

V: Five Year Implementation Plan, 2002-2007

The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP) is a partnership of state and federal agencies working in concert with local governments, environmental organizations, and the business community to develop and implement a regional strategy for the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of coastal wetlands and coastal watersheds. The long-term vision of the Wetlands Recovery Project is to reestablish a mosaic of fully functioning wetlands systems with a diversity of habitat types and connections to upland communities that preserves and recovers self-sustaining populations of species.

The WRP Regional Strategy defines a set of overarching goals to guide the efforts of the Wetlands Recovery Project and its partner organizations. The regional goals provide a framework for setting policies and priorities for the acquisition, restoration and enhancement of coastal wetlands and coastal watersheds. The WRP's six regional goals are:

1. Preserve and restore coastal wetland ecosystems.
2. Preserve and restore stream corridors and wetland ecosystems in coastal watersheds.
3. Recover native habitat and species diversity.
4. Integrate wetlands recovery with other public objectives.
5. Promote education and compatible access related to coastal wetlands and watersheds.
6. Advance the science of wetlands restoration and management in Southern California.

These goals are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the Regional Strategy.

The Five Year Implementation Plan of the WRP Regional Strategy outlines both short and medium-term steps that will be taken by the WRP to realize the six regional goals. It also identifies which unit of the WRP will take the lead on each action. The Implementation Plan will be updated periodically as program goals are refined and new projects developed. The implementation actions are summarized in Table 5.1 and described in greater detail below.

Table 5.1 Summary of Implementation Actions

Implementation	Action	WRP Lead
1. Develop and implement preservation, restoration, and enhancement projects. (Regional Goals 1-3)	1.1 Develop a decision support tool to help assess both preservation and restoration potential based on ecological objectives.	SAP
	1.2 Identify needs for each watershed in the region.	CTF
	1.3 Identify restoration priorities for steelhead trout.	SCC
	1.4 Identify preservation and restoration priorities for the Santa Monica Mountains and south Santa Barbara coastal watersheds.	SCC
	1.5 Coordinate with regional agencies on mutual priorities.	WMG, SCC
	1.6 Continue project evaluation and selection process for annual Work Plan.	WMG
	1.7 Target project development efforts to priority areas.	SCC, CTF
	1.8 Develop projects with multiple benefits.	SCC, CTF
	1.9 Build capacity and expertise of local agencies and organizations.	SCC, CTF, WMG
	1.10 Create a regional watershed network.	CTF
	1.11 Continue to implement projects.	SCC
	1.12 Secure project funding from state, federal, local, and private sources.	BOG, PAC
	1.13 Facilitate regulatory coordination for WRP projects.	WMG, BOG
2. Integrate wetlands recovery with other public objectives. (Regional Goal 4)	2.1 Coordinate with agencies working on related efforts to ensure wetlands objectives are considered.	WMG, SCC, CTF
3. Promote education and compatible access related to coastal wetlands and watersheds. (Regional Goal 5)	3.1 Develop guidelines for compatible access.	WMG, CTF
	3.2 Perform needs assessment regarding regional availability of accessible wetland areas and interpretive centers.	WMG, CTF
	3.3 Create a regional wetlands and watersheds calendar.	CTF
	3.4 Create a web-based guide describing the location, accessibility, sights, and activities at wetlands and watersheds throughout the region.	PAC, CTF
	3.5 Establish a means to track or estimate visitors to the region's wetlands and riparian areas.	PAC, CTF
	3.6 Continue to educate federal, state, and local decision-makers.	PAC
	3.7 Identify key educational themes for region's wetlands.	PAC
	3.8 Inventory wetlands materials in the five counties.	PAC
	3.9 Develop web site for sharing and disseminating education resources.	PAC, SCC

