

California's Wildlife Habitat and Ecosystem:

*The State Needs to Improve Its Land
Acquisition Planning and Oversight*



June 2000
2000-101

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June 27, 2000

2000-101

The Governor of California
President pro Tempore of the Senate
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

As requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the Bureau of State Audits presents its audit report concerning statewide efforts to acquire and manage land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation, both within and independent of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (Calfed).

This report concludes that although Calfed does not acquire land for these purposes, it funds projects that may include land acquisition that support its goals for restoring the ecosystem. Also, the State does not have a comprehensive land use policy to guide state entities in their efforts to preserve and restore the environment. Consequently, although there is some degree of coordination among these entities, no central vision exists of how their efforts benefit the State as a whole. California also needs to track data such as the purpose for which land was acquired to facilitate its land use planning. In addition, the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Parks and Recreation—the major acquirers of state land for environmental purposes—need to improve their management of this land.

Respectfully submitted,

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SUMMARY

Audit Highlights . . .

Although various entities acquire land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation, the State does not have a comprehensive land use policy that provides a common vision of goals and objectives that these entities can follow.

The two state departments that are acquiring the most land for these purposes—the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Parks and Recreation—have not performed key tasks for managing these properties. Specifically, they:

- Have not prepared management plans for at least one-third of their properties.*
 - Use outdated management plans for many properties.*
 - Inadequately manage some land because they have not achieved certain management objectives or undertaken specific projects.*
 - Insufficiently document their management efforts.*
-

RESULTS IN BRIEF

The State of California is home to numerous animal and plant species that are listed as endangered or threatened. Many entities, including state and federal agencies and private and nonprofit organizations, acquire land in California to preserve and restore the environments in which these plants and animals live. Although the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (Calfed) does not acquire land for these purposes, it funds projects that may include land acquisition that support its goals for restoring the ecosystem. State entities that do acquire land for environmental purposes include the Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game), which acquires land to protect rare, endangered, or threatened animals, and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which acquires land to preserve the natural resources of its park system. Each of the many entities that acquire land has a process for selecting and acquiring land to accomplish its individual mission and objectives, but a uniform statewide process for acquiring such land does not exist.

More importantly, the State does not have an overall policy with goals and objectives for statewide land use that would ensure that the efforts of various entities are coordinated. Although each player identifies the land necessary to fulfill its individual ecosystem restoration objectives, and some degree of formal and informal coordination occurs among state, federal, local, and private entities when acquiring specific properties, no central vision exists of how these efforts benefit the State as a whole.

The Legislature recognized the need to protect state land resources and to ensure that this land was preserved and used in economically and socially desirable ways. As early as 1970, it charged the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), housed within the Governor's Office, with overseeing the continuous evaluation and execution of statewide environmental goals. Thirty years later, the OPR still has not developed a statewide land use policy. Although it acknowledges its responsibility, the OPR has insufficient resources to fulfill its various statutory obligations, including this task. A statewide policy would incorporate the needs and priorities of the State and could furnish a framework for the many entities that acquire land for ecological

purposes. To facilitate its land use planning, California also needs to track data such as the purpose for which land was acquired.

Another major problem facing California is the managing and monitoring of its land. Fish and Game and the DPR, the major holders of state land for restoring the ecosystem and preserving wildlife habitat, have not completed management plans for 318 (50 percent) of their 632 properties and parks. Management plans, the essential first step of proper land management, identify the natural resources present and the goals or strategies for maintaining each property for the purpose it was intended.

Both departments agree that they can improve their land management efforts. In the past, insufficient funding has hampered their efforts in this area. However, Fish and Game and the DPR have recently received additional funds for certain land management activities. Also, the passage of Proposition 12—the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Act of 2000—authorizes additional funds for these departments to acquire land and perform major maintenance, such as rehabilitation, restoration, and improvement projects, but does not identify how the ongoing costs of operating and maintaining land will be met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that it fulfills its responsibility for developing a statewide land use policy, the OPR should do the following:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive approach for addressing statewide land use planning. Inherent in this mission should be the development of the State’s overall plan for acquiring land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation.
- Identify staffing and resource requirements necessary to fulfill its mandates.
- Work with other state entities to ensure that a composite inventory of land the State owns exists. To facilitate statewide land use planning, the inventory should include information on the purpose for which each property was acquired.

To ensure that they adequately manage their land, Fish and Game and the DPR should do the following:

- Prepare management plans for all properties, update older plans, and then follow them.
- Continue to request additional funding so that land acquired for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation is kept in its desired condition.

As the public has recently expressed an interest in preserving land for environmental purposes, the Legislature should consider doing the following:

- Establish a mechanism in future bond acts involving land acquisitions that sets aside a portion of the proceeds for major maintenance projects.
- Establish a mechanism to ensure that ongoing management of land acquired with the bond money is funded; for example, it could create a designated revenue stream or require the departments to establish a plan demonstrating how those ongoing costs will be met before they acquire the land.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Office of Planning and Research concurs with our recommendations. It also recognizes the importance of other state entities having adequate information and the necessary data that will allow it to effectively coordinate land use planning and to develop a statewide environmental goals and policies report.

The California Resources Agency did not address all of our recommendations, stating only that it will work with the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop new plans or review and update, as necessary, existing plans for all properties. Therefore, we look forward to receiving its 60-day, six-month, and one-year responses to the audit to assess the steps taken towards implementing our recommendations. ■

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Ecosystem restoration and the preservation of wildlife habitat entails rehabilitating, restoring, protecting, and conserving environments where plant and animal species live. Growing public recognition of the social, economic, and ecological costs of environmental degradation has stimulated interest in preserving and restoring ecosystems within California. The need to restore ecosystems and preserve wildlife habitats is critical not only because of the numerous plant and animal species in California that are listed as endangered or threatened, but also because doing so provides benefits to human communities. For example, some organisms help improve water quality and pollinate crops.

Acquiring land is one way to restore and preserve the ecosystem and habitat of such animal species as the California condor, Delta smelt, and Mojave ground squirrel and such plant species as the Siskiyou mariposa lily and Monterey spineflower. In California, numerous entities, including local, state, and federal agencies as well as private organizations, acquire land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. Each of these entities has a process for selecting and acquiring property to accomplish its individual mission and objectives. However, a uniform statewide process for land acquisition for such purposes does not exist.

Member Agencies of Calfed

Federal

- U.S. Department of the Interior
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of Commerce
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Forest Service
- Western Area Power Administration

State

- California Resources Agency
 - Department of Water Resources
 - Department of Fish and Game
- California Environmental Protection Agency
 - State Water Resources Control Board
- California Department of Food and Agriculture

State entities that play a role in restoring California's ecosystem and preserving its wildlife include the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (Calfed), the Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game), the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and state conservancies.

THE CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

Calfed, initiated in 1995, is a cooperative effort among 19 state and federal agencies to address and resolve environmental and water management concerns associated with the Bay-Delta system, an intricate web of waterways at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, and the watershed that feeds the system. Calfed is not a separate government agency but rather a joint entity with much of its staff on loan from state and federal agencies. Calfed's mission is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore the ecological health of and improve the water management of the Bay-Delta system for beneficial uses. Figure 1 shows the geographical boundaries of the Bay-Delta system. It also shows a much broader area that extends both upstream and downstream in which Calfed can develop possible solutions to problems affecting the Bay-Delta system.

Individuals and groups with environmental, urban, and agricultural interests are assisting Calfed in developing its Preferred Program Alternative, a 30-year plan to restore the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem, improve water supply reliability and water quality, and protect Delta levees. Calfed's ecosystem restoration program is the principal mechanism that it is using to restore the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. The goal of this program is to improve and increase water and land habitats and improve ecological functions in the Bay-Delta system to support increased populations of diverse and valuable plant and animal species.

