

December 17, 2015

Subject: Integrated Regional Conservation and Development program

Reporting Period: October 2015-December 2015

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Recommended Action:

For information only – no action required.

Background:

The Strategic Growth Council passed a resolution on Oct 6, 2014 to “coordinate state agencies for the development and implementation of an Integrated Regional Planning approach to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of regional development and natural resource conservation in California”. The California Biodiversity Council (CBC) quickly followed with a separate resolution to align their member agencies in support this Strategic Growth Council initiative.

The Integrated Regional Conservation and Development (IRCAD) initiative is now advancing on the following fronts.

1. Developing a framework and standard methods for the implementation of regional conservation assessments.
2. Integration into strategic projects that demonstrate the added value and efficiency of this process to inform sustainable conservation and development.
3. Applying a technology support platform to ensure broad implementation of this program by all stakeholders.
4. Advancing policy and financial strategies to ensure program institutionalization and implementation.

Update:

1. Framework and Methods

A multi-agency Methodology Working Group is developing and documenting the framework and standardized implementation approach for regional conservation assessments. The regional conservation priorities that will be identified provide the foundation for sustainable development and conservation. This effort is facilitated by the SGC and includes representatives from Caltrans, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, CA Department of Conservation, CA Department of Water Resources, California Energy Commission, California Department of Food and Agriculture, US Fish and Wildlife Service, UC-Davis, and The Nature Conservancy. Reports are being created to document the information, process and products that are needed to guide the IRCAD program.

A significant amount of conservation assessment and planning has already been carried out across California. These efforts provide the basis for a standardized regional conservation assessment approach. A review of current and past conservation

assessments has recently been completed to determine the extent of conservation information currently available. This baseline will determine the level of effort required to complete the standardized mapping of conservation priorities for California's ecoregions.

2. Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects will document the value of this regional approach to a) improve the implementation efficiencies for priority development projects, and b) advance priority regional conservation goals. These projects are selected to represent different aspects of the IRCAD methodology, show the roles of different stakeholders in this process, and demonstrate the value of regional products to improve the delivery of development and conservation objectives.

Demonstration activities are being carried out for High Speed Rail sections in Southern California along with regional planning in the San Joaquin Valley. Additional projects are being evaluated in the Central Grasslands, the Sierra Nevada, and the broader San Francisco Bay.

3. Technology Support

SGC is using the Data Basin online technology platform to support the overall IRCAD program. This user-friendly platform allows for data integration, exploration and management; and offers a flexible team working environment to build the data products required to inform sustainable regional conservation and development strategies and decisions.

4. Policy and finance strategy

Studies are being advanced to identify the existing and new policies that will be required for the institutionalization of the IRCAD program across state agencies, and to identify the most appropriate financial strategies for program implementation.