Implementation	Action	WRP Lead
	3.10 Continue to develop needed outreach materials and activities.	PAC
	3.11 Ensure that the WRP addresses the needs of the region’s ethnically diverse population.	PAC
	3.12 Establish means for private sector to play more active role in the WRP.	PAC
4. Advance the science of wetlands restoration and management in Southern California. (Regional Goal 6)	4.1 Develop regional habitat objectives for the WRP.	SAP
	4.2 Develop regional monitoring program based on regional habitat objectives.	SAP
	4.3 Develop monitoring guidelines for WRP projects.	SAP
	4.4 Develop an extramurally-funded research program.	SAP
5. Promote information exchange and dissemination. (All Regional Goals)	5.1 Expand the WRP Information Station.	SCC, WMG, CTF
	5.2 Establish Watershed Contact Network.	SCF
	5.3 Expand WRP web site.	SCC
	5.4 Continue to hold WRP Symposium every one or two years.	WMG
	5.5 Coordinate with related efforts to disseminate information.	WMG, CTF
6. Partner Agencies (All Regional Goals)	6.1 Identify specific roles or actions for each of the 17 state and federal partner agencies to further the WRP’s regional goals.	All agencies
7. Funding Objectives (All Regional Goals)	7.1 Secure project funding from the state each fiscal year.	BOG, PAC
	7.2 Increase proportion of federal, local, and private funding.	BOG, PAC
	7.3 Pursue long-term project funding.	BOG, WMG
	7.4 Pursue long-term funding for the County Task Forces.	PAC, CTF
	7.5 Secure funding for the Science Advisory Panel and SAP Research Program.	BOG, PAC, SAP

Key to WRP Lead:

- SCC – State Coastal Conservancy
- BOG – Board of Governors
- WMG – Wetlands Managers Group
- PAC – Public Advisory Committee
- SAP – Science Advisory Panel
- CTF – County Task Forces

1. Develop and implement preservation, restoration, and enhancement projects. (Regional Goals 1-3)

The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project is a partnership of state and federal agencies working together to acquire, restore and enhance coastal wetlands and coastal watersheds in the region. Development and implementation of acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects is the primary tool the WRP will use to achieve its regional goals, particularly Goals 1, 2, and 3 which define the WRP's ecological objectives. Key actions to improve and facilitate project selection, development, and implementation are outlined below. In addition, several high priority projects that will be pursued over the next five years are also identified.

Project selection

1.1 Develop a decision support tool to help assess both preservation and restoration potential based on ecological objectives. The WRP has begun a 2-3 year project with the NOAA Coastal Services Center to develop a GIS-based decision support tool. This tool will be based on the SWAMP model (Spatial Wetland Assessment for Management and Planning) developed by NOAA, and modified for the characteristics of Southern California coastal watersheds. The SWAMP model is a landscape level assessment tool which will help the WRP target project development efforts and funding to priority areas. The WRP will coordinate with efforts underway by the Resources Agency and CDFG to map wetland and riparian resources in the state.

WRP Lead: Science Advisory Panel, with participation from the WMG and CTF.

1.2 Identify needs for each watershed in the region. Environment Now has received a Proposition 13 grant from the SWRCB to develop a Regional Wetlands and Watershed Management Plan for Southern California. As part of this project, watershed coordinators in each of the five counties will review watershed plans, restoration plans, and related documents to identify priorities for each watershed. Coordinators will also discuss priorities with local agencies and watershed groups. Identified priorities may include acquisition and restoration projects, additional planning needs, and/or key issues requiring attention in the watershed.

WRP Lead: County Task Forces.

1.3 Identify restoration priorities for steelhead trout. Steelhead trout are an anadromous fish that swim into coastal streams to spawn, and then return to the ocean. Juvenile trout live in the stream for a few years before migrating into the ocean. Because steelhead trout use coastal streams at several stages in their lifecycle, they are an excellent indicator species for the health of coastal streams. The WRP will prioritize steelhead restoration projects not only because the species is endangered, but also because restoring steelhead habitat will help restore coastal stream corridors. Conception Coast Project is currently conducting a steelhead recovery assessment to identify and prioritize site specific restoration actions to aid steelhead recovery on the south coast of Santa Barbara County. A grant from NMFS will enable the

WRP to conduct a similar assessment and prioritize projects for Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange Counties.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy.