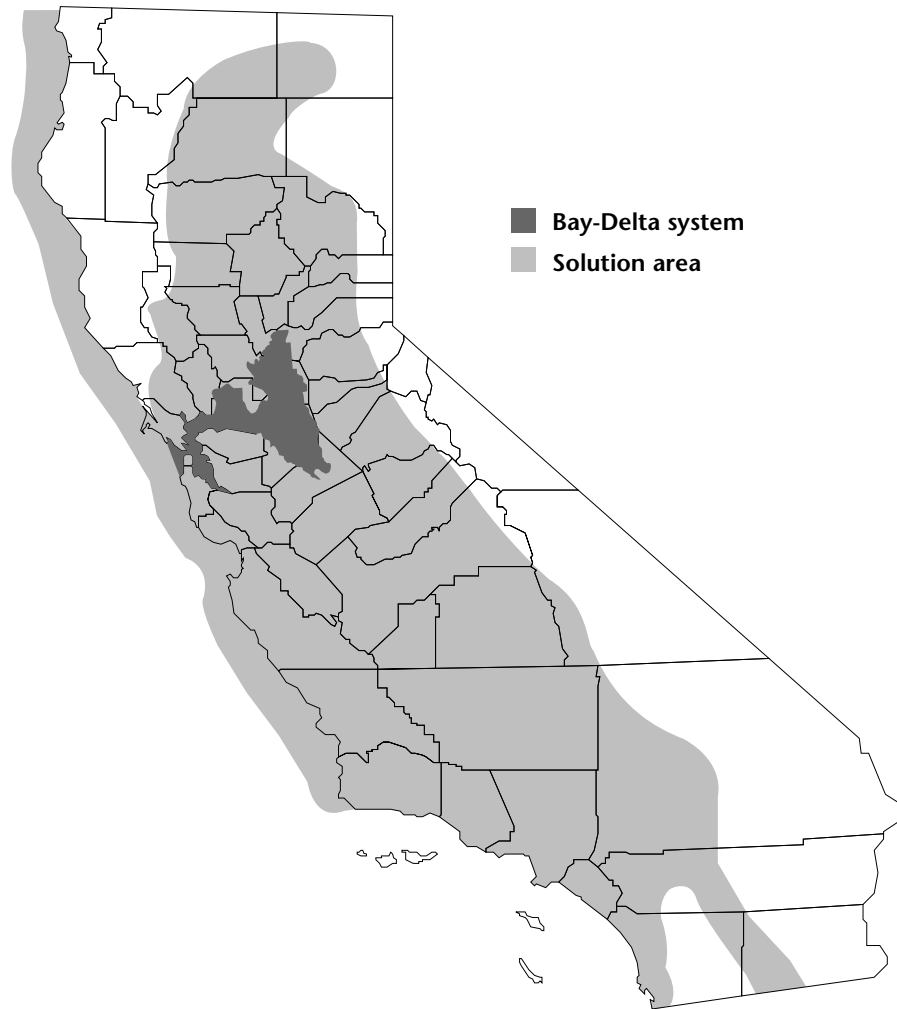
Calfed approves and provides funds to other entities for projects that support the goal of its ecosystem restoration program, which may result in the entities purchasing land. For example, in 1998, Calfed provided funds to the research foundation of the California State University at Chico to acquire 146 acres with 1.5 miles of frontage on Butte Creek, a Sacramento River tributary critical to endangered spring-run chinook salmon, for development of a natural flood plain to benefit riparian habitats.

Calfed uses two methods to select projects. The first is public solicitation. The other method entails directing funds to specific activities that help achieve its long-term goals. Projects are evaluated for their scientific and technical merit and go through a multiple-step approval process by the Calfed agencies, interest groups, and the public. The Calfed policy

group, consisting of member agencies, makes final funding recommendations to the California Secretary of Resources and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

FIGURE 1

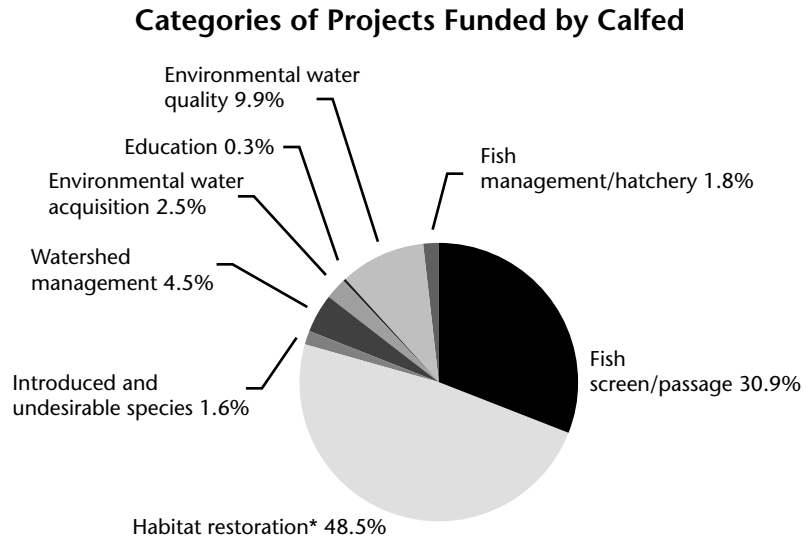
Solution Areas Extend CALFED Influence Far Beyond System Boundaries



Source: CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Between 1995 and 1999, Calfed received more than 800 proposals from private and public parties with interests in ecosystem restoration, including state and federal agencies, universities, nonprofit organizations, private entities, local governments, and joint ventures. As of May 2000, it has funded a total of 268 projects amounting to \$229.4 million. Figure 2 show the various categories of the projects it has funded.

FIGURE 2



Source: CALFED Bay-Delta Program

* 45 habitat restoration projects involve land acquisition. The amount of approved funding for these projects, only a portion of which is for land acquisition, is \$77.8 million, or 34 percent of the total Calfed approved funding.

Calfed receives financial support from numerous sources, such as state and federal agencies, interest groups, and the public. As of March 2000, Calfed had received a total of \$250 million to fund its ecosystem restoration projects. The four primary sources are as follows: \$28 million from the California Urban Water Agencies; \$52 million from Proposition 204, the Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Supply Act of 1996; \$168 million from the federal Bay-Delta Act; and \$2 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Fish and Game has a major role in acquiring land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation throughout California. Its lands committee sets priorities for land acquisition. Using these priorities, the Wildlife Conservation Board (board) acquires land for Fish and Game by authorizing and allocating funds. The board receives funding for land acquisitions from a variety of sources, including bond acts; the State's General Fund; and partnerships with nonprofit, federal, local, and other state agencies. On average, the board receives more than \$40 million annually for purchasing land. It also acquires

land by other means, such as gifts, donations, exchanges, easements, and transfers. In fiscal year 2000-01, the May revision to the Governor's Budget may allow the board to receive up to \$54 million as part of a land conservation program that gives grants for the purchase and restoration of wildlife habitat. The May revision also includes additional funds for the board to acquire land adjacent to the planned new University of California Merced campus to ensure the protection of wetlands, waterways, and wildlife around the campus.

Fish and Game's mission is to manage California's fish, wildlife, and plant resources, including habitats, for their ecological values and recreational enjoyment. The department manages land to preserve or restore habitat for threatened or endangered species; game species, including deer, waterfowl, and sport fish; and migratory birds and wetland or upland wildlife. Fish and Game also assumes responsibility for properties that it receives through settlements and other agreements, such as mitigation for habitat impacts.

THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Another state entity with a major role in acquiring land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation is the DPR. The DPR is not a member of Calfed. Its mission is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the State's diverse plant and animal species, protecting its most valuable natural and cultural resources, such as redwood forests and historical artifacts, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. To accomplish its mission, the DPR must sometimes acquire land. For instance, it recently acquired Sentenac Canyon for inclusion in the Anza-Borega Desert State Park. The majority of this new acquisition will be used to restore or enhance riparian habitat.

Funding for the DPR's land acquisitions comes largely from bond acts such as Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000, which in fiscal year 1999-2000 will furnish up to \$525 million for various purposes, including acquiring land.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE CONSERVANCIES

Six state conservancies created by the Legislature are the responsibility of the California Resources Agency (Resources Agency): the California Tahoe Conservancy, the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, the San Joaquin River Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the State Coastal Conservancy, and the newly created San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. Figure 3 illustrates the geographical locations of these conservancies.

FIGURE 3

The Legislature Created Six State Conservancies to Protect Specific Zones



Source: State conservancies.

* In addition to this zone, state law allows the State Coastal Conservancy to undertake projects and award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

The role of these conservancies is to protect and preserve six legislatively created zones in various parts of the State. State conservancies can acquire land to restore and preserve habitat and ecosystems. For example, the California Tahoe Conservancy can acquire land to protect the natural environment of the Lake Tahoe Basin or to protect land in its zone that is susceptible to erosion.

The conservancies receive funding for land acquisitions from various sources, including bond acts, grants, and the State's General Fund. Funding and staffing amounts vary widely depending on the size of the conservancy. For example, the State Coastal Conservancy has a staff of 50 and an annual budget of almost \$40 million, while the San Joaquin River Conservancy has 1.5 staff positions and an annual budget of \$200,000.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee directed the Bureau of State Audits to review the state entities that acquire land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation, both within and independent of Calfed. Because Calfed does not directly acquire land, our review of this program was limited to its project selection process and its coordination efforts with federal, state, and local agencies as well as the public.

To determine whether the State has developed a comprehensive land use policy, we reviewed relevant laws and regulations and interviewed the management of various state agencies, including the governor's Office of Planning and Research and the Resources Agency.

To obtain an understanding of its role in acquiring such land and coordinating with other state, federal, and local entities, we interviewed Calfed staff, reviewed its project selection process, and examined relevant documentation.

To identify those state entities that acquire such land, we interviewed the management of departments under the Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency and reviewed departmental mission statements. We also reviewed the goals and objectives of Fish and Game and the DPR, the major purchasers of land for these purposes, as well as the goals and objectives of the six state conservancies.

To ascertain whether Fish and Game and the DPR coordinate their land acquisitions with other state, federal, and local entities, we interviewed staff from these departments and reviewed documentation of recent purchases. We also reviewed recent efforts by these departments and other state entities to improve the coordination of land acquisitions.

To assess whether Fish and Game and the DPR adequately manage their land, we spoke with staff at selected regions and districts who are directly responsible for managing properties and parks, and we reviewed the documentation of management efforts for a sample of properties and parks. Using data provided by these departments, we determined whether they had prepared management plans for all of their properties and parks. We also reviewed their procedures for ensuring that the goals and objectives in these plans were met. Finally, we reviewed the funding made available to these departments to manage their land. Our analysis includes a review of the proceeds to be received by each department from Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000.

To identify the amount of land owned by Fish and Game, the DPR, and the state conservancies for ecological purposes, we requested their data on landholdings from the period of January 1, 1994, to December 31, 1999. We compared Fish and Game and DPR data to the statewide inventory system maintained by the Department of General Services. However, we did not validate this data. The appendix provides more detail on the landholdings and acquisition activity for these entities. ■

CHAPTER 1

California Does Not Have a Policy Governing Statewide Land Use Planning

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The State does not have an overall plan for coordinating the acquisition of land for wildlife habitat preservation and ecosystem restoration. In the absence of a statewide approach, various entities are coordinating land acquisitions at regional levels. For example, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (Calfed) encourages coordination among its participating federal and state agencies. The formal and informal approaches used by state entities on a regional level demonstrate the need to coordinate efforts statewide.

As early as 1970, the Legislature directed the Governor’s Office to oversee statewide land use planning, including the ongoing evaluation and execution of environmental goals. In enacting the law, the Legislature recognized the need for the State to protect its resources and to ensure the preservation and use of its land in economically and socially desirable ways. However, the governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has not developed a comprehensive statewide land use policy in the past three decades as state law requires, because this task has not been its top priority. The State is not capturing sufficient data to identify the purpose for which land is acquired, a key component in land use planning.

DESPITE VARIOUS COORDINATION EFFORTS, THE STATE STILL NEEDS A COHESIVE LAND USE POLICY

State, federal, and nongovernmental entities acquire land for preserving the environment.

State entities have their own individual missions, goals, and strategies for restoring ecosystems or preserving wildlife habitat, which may include acquiring land. For example, the Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game) can acquire land to protect rare, endangered, or threatened animal species, while the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) can acquire land to preserve and protect the value and beauty of natural resources in state parks. Federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations also acquire land for ecological purposes.

The number of players involved in ecological preservation sometimes creates common interests for the same land. Although formal and informal efforts on a regional level generate some coordination in land acquisition, a comprehensive statewide land use policy would improve these efforts. Without such a policy, the State cannot ensure that decisions regarding whether to acquire land are compatible with its goals and objectives for ecological preservation.

Calfed Encourages Coordination in the Bay-Delta Region by Approving Projects That Improve the Ecosystem

Calfed approves and funds projects to implement its ecosystem restoration program. During its selection process, Calfed obtains input and assistance from its member agencies and interest groups through various committees and panels. The federally chartered Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC), consisting of more than 30 representatives from various interest groups, meets regularly to offer input to the overall Calfed program. The ecosystem roundtable, a subcommittee of the BDAC composed of a broad cross section of interest groups, furnishes specific input on the coordination of Calfed projects. A team of scientific advisors and chief scientists from Calfed member agencies and interest groups evaluates potential projects based on their ability to meet Calfed's ecosystem restoration goals. In its project selection process, Calfed does not separately evaluate land acquisitions that applicants include in their project proposals. Thus, its current coordination efforts do not result in specific land use planning for the Bay-Delta region.

Calfed focuses on projects, rather than specific land acquisitions, in its efforts to improve the ecosystem.

Although Formal Venues Encourage Regional Coordination, They Have Limitations

State departments participate in forums created to foster coordination among the various entities involved in acquiring land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. One example is the Natural Community Conservation Planning program (NCCP), which creates regional conservation and development plans to protect entire communities of native plants and animals while also streamlining the land use and regulatory system so that it is more efficient and cost-effective. State law created the NCCP in 1991. The initial focus of the NCCP is to preserve the coastal sage scrub ecosystem scattered over a 5,000-square-mile area in San Diego, Orange,

Although the Natural Community Conservation Planning program, conservancies, and joint ventures present many opportunities for coordination, a statewide land use policy is still needed.

Riverside, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino counties. In the future, however, the program may expand its planning efforts to address environmental concerns in other regions of the State.

Fish and Game provides guidance and assistance to local agencies choosing to develop and implement a plan under the NCCP. The core group that oversees NCCP activities includes representatives from various state and federal agencies, who meet frequently to develop unified priorities for habitat protection and land acquisition. This management group also regularly hosts meetings for representatives from city and county governments, real estate developers, and environmental and conservation organizations to discuss efforts to plan and coordinate land acquisitions.

The six state conservancies are also examples of formal approaches to acquiring and protecting land in various parts of the State. The conservancies acquire land to support their environmental preservation goals. Since these conservancies operate at the regional level, they provide a forum in which state departments and other entities can inquire about acquisition opportunities within these geographical areas.

