

January 15, 2016

2 Year Action Plan: Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program

The California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) is coordinating and guiding the Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Planning (IRCAD) program. The SGC has been working with the California Biodiversity Council (CBC) to advance this initiative over the past year.

One of the products from the past year is this 2 year action plan. This document describes the actions that are needed to advance the initiative. All CBC member agencies are being asked to engage in the development and implementation of this program, to engage in the use of IRCAD products to achieve an integrated conservation vision for California. Some agencies with special expertise and responsibilities are requested to provide staff and information resources to help accomplish specific tasks as described below.

Activity 1. IRCAD Framework and Standards

- **Purpose:** Develop and document standards and methods for the implementation of the IRCAD program in California.
- **Outcomes:**
 1. Evaluate the status and products of past and current Regional Conservation Assessments to inform the development of Regional Conservation Assessments.
 2. Develop regional strategies that will integrate past and current conservation efforts and data into a regionally consistent regional assessment.
 3. Document the framework and methods for IRCAD regional program implementation.
 4. Evaluate roles for permitting and regulatory agencies, local and regional agencies, state agencies, project proponents, and the broad conservation and development community for the effective development, implementation, and use of Regional Conservation Assessments.
- **Status:** An IRCAD Methodology Working Group was set up in the Spring of 2015 and meets bi-monthly. There are representatives from the USFWS, CDFW, CDWR, CDOC, SGC, TNC, CDFA, Caltrans, CEC, UC-Davis and the CA Biodiversity Council on this Working Group.
- **CBC Member Agency Involvement / Contribution:** Provide representation and expertise in this Working Group to develop and document Regional Conservation Assessment standards and practices for California.
 1. Contribute to methods development and documentation for Regional Conservation Assessments.
 2. Participate in the identification and implementation of strategic demonstration projects.
 3. Participate in the identification of conservation targets and goals, alignment of regulatory and permitting processes, and the development of integrated conservation and development strategies.

4. Share data and information, staff and other in-kind resources to support this work.

Activity 2. IRCAD Project Implementation

- **Purpose:** Promote the development of regional conservation assessments to integrate avoidance, minimization and mitigation into the planning and implementation of regional development initiatives. Demonstrate the process and value of this approach to effectively achieve regionally sustainable conservation and development objectives.
- **Outcomes:**
 1. Develop an RCA implementation sequence across CA ecoregions based on need, opportunity and 'readiness'.
 2. Identify strategic demonstration projects that require regional scale solutions for sustainable development and conservation conflicts.
 3. Advance the implementation of demonstration pilots through the appropriate application of IRCAD methods, which include:
 - Document regional conservation targets and associated goals.
 - Map regional conservation priorities.
 - Identify strategies and opportunities to achieve unmet regional conservation goals.
 4. Engage stakeholders for the development and implementation of these plans.
- **Status:** Projects under discussion to demonstrate and inform different components of the IRCAD program include:
 1. HSR Project Sections from a) Bakersfield to Burbank and from b) Merced to Gilroy – Transportation and Regional Conservation
 2. Bay Area Plan – Transportation and Regional Conservation
 3. Sierra Nevada Mountains – Watershed Improvement Program, National Forest Planning, and Conservation
 4. San Joaquin Valley Greenprint – Addressing resource conflicts through integrated regional planning.
 5. DRECP
- **CBC Member Agency Involvement / Contribution:**
 1. Development of the implementation sequence for Regional Conservation Assessments.
 2. Participate in the identification and implementation of strategic demonstration projects.
 3. Support for, and involvement, in the designated demonstration projects.
 4. Share data and information, staff and other in-kind resources to support this work.

Activity 3. Information and Technology Support

- **Purpose:** Implement a technology platform that will support the development, integration, analysis of application of data, in an appropriate work environment, to advance the implementation of IRCAD project objectives.
- Develop and manage the required data with associated support technology for effective implementation of this program.
- **Outcomes:**

1. Evaluate data requirements and data availability to support the implementation of the IRCAD program.
 - Categories of conservation data include biological and ecological diversity as well as ecosystem service values for water, carbon, and prime agriculture.
 - Conservation opportunity data includes information on landscape integrity, corridors and connectivity.
 - Conservation constraint data includes information on climate change, development plans, drought, and urban growth.
 2. Secure technology platform where underlying datasets will be standardized and integrated for viewing, analysis and reporting.
 3. Identify, develop and integrate core datasets on a widely accessible information platform to support the implement of the IRCAD program.
 4. Identify and develop tools that will support group process at the state, regional and sub-regional level for implementation of the IRCAD program.
- **Status:**
 1. The Data Basin platform has been secured to support this program through an umbrella contract between the CA Office of Technology and the Conservation Biology Institute.
 2. Many 100's of datasets and many analytic and reporting tools are now integrated in the Data Basin environment to support IRCAD implementation.
 - **CBC Member Agency Involvement / Contribution:**
 1. Participation in data review and status activities.
 2. Provide datasets and assist in the integration of these data in Data Basin.
 3. Participation in the identification of additional tools that will advance IRCAD implementation.

Focus Area 4. Policy and Fiscal Strategy

- **Purpose:** Identification and advancement of financial and policy strategies to support the implementation and institutionalization of IRCAD.
- **Outcomes:**
 1. Advance policy options and strategies that will support the implementation of IRCAD program.
 2. Identify options and strategies that will provide funding support for the implementation of the IRCAD program.
- **Status:** A renewed Tri Agency Partnership Agreement is being advanced to address these objectives through clear working agreements between the Resources Agency, the Transportation Agency and CalEPA.
- **CBC Member Agency Involvement / Contribution:**
 1. Participation in the evaluation, development and implementation of policy strategies
 2. Participation in the evaluation, development and implementation of financial strategies.