1.4 Identify preservation and restoration priorities for the Santa Monica Mountains and south Santa Barbara coastal watersheds. The Santa Monica Mountains and southern Santa Barbara County are two of the least disturbed areas of coastal Southern California, and many opportunities for preservation and restoration of coastal stream corridors remain. The WRP will prepare a study of preservation and restoration priorities in each of these regions. Key elements of these studies will include: priorities already identified by the counties, National Park Service, State Parks, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project; steelhead trout restoration potential; and opportunities to address watershed impacts on coastal wetlands.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy, with participation from local stakeholders.

1.5 Coordinate with regional agencies on mutual priorities. There are many agencies and organizations working in Southern California to develop and implement wetlands and watershed projects. Most of these agencies focus on a specific geographic area and/or a specific resources issue (e.g., water quality). By coordinating with these agencies, the WRP will avoid redundancy and meet the region's resource needs in the most efficient way. The WRP will coordinate with these organizations to identify mutual priorities on which to partner, as well as to determine when the WRP or another group should take the lead on a project. Key agencies that the WRP will work with include the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Program, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The WRP will also work with the federal Coastal America effort, particularly on developing a corporate sponsorship program for wetlands restoration efforts.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group and Coastal Conservancy.

1.6 Continue project evaluation and selection process for annual Work Plan. The Wetlands Managers Group will continue the annual process of soliciting project proposals, evaluating potential projects, and selecting a set of candidate projects for the annual WRP Work Plan. The Wetlands Managers Group will continue to work with the Coastal Conservancy and County Task Forces to ensure that selected projects are well designed and address priorities throughout the region.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group.

Project development

1.7 Target project development efforts to priority areas (see project selection). Opportunities for wetlands acquisition and restoration in Southern California are limited, which requires the WRP to remain flexible and ready to act opportunistically. To some extent, however, the WRP can help to create opportunities by targeting project development efforts in specific areas. Steps 1.1-1.5 outline several steps to identify priority areas for WRP action. The

Coastal Conservancy and the County Task Forces will target project development efforts towards the identified priority areas, to the extent that staff resources allow.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy and County Task Forces.

- 1.8 **Develop projects with multiple benefits.** The WRP will work with local partners to develop wetlands recovery projects with multiple public benefits such as recreational opportunities, education programs, stormwater treatment or storage benefits, and scientific research elements. These types of projects are particularly important in the most highly urbanized areas of the region, such as the Los Angeles basin, where open space is extremely limited and its use must be maximized for both humans and wildlife.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy and County Task Forces.

- 1.9 **Build capacity and expertise of local agencies and organizations.** The Coastal Conservancy, as staff to the WRP, is responsible for developing and implementing projects. Typically, the Conservancy works in partnership with local government agencies and/or nonprofit organizations. In order to increase the pace and effectiveness of wetlands recovery efforts, the WRP must help to build the capacity of these local organizations to develop and implement successful projects. To this end, the WRP will sponsor trainings on relevant topics at its annual symposium and at regional meetings. The WRP will also use its email list to promote relevant trainings and conferences. The Conservancy and Task Forces will facilitate information exchange within and among the five counties regarding demonstration projects, restoration techniques, best management practices, funding sources, and other relevant topics (see also Section 5 below). Finally, the WRP will use the Small Grants Program as a way to train less experienced agencies and nonprofits on the complexities of project development and implementation.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy, County Task Forces, and Wetlands Managers Group.

- 1.10 **Create a regional watershed network.** With funding from a SWRCB Proposition 13 grant, the County Task Forces will hire watershed coordinators in each of the five counties. These coordinators will establish a network of organizations and people engaged in watershed planning and restoration within the county. The County Task Forces will work with the watershed network to identify and develop acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects.