Joint ventures are another example of formal coordination among California and other states, federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. A joint venture generally focuses on a geographical region or area of interest to multiple entities. For example, the Intermountain West Joint Venture covers 11 western states, including California, and the Pacific Coast Joint Venture encompasses the states of Washington, Oregon, and California. Federal, state, and local governments, private organizations, and individuals pool their resources to fund these joint ventures, which allow the various entities to cooperate to accomplish goals that could be difficult for them to attain individually.

Although the NCCP, conservancies, and joint ventures offer many opportunities for coordination, their focus is limited. A statewide land use policy is still needed to provide greater cohesion among state entities that acquire land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation.

Informal Coordination Activities Do Not Establish Accountability

State departments also coordinate their land-acquisition efforts informally. For example, Fish and Game and its land-acquisition arm, the Wildlife Conservation Board (board), interact with numerous public and private entities in purchasing specific land. On an informal basis, nonprofit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land meet and correspond with the board regarding potential purchases.

Another example of informal coordination is a recent project to bring together representatives from various entities with interests in acquiring land in the State. In June 1999, Fish and Game and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (bureau) formed a land-acquisition coordination group (coordination group). Participating entities include state agencies and departments such as Fish and Game, the DPR, and the California Resources Agency (Resources Agency); federal agencies such as the bureau, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service; and nongovernmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the Packard Foundation.

The coordination group has met a few times during the past year. According to the director of Fish and Game, the main purpose of these meetings was to identify common goals and interests, to determine the existing partnerships between entities, and to learn how to better coordinate land-acquisition projects to use scarce resources more productively. One action resulting from the meetings was that Fish and Game agreed to prepare a matrix of data that will identify the general locations in the State where each entity is interested in acquiring land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. According to the director, this matrix, once completed, will give the coordination group a better perspective on current and proposed acquisition efforts throughout the State and on how to coordinate future acquisitions. Although the coordination group provides a forum for relevant discussions and seeks to accomplish much of what statewide planning would do, it is an informal arrangement, and its participants are not bound by an official agreement or memorandum of understanding.

These examples demonstrate that state entities are actively seeking opportunities to coordinate their efforts, but these informal measures do not fill the need for statewide coordination. They typically address the direct needs of the entities

Through an informal coordination group, state entities interact with other organizations that acquire land.

involved rather than focusing on long-term growth and development strategies for the entire State. Moreover, an informal structure does not ensure that state entities are held accountable for taking the proper action on agreed-upon decisions.

FOR ALMOST 30 YEARS, THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATEWIDE LAND USE POLICY HAS REMAINED DORMANT

Despite a specific state law enacted nearly 30 years ago, California is still without a statewide land use policy. In 1970, the Legislature recognized the necessity of having one entity at the state level responsible for developing land use policies to protect California's resources and to ensure the preservation and use of its land for the good of its population. The Legislature envisioned the OPR as the most appropriate entity and directed it to prepare a comprehensive statewide environmental goals and policies report. Moreover, it gave immediate and high priority to the development of a comprehensive land use policy. The report was to include, at a minimum, a statewide land use policy, a 20-year to 30-year prospective overview describing state growth and development, and a statement of approved state environmental goals and objectives, including those directed to land use, conservation of natural resources, and air and water quality.

Despite a legal requirement to do so, the OPR has never issued a statewide land use policy.

In June 1973, the OPR issued the first statewide environmental goals and policies report, stating clearly that it did not represent a comprehensive land use policy. In fact, the report indicates that the State's goal for land use was to develop and maintain a series of policies, including standards and criteria to serve as a guide for state, regional, county, and city planning efforts. In February 1978, the OPR issued a partial update to the 1973 report, which attempted to identify government actions that could revitalize the State's urban areas, including cities and suburbs. Once again, the OPR's report lacked a statewide land use policy. The OPR still has not developed a comprehensive land use policy, and it has not issued a new or updated goals and policies report since 1978, despite state law requiring that such a report be produced every four years.

THE OPR NEEDS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO FULFILL ITS MANDATES

Statewide land use planning is a comprehensive process that involves the coordination of input from many stakeholders. As discussed in the introduction, many state entities are involved in acquiring and maintaining land for various purposes, including ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. Each one has its own mission and acquires land to meet its particular goals and objectives. Because local governments and interest groups also have a direct interest in the use of land in their respective jurisdictions, we believe the OPR should encourage these interested parties to develop short- and long-range land use goals that are compatible with statewide goals and objectives.

The OPR acknowledges its legal responsibility for statewide land use planning. Although its current staff could not provide us with the priorities of various governors and OPR directors over the past 30 years, developing a statewide land use policy clearly has not been the OPR's top priority in the past.

In April 2000, the Governor's Office assigned an acting director to replace the previous OPR director, who left in December 1999. The acting director recognizes that although the OPR performs certain land use planning and policy functions, such as providing technical assistance and preparing guidelines for local agencies, it has not prepared a land use policy or updated the statewide environmental goals and policies report.

According to the acting director, one of his first tasks will be to identify the staffing and resource requirements necessary to fulfill the OPR's various statutory obligations. He also plans to identify existing relevant systems and data the OPR can rely on to perform its statutory responsibilities for land use planning and policy. Furthermore, because the acting director also serves as the governor's special assistant for innovation in government, he plans to use his background and experience to identify the information technology required to implement land use planning at the statewide level. However, the development of a statewide land use policy will not occur until the OPR reassesses its staffing and resource requirements.

Without a statewide land use policy, state entities have no clear central vision of goals and objectives to follow for the use of land. If the Governor's Office intends to fulfill its mandate of

The new acting director intends to be more proactive than his predecessors in fulfilling the OPR's statutory responsibilities.

overseeing the continuous evaluation and execution of statewide environmental goals, including statewide land use policies, it needs to ensure that the OPR has sufficient resources to do so.

IN DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE POLICY, THE OPR SHOULD CONSIDER THE EFFORTS OF OTHER STATE ENTITIES

The OPR's responsibility for developing a statewide land use policy includes identifying environmental goals pertaining to the use of land in the State. In addressing this component, the OPR can use the resources and efforts of other entities. One such effort currently underway is a project that will lead to a statewide conservation and habitat assessment strategy. The fiscal year 1999-2000 Budget Act authorized \$250,000 for the Resources Agency to begin developing this project to assess the current condition of the State's natural resources and habitat and establish long-term funding and policy priorities and targets for future investment in resource protection and habitat acquisition or preservation. The Resources Agency expects the project to include an assessment of available resource data that will identify opportunities, gaps in data, and future needs related to statewide conservation and land stewardship.

In its January 2000 status report to the Legislature, the Resources Agency underscored the necessity for statewide planning.

In its January 2000 status report to the Legislature, the Resources Agency underscored the necessity for statewide planning by acknowledging that the State does not have a strategic approach to ensure that major investments in wildlife habitat and agricultural land conservation are being made most effectively. It plans to provide an additional report to the Legislature that summarizes its initial results and provides more detail on the extent of the project, its time lines, and its funding needs. The Resources Agency will submit this report along with its revised budget change proposal for the project as part of the State's fiscal year 2000-01 budget process. Although the project is still in the preliminary stage of development, it appears to cover many areas of common interest to the OPR in developing a statewide land use policy.

AN ABSENCE OF DATA THAT IDENTIFIES THE PURPOSE OF LAND ACQUISITIONS IMPEDES LAND USE PLANNING

Although many state entities maintain inventories of land they own, the State does not have a comprehensive inventory system that it could use to facilitate statewide land use planning by readily identifying land acquired for specific purposes, including ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. For instance, the DPR has a database that tracks land it acquires for parks. However, it does not keep track of land owned by other state entities in areas of common interest. Moreover, as discussed in the appendix, this database does not identify land acquired or held for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation purposes.

