consequences of the failure to acquire lands in a timely manner.

(10) The plan contains provisions that ensure adequate funding to carry out the conservation actions identified in the plan.

(b) A natural community conservation plan approved pursuant to this section shall include an implementation agreement that contains all of the following:

(1) Provisions defining species coverage, including any conditions of coverage.

(2) Provisions for establishing the long-term protection of any habitat reserve or other measures that provide equivalent conservation of covered species.

(3) Specific terms and conditions, which, if violated, would result in the suspension or revocation of the permit, in whole or in part. The department shall include a provision requiring notification to the plan participant of a specified period of time to cure any default prior to suspension or revocation of the permit in whole or in part. These terms and conditions shall address, but are not limited to, provisions specifying the actions the department shall take under all of the following circumstances:

(A) If the plan participant fails to provide adequate funding.

(B) If the plan participant fails to maintain the rough proportionality between impacts on habitat or covered species and conservation measures.

(C) If the plan participant adopts, amends, or approves any plan or project without the concurrence of the wildlife agencies that is

inconsistent with the objectives and requirements of the approved plan.

(D) If the level of take exceeds that authorized by the permit.

(4) Provisions specifying procedures for amendment of the plan and the implementation agreement.

(5) Provisions ensuring implementation of the monitoring program and adaptive management program.

(6) Provisions for oversight of plan implementation for purposes of assessing mitigation performance, funding, and habitat protection measures.

(7) Provisions for periodic reporting to the wildlife agencies and the public for purposes of information and evaluation of plan progress.

(8) Mechanisms to ensure adequate funding to carry out the conservation actions identified in the plan.

(9) Provisions to ensure that implementation of mitigation and conservation measures on a plan basis is roughly proportional in time and extent to the impact on habitat or covered species authorized under the plan. These provisions shall identify the conservation measures, including assembly of reserves where appropriate and implementation of monitoring and management activities, that will be maintained or carried out in rough proportion to the impact on habitat or covered species and the measurements that will be used to determine if this is occurring.

(c) If a plan participant does not maintain the proportionality between take and conservation measures specified in the implementation agreement and does not either cure the default within 45 days or enter into an agreement with the department within 45 days to expeditiously cure the default, the department shall suspend or revoke the permit, in whole or in part.

(d) Any data and reports associated with the monitoring program required by this section shall be available for public review. The entity managing the plan shall also conduct public workshops on an annual basis to provide information and evaluate progress toward attaining the conservation objectives of the plan.

(e) To the extent provided pursuant to Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code and any guidelines adopted pursuant thereto, if the impacts on one or more covered species and its habitat are analyzed and mitigated pursuant to a program environmental impact report for a plan adopted pursuant to this chapter, a plan participant that is a lead agency or a responsible agency under that division shall incorporate in the review of any subsequent project in the plan area the feasible mitigation measures and alternatives related to the biological impacts on covered species and their habitat developed in the program environmental impact report.

(f) The department may provide assurances for plan participants commensurate with long-term conservation assurances and associated implementation measures pursuant to the approved plan.

(1) When providing assurances pursuant to this subdivision, the department's determination of the level of assurances and the time limits specified in the implementation agreement for assurances may be based on localized conditions and shall consider all of the following:

(A) The level of knowledge of the status of the covered species and natural communities.

(B) The adequacy of analysis of the impact of take on covered

species.

(C) The use of the best available science to make assessments about the impacts of take, the reliability of mitigation strategies, and the appropriateness of monitoring techniques.

(D) The appropriateness of the size and duration of the plan with respect to quality and amount of data.

(E) The sufficiency of mechanisms for long-term funding of all components of the plan and contingencies.

(F) The degree of coordination and accessibility of centralized data for analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan.

(G) The degree to which a thorough range of foreseeable circumstances are considered and provided for under the adaptive management program.

(H) The size and duration of the plan.

(2) If there are unforeseen circumstances, additional land, water, or financial compensation or additional restrictions on the use of land, water, or other natural resources shall not be required without the consent of plan participants for a period of time specified in the implementation agreement, unless the department determines that the plan is not being implemented consistent with the substantive terms of the implementation agreement.

2821. Concurrent with the approval by the department of a final natural community conservation plan, the department shall do both of the following:

(a) Establish a list of species that are authorized for take pursuant to Section 2835 and the department shall make specific findings to support coverage pursuant to Section 2820. For purposes of determining whether a species should receive coverage under a plan, the department shall use, in addition to the standards required for the adoption of a plan, one or more of the following criteria:

(1) Coverage is warranted based upon regional or landscape level consideration, such as healthy population levels, widespread distribution throughout the plan area, and life history characteristics that respond to habitat-scale conservation and management actions.

(2) Coverage is warranted based on regional or landscape level considerations with site specific conservation and management requirements that are clearly identified in the plan for species that are generally well-distributed, but that have core habitats that must be conserved.

(3) Coverage is warranted based upon site specific considerations and the identification of specific conservation and management conditions for species within a narrowly defined habitat or limited geographic area within the plan area.

(b) Find that the mitigation measures specified in the plan and imposed by the plan participants are consistent with subdivision (d) of Section 2801.