WRP Lead: County Task Forces.

Project implementation

- 1.11 **Implement projects.** The most important action for the WRP is to continue to implement acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects. The Coastal Conservancy will continue to develop and implement projects on its own and with local partners in order to further the Regional Goals. Projects will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis for the WRP Work Plan. In addition to projects identified on the Work Plan, there are several large, complex

projects that the WRP and its partners will continue working on over the next five years. These long-term projects include:

- Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program (TETRP) – The TETRP outlines a plan to restore 500 acres in the south arm of Tijuana Estuary. Restoration of the Model Marsh was the first phase of this effort. Planning for the second phase began in Summer 2001. The TETRP will be implemented in association with several sediment management projects, including the Goat Canyon Enhancement which should begin construction in Fall 2002.
- South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge Enhancements – In 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired the South San Diego Bay salt works and created a new National Wildlife Refuge. FWS is developing an enhancement plan for the refuge. The preliminary plan should be complete within the next year, and implementation of specific projects could begin soon after.
- San Elijo State Ecological Reserve Wetlands Restoration Plan – The WRP has been working with the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy (SELCO) to systematically restore the 1000 ac reserve. A Coastal Conservancy grant funded the completion of an Action Plan, which outlined the potential restoration. The WRP has funded three components to date and now the ACOE in cooperation with SELCO is completing the Feasibility Study for the Dredging components. A final EIR/EIS is due out in late 2003.
- Bolsa Chica Restoration – Planning for restoration of the Bolsa Chica wetlands has been underway for several years now and implementation may be ready to begin within the next five years. The project will be funded in large part by the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles; however, additional funding may be needed to complete the restoration, provide a long-term management fund, and/or acquire and restore adjacent parcels.
- Los Cerritos Acquisition and Restoration – WRP partner agencies are currently negotiating to acquire three large parcels of the Los Cerritos Wetlands. If acquired, a multi-agency restoration planning process for these parcels and adjacent publicly-owned parcels will begin.
- Ballona Wetlands Acquisition and Restoration – Acquisition and restoration of the Ballona Wetlands has been identified as a high priority by the WRP. The WRP will work with the State Controller's office to identify restoration opportunities for Area C, which is currently owned by the state. In addition, the WRP will coordinate with the Trust for Public Land which is currently negotiating for acquisition of two additional parcels at Ballona.
- Ormond Beach Wetlands Acquisition and Restoration – The Coastal Conservancy continues to negotiate for acquisition of parcels at the Ormond Beach wetlands. If acquired, the Conservancy will begin a multi-agency restoration planning effort for the wetlands.

- Santa Clara River Parkway – The Coastal Conservancy is working with local partners to restore a continuous riparian corridor along the lower 12 miles of the Santa Clara River. This project will require acquisition of fee title and conservation easements for several properties. Enhancement activities may include relocating the levees to create a broader floodplain and riparian corridor.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy.

- 1.12 **Secure project funding from state, federal, local, and private sources.** In its first three years, the WRP has primarily been funded by the State through direct allocations to the WRP as well as through other state funding available to the Coastal Conservancy and partner agencies. The WRP will work with State agencies to continue this funding, while also attempting to diversify its funding to include more significant contributions from federal, local, and private sources. The WRP will pursue long-term funding mechanisms that help provide stability to its effort. See Funding Objectives below for more details.

WRP Lead: Board of Governors and Public Advisory Committee.

- 1.13 **Facilitate regulatory coordination for WRP projects.** Regulatory permitting is one of the most challenging aspects of developing wetland restoration projects. All of the key agencies with regulatory authority over wetlands and streams are represented on the WRP. The WRP will use these relationships to facilitate early regulatory coordination on restoration projects, particularly complex projects. In addition, the WRP will evaluate options for facilitating the permitting process for restoration projects; for instance, it may be feasible to develop programmatic permits for erosion control or stream revegetation projects in a specific watershed or subregion.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group and Board of Governors.