In addition, Calfed does not maintain an inventory of land acquired through the projects it funds. It is currently in the preliminary stage of developing a report that will identify land ownership and use in the Bay-Delta region. This report is intended to show changes and trends in land ownership and use, and it can also serve as a tool for planning and implementing conservation and restoration efforts.

Although the Department of General Services maintains a statewide real property inventory that is capable of tracking information on land owned by state entities, including acreage, location, purchase price, and the specific purposes for which they acquire land, it contains limited information. In particular, the inventory does not identify certain types of land, such as agricultural sites, specific wildlife habitats, and sites where the State retains the right to control the development occurring on the property. Without this information, state land use planners do not have a complete picture of the amount of land the State owns for various purposes. This detail is essential for determining California's future needs and for assessing whether individual efforts are compatible with the goals and objectives of the statewide land use policy.

A comprehensive inventory is critical for effective statewide land use planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that it fulfills its responsibility for developing a statewide land use policy, the OPR should do the following:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive approach for addressing statewide land use planning. Inherent in this mission should be the development of an overall plan for the State to acquire land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation.
- Identify those resources it can use from projects and studies already performed by other entities, such as the Resources Agency's statewide conservation and habitat assessment project, and consider this data when developing its approach.
- Project staffing and resource requirements it needs to fulfill its mandates, and seek additional staff and resources as necessary.
- Update the statewide environmental goals and policies report and continue to update this report every four years, as state law dictates.
- Work with other state entities to ensure that a composite inventory of land the State owns exists. To facilitate statewide land use planning, the inventory should include information on the purpose for which each property was acquired. ■

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CHAPTER 2

The Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Parks and Recreation Should Improve Management of Their Land

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) do not adequately manage the land they acquire for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. Neither department has a written plan defining management goals and strategies for at least one-third of the properties it owns. Existing plans often have not been updated to account for changes in the condition of the land, changes in land use, or advances in scientific practice. These departments also lack uniform procedures for staff to document the approaches they use to manage land to ensure that they are meeting their goals and strategies. Consequently, they have no way of knowing whether they are maintaining properties adequately for their intended purposes, such as protecting endangered species or restoring critical ecosystems.

NEITHER DEPARTMENT PREPARES A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR EACH PROPERTY IT ACQUIRES

Although Fish and Game and the DPR require staff to prepare management plans for land acquired, they have not completed plans for 318 properties and parks.

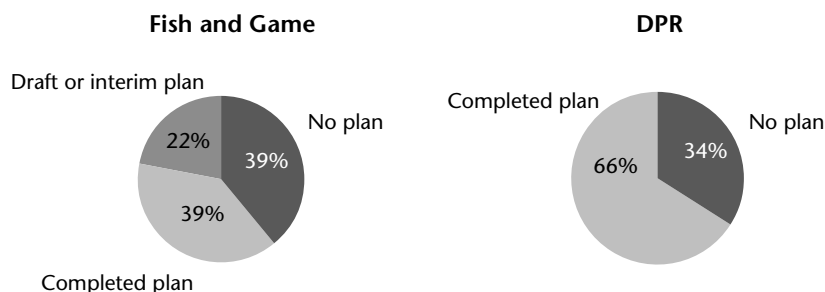
Both Fish and Game and the DPR require their staff to prepare formal plans describing goals and strategies for managing the land they acquire. Each plan is to include information such as proposed use, maintenance schedules, any environmental impacts, and staffing needs. Although Fish and Game and DPR staff are required to prepare a plan to manage each specific property or park, plans do not exist for a significant number of properties or parks.

The State's policy is to acquire and restore to the highest possible level those areas that can most successfully sustain wildlife. However, Fish and Game has not completed land management plans for more than half of its properties. For instance, it has no plan for Rancho Jamul, 2,260 acres acquired in 1997 to preserve

and manage declining sensitive species and habitat in San Diego County. Figure 4 illustrates that as of April 2000, plans do not exist for 149 (39 percent) of the 383 properties that Fish and Game has owned or managed for more than a year.

FIGURE 4

Overall Status of Management Plans for Properties and Parks Held by Fish and Game and the DPR



Sources: Department of Fish and Game, Land and Facilities Branch.
Department of Parks and Recreation.

Note: Status of plans is as of April 2000 for Fish and Game and as of May 2000 for the DPR.

Fish and Game staff in six regions are responsible for preparing land management plans for properties within their boundaries. The department requires its staff to submit a draft plan within one year of acquisition and expects staff to finalize the plan within 90 days. Fish and Game requires all plans to undergo an environmental impact review and a public review comment period before receiving final approval. However, it has 85 properties for which plans have remained incomplete for up to 24 years. The deputy director of administration states that by 2002, Fish and Game will have plans for all its properties. Without a final plan, Fish and Game may not be able to obtain funding to pursue certain management activities that may enhance wildlife habitat on these properties.

The DPR has a park system plan that defines missions, goals, policies, proposed funding, and upcoming challenges. However, the DPR cannot measure progress in completing its goals because the park system plan has not been updated since 1982, and it has not prepared individual general plans, which outline an appropriate preservation and management strategy, for 84 (34 percent) of its 249 parks, as shown in Figure 4. In fact, 50 of the parks that still do not have plans were established by the DPR between 1960 and 1965—almost 40 years ago. For

example, the DPR has no plan for Castle Crags State Park, a unit in the Northern Buttes District encompassing about 4,350 acres that was classified as a state park in 1963. Until the DPR completes and implements its general plans, it cannot ensure that the use of a park meets the initial intent of the acquisition.

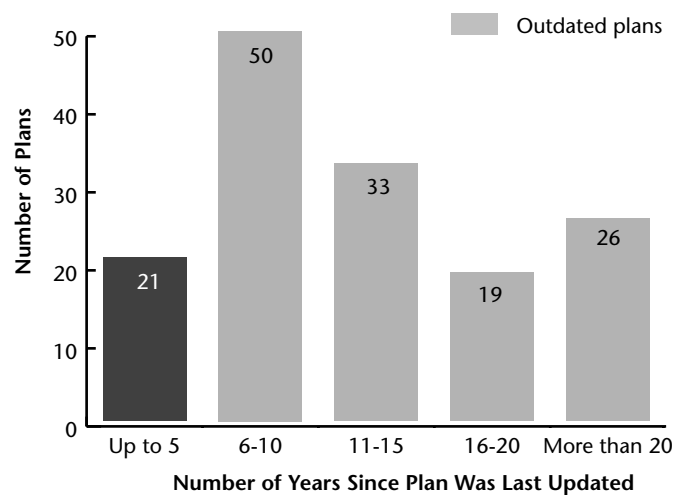
BOTH DEPARTMENTS USE OUTDATED PLANS TO MANAGE SOME PROPERTIES

Using a current plan that outlines the use of the land and compliance with relevant requirements for overseeing the land is a basic principle of land management. However, neither Fish and Game nor the DPR regularly updates its plans. Both departments have management plans or general plans that by their own standards are outdated.

Although Fish and Game requires a review of its land management plans at least every five years, as Figure 5 shows, 128 (86 percent) of its 149 completed plans are more than 5 years old. Half of its completed plans are at least 10 years old and have never been updated. Consequently, Fish and Game may be using goals and objectives that are no longer relevant due to changing priorities and resource management approaches.