2. Integrate wetlands recovery with other public objectives. (Regional Goal 4)

As discussed in Chapter 3 of the Regional Strategy, the goal of integrating wetlands recovery with other public objectives has two facets. The first is for the WRP to integrate other public objectives such as public access, education, and flood management into its projects. This aspect will be addressed through project development and selection (see Action 1.7). The second facet is to ensure that agencies pursuing other public objectives consider benefits and/or impacts to wetlands.

- 2.1 **Coordinate with agencies working on related efforts to ensure wetlands objectives are considered.** Specific agencies and programs that the WRP will target over the next five years include:

- Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB) – The RWQCBs have several programs which relate to the WRP's efforts. Each RWQCB has written a chapter of the State's Watershed Management Initiative (WMI). These chapters outline for each

watershed management area in their region existing conditions, key concerns, enhancement efforts, and RWQCBs activities in the watershed. There is a great deal of variation in the extent to which these WMI chapters address wetlands concerns. The WRP will work to ensure that wetlands issues are adequately addressed in all of these chapters. Wetlands are also of concern for the RWQCBs nonpoint source pollution control programs. The WRP will work with the RWQCBs to identify opportunities to integrate both habitat and water quality objectives into wetlands projects. The RWQCBs share an interest with the WRP in finding more efficient and effective ways to monitor restoration projects and evaluate success. The WRP will coordinate and exchange information with the RWQCBs on monitoring programs and protocols. Finally, the RWQCBs Supplement Environmental Project (SEP) program is a potential source of funding for wetland and stream restoration projects. The WRP will work with each RWQCB to develop a process for matching appropriate projects to SEP funding.

- Stormwater Management Agencies – As discussed in Chapter 2, flood control activities have had a devastating effect on the Southern California’s coastal rivers and streams over the past 150 years. Efforts to implement more environmentally-sensitive flood control structures and stormwater management practices are growing. Throughout the region, however, agencies responsible for stormwater management continue to channelize streams and line them with concrete. The WRP will work with stormwater management agencies to implement more environmentally-sensitive stream stabilization projects and management practices and to disseminate the results of these projects, as well as to explore opportunities to remove concrete and restore stream channels.
- The California Legacy Project (formerly CCRISP) – One goal of the California Legacy Project is to identify resource areas that are high priority for public acquisition. The WRP will work with CLP to ensure that the WRP’s Regional Goals are reflected in any priority setting for coastal wetlands and watersheds in Southern California.
- Sediment Management Group –The Sediment Management Group is a Federal-State partnership focused primarily on beach nourishment. As discussed in Chapter 2, sediment delivery to beaches and nearshore waters has been reduced in most areas due to changes in the hydrologic processes. These changes have also adversely impacted wetland and stream ecosystems. The WRP will work with the Sediment Management Group to identify opportunities to restore natural sediment processes to benefit both beach nourishment and wetland habitat.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group, Coastal Conservancy, and County Task Forces.

3. Promote education and compatible access related to coastal wetlands and watersheds. (Regional Goal 5)

The shorter term success of the WRP depends on key interested parties knowing about, getting involved in, and demonstrating support for the WRP. Much of the initial education and outreach

program, therefore, has encouraged wetlands and watershed stakeholders to become involved in the WRP. Initial efforts also sought to inform potential funding sources about the importance of the region's wetlands and watersheds and about the level of stakeholder participation in the WRP process. This work is ongoing. With regard to longer term success, the WRP depends on recruiting new interests and providing tools that enable increasing regional coordination. These are the goals of the program described below.

Compatible Access

3.1 Develop guidelines for compatible access. Public access to coastal wetlands and streams is one of the best tools for educating local communities about the value of these resources, and it also helps meet the great demand for recreational nature experiences in the highly urbanized landscape of Southern California. Uncontrolled public access, however, can have a detrimental effect on habitat and wildlife. To help local communities balance these public needs, the WRP will develop guidelines for compatible access to habitat areas and will promote these to counties, cities, and local park districts.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group.

3.2 Perform needs assessment regarding regional availability of accessible wetland areas and interpretive centers. The WRP will assess the regional availability of accessible wetland areas and interpretive centers. This information will be used in two ways. First, it will help the WRP to identify regions where additional public access or interpretive facilities are needed. It will also help the WRP to identify regions where it might be appropriate to exclude public access, if sufficient access to similar resources exists nearby.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group and County Task Forces.

3.3 Create a regional wetlands and watersheds calendar. Many kinds of educational and volunteer activities related to wetlands and watersheds occur throughout the region each weekend. Individual organizations promote these through newsletters and e-mail lists, but there is no central calendar that organizations can check to help avoid conflicts, and that people who are not on the mailing lists can consult to find new and rewarding activities they might explore. A web-based calendar will promote broader knowledge of and wider participation in activities occurring throughout the region.

WRP Lead: County Task Forces.

3.4 Create a web-based guide describing the location, accessibility, sights, and activities at wetlands and watersheds throughout the region. Wetlands and riparian areas are preferred destinations for many teachers, families, and tourists. There is no guide that people can consult which describes directions, parking, trails, interpretive facilities, available tours, species that one might see or that one must take care not to disturb, etc. This guide will set out the array of opportunities within the region so that people can better select appropriate places to visit.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee and County Task Forces, with assistance from the Coastal Conservancy.

- 3.5 **Establish a means to track or estimate visitors to the region’s wetlands and riparian areas.** Only a very few wetlands track or estimate the number of annual visitors and how their numbers break down demographically. Such information would allow organizations involved in interpretive activities to distribute more appropriate educational materials and would also provide a basis for determining demand for and economic value of these kinds of “passive” recreational experiences.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee and County Task Forces.

Education

- 3.6 **Continue to educate federal, state, and local decision-makers.** The Public Advisory Committee will continue to conduct annual trips to Sacramento and Washington, D.C. to describe to legislators and other decision-makers the activities of the WRP and the overall progress in wetlands recovery. With the help of its local elected officials, the PAC will also continue to educate local municipalities about the value of their wetlands and opportunities to preserve or restore these resources through local action.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee.

- 3.7 **Identify key educational themes for region’s wetlands.** Building a constituency for wetlands recovery in Southern California requires that the functions and values of the region’s wetlands be understood and described in an accurate and consistent way. A great deal of general information about wetlands and watersheds exists, but derives from Atlantic and Gulf Coast wetlands. This has resulted in laws and policies that fail to take account of the unusual features found in coastal Southern California. What central facts about Southern California wetlands and watersheds should be generally known and understood? How can people within the region come to see themselves as “watershed citizens”? What are the primary things they can do to help protect these resources? There is a need to clarify the central educational themes that WRP partners should promote.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee.

- 3.8 **Inventory wetlands materials in the five counties.** An enormous amount of wetlands educational material exists throughout the region, but has never been collected, sorted into categories, and assessed in terms of quality and gaps. This inventory will highlight the best existing materials in different categories and identify key areas where additional materials should be developed, serving as a rationale for seeking funding to promote development of needed materials.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee.

- 3.9 **Develop web site for sharing and disseminating education resources.** Despite the existence of many excellent educational materials, many organizations continue to expend

resources developing additional materials. This occurs because materials are not centrally available. The outstanding materials in different categories will be made available on a WRP web site which will serve to publicize and disseminate educational materials throughout the region.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee and Coastal Conservancy.