FIGURE 5

A Majority of Fish and Game’s Land Management Plans Are Outdated

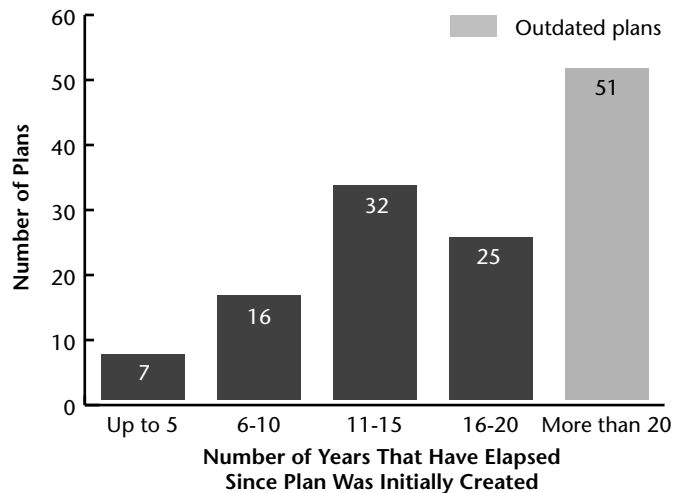


Source: Department of Fish and Game, Land and Facilities Branch.

Until 1998, the DPR considered its general plans to be applicable and relevant for 15 to 20 years. For plans prepared in 1998 or later, the DPR’s current policy is to update them when circumstance and need dictate. However, many of the plans it prepared prior to 1998 are outdated. As Figure 6 illustrates, almost half of the 165 existing general plans have not been updated for more than 15 years, and 51 are more than 20 years old. For example, the DPR prepared a plan for the Hendy Woods State Park in 1962 that has never been updated. The park’s guiding document, nearly 40 years old, is a map that describes the layout of the park but does not define any goals or strategies for managing the land.

FIGURE 6

Many of the DPR’s General Plans Are Outdated



Source: Department of Parks and Recreation.
 Note: Figure excludes 34 general plans that were amended.

The DPR prepared 11 of its general plans prior to the enactment of the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act in 1970. Both acts require submission and approval of an environmental impact report for projects that may affect the environment. Plans the DPR prepared before 1970 would not contain environmental impact information. Other factors, such as changes in the condition of the land, changes in land use, or advances in scientific practice, also dictate the need for regular review and updating of general plans. To ensure that sufficient information exists to make

informed decisions concerning land use, maintenance schedules, any environmental impacts, and staffing needs, the DPR should update these plans.

THE DEPARTMENTS DO NOT ADEQUATELY MANAGE SOME LAND

For three of the four Fish and Game properties and three of the six DPR parks we reviewed, the departments did not meet certain objectives or undertake some restoration projects.

Fish and Game has not always been able to adequately manage land it acquired for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. In 1995, it inspected 245 of its properties and found that 74 percent of the land had critical site maintenance problems, such as severe resource damage, public safety and nuisance problems associated with trespassers, and other uncontrolled or unauthorized uses. Fish and Game did not meet some of its objectives for managing three of the four properties we reviewed. Although the deputy director of administration believes that certain objectives have been met for these properties, he agrees that other objectives have not been met. For instance, Fish and Game acknowledges that it has not met some of the objectives contained in its land management plan for the Camp Cady Wildlife Area in San Bernardino County, which is desert riparian habitat for various protected species. In addition, although Fish and Game states that it has met its maintenance goals for 11,000 acres of deer winter range in the Doyle Wildlife Area in Lassen County, it has not met its goal of undertaking projects to enhance the habitat on this property.

The DPR also does not adequately manage some of its parks. It had not undertaken certain restoration projects for three of the six parks we reviewed. For instance, the district superintendent told us that staff at the Leo Carillo State Park in Los Angeles County have not yet begun work on removing German ivy, an invasive, nonnative plant. The district superintendent also told us that staff shortages prevent adequate monitoring of some of the 40,000 acres in the Topanga and Malibu sectors of the district.

Consistent and thorough management of acquired land is essential for ongoing benefits. Delays in restoring or maintaining land may also result in additional problems. For example, by postponing a prescribed burn project—the setting of a controlled fire in a specific area to clear the land of fallen branches and undergrowth—the DPR allows conditions for a catastrophic wildfire to develop and jeopardizes the ecological health of the entire area.

DOCUMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT EFFORTS IS INSUFFICIENT

In fiscal year 1994-95, Fish and Game developed a standard monitoring report for inspecting properties that allows staff to record information relating to the condition of the land. Its regional staff were instructed to use these reports for two years for all of their properties to capture sufficient data to allow Fish and Game to determine future inspection scheduling and budget needs. However, Fish and Game did not require its staff to complete the monitoring reports each year thereafter. Supervising wildlife biologists for the regions told us that they were not currently using these reports to document monitoring activities. Even if staff were to use these monitoring reports routinely, they would be unable to assess whether they are meeting the goals and objectives of land management plans because these reports do not capture this information.

Without standard procedures to track and document monitoring activities, Fish and Game and the DPR cannot ensure they meet the goals and objectives of the management plans.

Fish and Game states that it aggressively manages those properties with maximum resource values. It also recognizes that its land managers, primarily biologists, use varying management methods, and it plans to develop a statewide format to foster greater consistency. Until Fish and Game completes this tool and incorporates a component that addresses whether its management activities meet the goals and objectives of land management plans, it cannot ensure that sufficient documentation exists to verify its land management activities. For example, Fish and Game was unable to furnish documentation for its management of one of the properties in our sample, the Camp Cady Wildlife Area.

Similarly, the DPR does not have uniform standards for monitoring its parks. As a result, districts vary considerably in their documentation methods. For example, three district superintendents told us that they do not require staff to regularly document the full nature and extent of all of their monitoring activities. Without standard procedures, park district staff cannot track and maintain information in a uniform manner, and the DPR cannot properly oversee its land management efforts. The DPR is aware of this problem. In October 1999, it prepared a draft natural resource inventory, monitoring, and assessment guideline. This guideline provides uniform monitoring procedures for the districts to follow and requires them to develop comprehensive park monitoring plans. Although this is a draft guideline, 6 of the 23 park districts are presently using it on a pilot basis.

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING HAMPERS EFFECTIVE LAND MANAGEMENT

State departments acquire land that meets their goals and objectives for restoring ecosystems and preserving wildlife habitat as it becomes available. The departments also acquire land that meets the intent of certain bond acts. Regardless of the circumstances, when a department acquires new property, it also assumes the responsibility of land management.

In 1991, Fish and Game estimated that an extra \$8 million annually and an additional 92 positions were needed to fully manage its properties.

Over the past decade, Fish and Game has communicated to the Legislature the funding shortfalls affecting its ability to manage the land it acquires. Historically, Fish and Game has allotted between \$6.8 million and \$15.6 million, or about 5 percent to 8 percent of its annual budget, for land management. In 1991, it reported to the Legislature that its pace of acquiring land exceeded its ability to provide resources for land management. Fish and Game estimated that to fully manage its properties, it would need an additional 92 positions and \$8 million annually. On three separate occasions—1978, 1990, and 1992—the Legislature declared that Fish and Game has not been properly funded.

In 1997, Fish and Game submitted a budget change proposal for almost \$2.6 million, stating that it had inadequate staffing and funding to manage and enhance the property it had acquired. Fish and Game also stated that it was unable to provide reliable and timely data on species and habitats to facilitate habitat conservation planning. Although this proposal was approved, most of its 12 authorized positions were not filled due to an unanticipated revenue shortfall in fiscal year 1997-98. However, for fiscal year 2000-01, Fish and Game will receive nearly \$4 million, of which a portion will fund land management activities. Fish and Game is currently in the process of evaluating its existing programs so that it can develop long-term funding options. It expects to consult with both the Legislature and its constituents on the best option for funding its programs.

The deputy director of park operations told us that the DPR also lacks the necessary funding to adequately manage all of the land and natural resources under its stewardship. In addition, two district superintendents commented on how staff shortages affect their ability to manage their land. In its fiscal year 1999-2000 memorandum of understanding with the Legislature, the DPR states that in recent years its budget has been limited to basic park operations, and the backlog of

deferred projects is having a significant effect on the natural environment and the DPR's ability to maintain its stewardship role. The deputy director stated that the fiscal year 1999-2000 budget provided \$10 million in additional funds for natural resource maintenance projects and that the DPR has set priorities and begun work on these projects.