Outreach

3.10 Continue to develop needed outreach materials and activities. The WRP has an ongoing responsibility to educate people about the values of the region's wetlands and waterways, to inform people about the activities of the WRP, and encourage people and organizations to get involved in protecting them. The WRP must continually assess needs and develop or adapt appropriate materials to address those needs.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee.

3.11 Ensure that the WRP addresses the needs of the region's ethnically diverse population. The biological diversity of the region is matched only by its ethnic diversity. The WRP must make every effort to ensure that its decision-making processes are inclusive and that its resources are invested equitably. It will, therefore, conduct a review of its decision-making tools and processes related to project selection, design, and evaluation, as well as its approach to outreach, to determine how better to address the needs and interests of the region's diverse population. Exploring how to better link restoration of region's water with appropriate community development proposals is likely to be one strategy considered.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee.

3.12 Establish means for private sector to play more active role in the WRP. On the East Coast, a program sponsored by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, Coastal America, has proved very successful in attracting private resources to wetland acquisition and restoration. In California, the California Environmental Dialog, comprising leading corporations and others, has written influential white papers about the benefits of investments in the state's "natural infrastructure." Business leaders who serve on the PAC have been very helpful in providing some funding, writing letters, and going to Sacramento to meet with legislators. The PAC will identify those private sector interests which would find the WRP of relevance to their concerns, and recruit representatives from these sectors to play a more active role in the recovery process.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee.

4. Advance the science of wetlands restoration and management in Southern California. (Regional Goal 6)

4.1 Develop regional habitat objectives for the WRP. The Science Advisory Panel has begun the process of developing specific regional habitat objectives that will help the WRP to

realize its Regional Goals. Several steps will be involved in this process, including: 1) create a GIS layer that characterizes existing wetlands resources by habitat type; 2) research historical wetland data, and if possible characterize historical wetland resources by habitat type; 3) develop a conceptual model and indicators of ecological health for both coastal wetlands and stream corridors; and 4) define regional habitat objectives for the WRP. The SAP will develop quantitative habitat objectives if the available data is sufficiently detailed and reliable.

WRP Lead: Science Advisory Panel, with assistance from Wetlands Managers Group.

4.2 Develop regional monitoring program based on regional habitat objectives. The Science Advisory Panel will develop a regional monitoring program to enable the WRP to assess both the effectiveness of its own efforts, as well as the overall ecological health of Southern California wetlands. The monitoring program will be derived from the regional habitat objectives.

WRP Lead: Science Advisory Panel.

4.3 Develop monitoring guidelines for WRP projects. Project monitoring is essential in helping the WRP assess the effectiveness of restoration projects and identify areas for improvement. By establishing monitoring guidelines for all WRP projects, it will facilitate comparison and analysis of data from different sites. Similar to the regional monitoring program, the project monitoring guidelines will be derived, at least in part, from the regional habitat objectives. One challenge will be to make the guidelines specific enough to be meaningful, while remaining flexible enough to be tailored to the unique elements of each individual project.

WRP Lead: Science Advisory Panel, with assistance from Wetlands Managers Group.

4.4 Develop an extramurally-funded research program. The Board of Governors tasked the Science Advisory Panel with developing and implementing a research program to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of WRP projects. The SAP has identified several research topics of concern for this program and outlined a procedure for administering the program. The next step is to secure funding for the program. The SAP, Board of Governors, and Public Advisory Committee will continue working to identify and secure funding for the program. High priority research topics identified by the SAP include the role of marshes in nearshore public health issues and developing and evaluating new restoration practices.

WRP Lead: Science Advisory Panel, with assistance from the Board of Governors and Public Advisory Committee.

5. Promote information exchange and dissemination.

Information exchange and dissemination is critical for achieving all six of the Regional Goals. The WRP is developing several different mechanisms for communicating with the extensive

network of federal, state, and local agencies, community groups, and interested people that makes up the WRP.