A RECENT BOND ACT PROVIDES A NEW SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR PROTECTING LAND

Proposition 12 provides \$802 million to the DPR, Fish and Game, and the Wildlife Conservation Board for projects including land acquisition and restoration.

In March 2000, voters passed Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000, which was initiated by the Legislature. This act authorizes a bond issue of \$2.1 billion for various purposes, including funds to protect land such as wildlife habitats throughout the State. As a result of this act, the DPR will receive about \$525 million to fund a variety of projects within the state park system, including land acquisition and major maintenance such as rehabilitation, restoration, and improvement projects. Fish and Game and its land-acquisition arm, the Wildlife Conservation Board, will receive \$12 million and \$265 million, respectively, to fund projects ranging from the acquisition and restoration of land benefiting wildlife to the rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of land to preserve threatened or endangered species.

Although the bond act specifies that the proceeds can be spent on acquisition and major maintenance projects such as the rehabilitation, restoration, and improvement of various types of land, it does not address how the ongoing costs of operating and maintaining the newly acquired land will be met. Additionally, although some bond money is available to fund unmet major maintenance projects on land already held by the State, the bond act does not require that these existing needs be met before the State acquires additional land that may have similar needs.

If the bond act had established a mechanism to ensure a steady source of funds for ongoing operating and maintenance expenses that correlates with the amount of land the State acquires, it would have been able to address the concern of insufficient funding. Further, if the bond act had required that

existing major maintenance projects be adequately funded before additional land with similar needs is acquired, the act would have established a priority for state departments to address the restoration and improvement of their existing land before acquiring more. For instance, the act could have identified a fixed amount or percentage of the total bond issue that must be used for existing unmet major maintenance activities. The act could also have established a designated revenue stream that could be drawn against in future years for ongoing land management activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fish and Game and the DPR should continue to request additional funding to ensure that land acquired for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation is kept in its desired condition.

To ensure that they adequately manage their land, Fish and Game and the DPR should do the following:

- Prepare final plans for all of their properties and parks that describe goals and strategies for managing the land.
- Update their older land management or general plans.
- Perform restoration, rehabilitation, and improvement projects, as well as periodic inspections of all land, in accordance with their land management or general plans.

Moreover, Fish and Game should develop and implement procedures for documenting its land management activities that address the goals and objectives of its land management plans. In addition, the DPR should complete and implement its pilot guideline for standard, uniform monitoring procedures.

As the public has recently expressed its interest in preserving land for environmental purposes, the Legislature should consider doing the following:

- Establish a mechanism in future bond acts involving land acquisitions that sets aside a portion of the proceeds for major maintenance projects.

- Establish a mechanism to ensure that ongoing management of land acquired with the bond money is funded; for example, it could create a designated revenue stream or require the departments to establish a plan demonstrating how those ongoing costs will be met before acquiring the land.

We conducted this review under the authority vested in the California State Auditor by Section 8543 et seq. of the California Government Code and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. We limited our review to those areas specified in the audit scope section of this report.

Respectfully submitted,



MARY P. NOBLE
Acting State Auditor

Date: June 27, 2000

Staff: Joanne Quarles, CPA, Audit Principal
Linus A. Li, CPA, CMA
Corey Bock
Andrew M. Roth
Dianna Scott

APPENDIX

Land Acquired by the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and State Conservancies for Ecosystem Restoration and Wildlife Habitat Preservation

This appendix summarizes the land acquired by state entities for the purposes of restoring ecosystems and preserving wildlife habitat. We attempted to identify all of the land the Department of Fish and Game (Fish and Game), the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the state conservancies held for these purposes as of December 31, 1999. We also tried to identify the total amount of land that these entities acquired between 1994 and 1999. Table 1 presents the total amount of land held by the departments and conservancies, and Table 2 shows annual acquisition activity. Although the State has numerous methods for acquiring land, the two most common are by purchasing the fee title, which results in full title to the land, and acquiring an easement, which results in restrictions on the use of the land.

We asked each department and conservancy to provide the data using their inventory records. We also asked them to identify the portion of their land that was being managed by another entity, but neither department could provide this data. We compared Fish and Game and DPR inventory records to the statewide real property inventory system (statewide inventory) maintained by the Department of General Services. However, we did not validate the information provided by the departments and conservancies.

We extracted from the statewide inventory those Fish and Game properties that were acquired using funds designated for restoration and preservation purposes. However, these properties do not reflect all of the land that Fish and Game has acquired for these purposes, because the statewide inventory does not list a funding source for many of the properties it contains. For

reporting purposes, we used Fish and Game’s data. Fish and Game is responsible for ensuring that it can reconcile its data with the statewide inventory.

Because the DPR does not separately identify landholdings by purpose, we compared the land acquired for all purposes as reported in the DPR’s records to that reported in the statewide inventory and determined that these two inventories do not match. For reporting purposes, we used the DPR’s data. The DPR is responsible for ensuring that it can reconcile its data with the statewide inventory.

TABLE 1

**Total Land Held by Fish and Game, the DPR, and Conservancies
as of December 31, 1999**

		Land Held and Managed by Conservancy/Department (in acres)	Land Held by Conservancy/Department but Managed by Others (in acres)
California Tahoe Conservancy	Fee Title	5,666	28
	Easements	120	0
	Subtotal:	5,786	28
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy	Fee Title	1,622	160
	Easements	1,138	0
	Subtotal:	2,760	160
San Joaquin River Conservancy	Fee Title	123	189
	Easements	0	0
	Subtotal:	123	189
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	Fee Title	0	11,106
	Easements	0	0
	Subtotal:	0	11,106
State Coastal Conservancy	Fee Title	611	837
	Easements	3,609	0
	Other	7	0
	Subtotal:	4,227	837
Department of Parks and Recreation [†]	Fee Title	1,197,117*	
	Easements	43,238	
	Other [‡]	165,791	
	Subtotal:	1,406,146	
Department of Fish and Game	Fee Title	441,211*	
	Easements	66,853	
	Other [‡]	352,656	
	Subtotal:	860,720	
Total:		2,279,762	12,320

Source: Survey responses from state conservancies.
 Department of Fish and Game inventory records.
 Department of Parks and Recreation inventory records.

Note: Amounts are rounded to the nearest acre. Amounts less than one acre are omitted from this table.

* The department states that the total for fee title includes land it holds that is managed by others; however, it could not provide this breakdown.

† As discussed in the report, the DPR does not separately identify land held for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. Therefore, the amounts reported on this table represent all of its properties.

‡ These amounts include other types of interests in land such as leases, licenses, and management agreements.

TABLE 2

**Total Land Acquired by Fish and Game, the DPR, and Conservancies
From 1994 to 1999 (in acres)**

		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
California Tahoe Conservancy	Fee Title	93	41	21	15	13	199
	Easements	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Subtotal:	93	41	21	15	13	199
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy	Fee Title	80	69	278	466	366	435
	Easements	0	0	1,109	0	0	0
	Subtotal:	80	69	1,387	466	366	435
San Joaquin River Conservancy	Fee Title	0	0	22	0	167	123
	Easements	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Subtotal:	0	0	22	0	167	123
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	Fee Title	849	8,412	304	1,114	8,954	249
	Easements	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Subtotal:	849	8,412	304	1,114	8,954	249
State Coastal Conservancy	Fee Title	322	1,798	162	0	0	0
	Easements	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Subtotal:	322	1,798	162	0	0	0
Department of Parks and Recreation [†]	Fee Title	13,800	15,893	5,425	13,743	8,946	5,164
	Easements	77	174	19	1	0	0
	Other*	0	9,111	76	0	1,568	0
	Subtotal:	13,877	25,178	5,520	13,744	10,514	5,164
Department of Fish and Game	Fee Title	24,688	12,074	4,015	6,969	13,240	5,854
	Easements	6,585	2,019	5,169	10,588	2,861	4,543
	Other*	308	2,000	0	355	9,727	0
	Subtotal:	31,581	16,093	9,184	17,912	25,828	10,397
Total:		46,802	51,591	16,600	33,251	45,842	16,567

Source: Survey responses from state conservancies.
 Department of Fish and Game inventory records.
 Department of Parks and Recreation inventory records.

Note: Amounts are rounded to the nearest acre. Amounts less than one acre are omitted from this table.

* These amounts include other types of interests in land such as leases, licenses, and management agreements.

† As discussed in the report, the DPR does not separately identify land acquired for ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. Therefore, the amounts reported on this table represent all of its properties.

Agency's comments provided as text only.

Governor's Office of Planning and Research
Steven A. Nissen
Acting Director
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, California 95814

June 15, 2000

Mary P. Noble
Acting State Auditor
Bureau of State Audits
555 Capitol Mall, Suite 300
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: REPORT ON WILDLIFE HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM

DEAR MS. NOBLE:

The Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has reviewed the Bureau of State Audit's draft report entitled *California's Wildlife Habitat and Ecosystem: The State Needs to Improve Its Land Acquisition Planning and Oversight*. We concur with the report's recommendations concerning OPR. However, we note that OPR has consistently engaged in statewide planning activities through its technical assistance role to state agencies and local governments. Examples of this technical assistance include, but are not limited to: 1) helping local agencies in the development and implementation of General Plans, 2) publication of technical advisory documents on a variety of land use related subjects such as specific plans, zoning ordinances and environmental mitigation and 3) maintenance of a database of environmental assessment documents which represent the major land use proposals in the State.

Additionally, with respect to the Auditor's recommendations, we note the importance of other state departments and agencies having an adequate information infrastructure from which OPR can obtain the necessary data to effectively coordinate land use planning and develop an Environmental Goals and Policy Report.

Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions you might have.

Sincerely,

(Signed by: Steven A. Nissen)

STEVEN A. NISSEN

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Agency's comments provided as text only.

California Resources Agency
Mary D. Nichols
Secretary
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, California 95814

June 15, 2000

Mary P. Noble*
Acting State Auditor
Bureau of State Audits
555 Capitol Mall, Suite 300
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Noble:

Subject: California's Wildlife Habitat and Ecosystem Audit Number 2000-101

In response to the report entitled "California's Wildlife Habitat and Ecosystem: The State Needs to Improve Its Land Acquisition Planning and Oversight," we were pleased to see recognized the efforts of this Administration to bring together the prominent land acquisition organizations from the state and federal governments, along with the nonprofit sector for improved land acquisition coordination. Nevertheless, on page 15 the report suggests that "...a comprehensive statewide land use policy would improve these efforts." I wholeheartedly concur. Indeed, in recognition of such a need, the Resources Agency received funding in the 1999-2000 fiscal year to begin the development of a statewide conservation and habitat blueprint. That effort, known as the California Continuing Resource Investment Strategy Project (CCRISP) will be expanded in 2000 budget. One of the goals of CCRISP is to provide statewide scientific data and analysis that will facilitate the identification of the most sensitive lands in need of protection and will help facilitate the development of a comprehensive statewide land use policy.

The report correctly states that the Departments of Fish and Game and Parks and Recreation do not have management plans for all of their properties. Resource constraints over many years have prevented the preparation of new plans, and the updating of old plans. Nevertheless each department takes resource management responsibilities very seriously.

*California State Auditor's comments appear on page 43.

The Department of Fish and Game is guided in its goals and objectives for statewide land use by statutory State policy "...to protect threatened or endangered native plants, wildlife, or aquatic organisms or specialized habitat types, both terrestrial and aquatic ..." and by its own mission statement "...to manage wildlife, and plant resources, and habitats upon which they depend for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public."

① On page 24, the report heading states "THE ABSENCE OF DATA THAT IDENTIFIES THE PURPOSE OF LAND ACQUISITIONS IMPEDES LAND USE PLANNING." The Department does capture sufficient data that allow it to identify the purpose for which land is acquired. Land Acquisition Evaluations containing stringent land value assessments are completed during on-site visits by regional land managers for all land proposed for acquisition. These are reviewed and scored by a Department Lands Committee and then must be approved by a high level Oversight Committee before forwarding to the Wildlife Conservation Board for acquisition.

② On page 29, the report states "...neither Fish and Game nor the DPR regularly updates its plans..." Management plans do not necessarily go out of date with the passage of time. While in some cases management plans may be dated, the management efforts being carried out are current.

The Department of Parks and Recreation notes that it should be understood that the type of general plan which the Public Resources Code (Section 5002.2 *et seq.*) requires the Department of Parks and Recreation to prepare specifically mandates research, analysis and goal-setting for a wide range of issues that go far beyond ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat management. The department's general plans must deal with cultural resources, land use, facility development, interpretation, concessions and operational issues, as well as provide the environmental analysis needed for the plan's CEQA compliance.

While the adoption of a general plan for each unit is desirable, the department believes that natural resources are being adequately protected and restored on lands managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation--with or without such plans. Management actions on lands without general plans are guided by the unit's classification, i.e., State Reserve, State Park, State Recreation Area, etc. Classification statutes

Mary P. Noble
June 15, 2000
Page 3

in the Public Resources Code, Section 5019.50-74, provide policy guidance on the overall purpose of a unit and general management objectives. In addition, specific purpose statements have been prepared for all units of the State Park System. Together, these classification statutes, statements of purpose and additional systemwide management directives guide management actions. In recognition of the need for a cohesive statewide strategy for managing the State Park System, the department is currently reviewing and revising its goals and operating procedures through a process entitled "A Path to Our Future."

This is not meant to imply that more effort toward the preparation of unit general plans and management plans is not needed to better manage wildlife areas and parklands. The Resources Agency will work with the Departments of Fish and Game and Parks and Recreation to develop a workable plan and timetable for the development of new plans or review and updating, as necessary, of existing plans for all properties.

(Signed by: Mary D. Nichols)

Mary D. Nichols
Secretary for Resources

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COMMENTS

California State Auditor's Comments on the Response From the California Resources Agency

To provide clarity and perspective, we are commenting on the California Resources Agency's (Resources Agency) response to our audit report. The following numbers correspond to the numbers we have placed in the response.

- ① Our concern is that the State does not have a comprehensive inventory system that it could use to facilitate statewide land use planning by readily identifying land acquired for specific purposes, including ecosystem restoration and wildlife habitat preservation. Although we agree that the Department of Fish and Game does identify the purpose for which it acquires land, this information is not used in the statewide real property inventory maintained by the Department of General Services. Furthermore, as noted in the appendix, the Department of Parks and Recreation does not separately identify landholdings by purpose.
- ② It is unclear how the Resources Agency can assert that management efforts being carried out are current without ensuring that the goals and objectives for the use of the land are current and relevant. As stated on page 26, there are various factors that dictate the need for regular review and updating of plans, such as changes in the condition of the land, changes in land use, or advances in scientific practice. Using a current plan that outlines the use of the land and compliance with relevant requirements for overseeing the land is a basic principle of land management.

cc: Members of the Legislature
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Milton Marks Commission on California State
Government Organization and Economy
Department of Finance
Attorney General
State Controller
State Treasurer
Legislative Analyst
Senate Office of Research
California Research Bureau
Capitol Press