5.1 Expand the WRP Information Station. The Coastal Conservancy has recently completed construction of a watershed-based information system that is accessible over the internet. The WRP Information Station was designed to be a repository of watershed-based information. Now that the structure of the system is complete, the County Task Forces will work with the Coastal Conservancy to begin adding information to the system and promoting its use. Specific steps to be taken include: 1) complete the connection with CERES metadata catalog to make it watershed-specific; 2) streamline the process for adding GIS layers, databases, and text data; 3) add data to the system and create additional detailed profiles; and 4) organize trainings on use of system.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy, WMG, and County Task Forces.

5.2 Establish Watershed Contact Network. The Watershed Coordinators funded by the Proposition 13 grant will identify points of contact for each watershed in the county. This information will be disseminated to the broader WRP network to facilitate information sharing and exchange in each watershed.

WRP Lead: County Task Forces.

5.3 Expand WRP web site. The WRP web site is one of the best tools for sharing information. Several improvements to the site are planned over the next five years, including: 1) add an education resources section for sharing education tools gathered and/or developed by the PAC Education Subcommittee; 2) improve links to related sites; 3) improve search capabilities; 4) develop calendar system for tracking conferences, training, and grant deadlines that allows users to add entries; 5) develop repository for monitoring data.

WRP Lead: Coastal Conservancy, with assistance from the County Task Forces and Science Advisory Panel.

5.4 Continue to hold WRP Symposium every one or two years. The Symposium is the only time at which all the elements of the WRP come together. It is an excellent forum for sharing and disseminating information.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group, Science Advisory Panel, and Public Advisory Committee.

5.5 Coordinate with related efforts to disseminate information. In order to avoid duplicative effort, the WRP will coordinate with other agencies working to disseminate wetland and watershed information. For instance, the Resources Agency has developed a database of environmental grant programs. The WRP will work with the Resources Agency to ensure that all relevant wetlands and watershed grant programs are included in this database, and will also identify mechanisms for highlighting wetland and watershed grant programs to

WRP users. Two initiatives in particular that the WRP will coordinate with are the California Legacy Project and CERES.

WRP Lead: Wetlands Managers Group and County Task Forces.

6. Partner Agencies

6.1 Identify specific roles or actions for each of the 17 state and federal partner agencies to further the WRP's regional goals. One of the principals of the WRP is that the state and federal partner agencies will pursue the WRP's goals both collectively and individually. The steps outlined in this chapter address how the WRP will collectively pursue the Regional Goals. An extremely important next step is for each of the partner agencies to identify steps it will take to integrate these goals into their existing programs and policies.

WRP Lead: State and Federal Partner Agencies.

7. Funding objectives

7.1 Secure project funding from the state each fiscal year. In its first three years, the WRP has primarily been funded by the State through direct allocations to the WRP as well as other state funding available to the Coastal Conservancy and partner agencies. The WRP will work to continue State funding, through appropriations from both the General Fund and related bond acts.

WRP Lead: Board of Governors and Public Advisory Committee.

7.2 Increase proportion of federal, local, and private funding. In its first three years, the WRP has primarily been funded by the State. The WRP will attempt to diversify its funding to include more significant contributions from federal, local, and private sources. This could include pursuing a regional Feasibility Study with the ACOE that would provide federal funding for several WRP projects. Federal funding may also be available through the Estuaries Act.

WRP Lead: Board of Governors and Public Advisory Committee.

7.3 Pursue long-term project funding. To date, the WRP has been funded on a year to year basis which creates uncertainty for undertaking long-term projects. Since many of the high priority acquisition and restoration projects are potentially multi-year efforts, the WRP would benefit significantly from having a reliable source of long-term funding. The WRP will investigate various options for achieving this.

WRP Lead: Board of Governors and Wetlands Managers Group.

7.4 Pursue long-term funding for the County Task Forces. Environment Now has secured a Proposition 13 grant from the SWRCB that will fund a watershed coordinator for each of the

five County Task Forces for 15 months. These funded positions will enable the Task Forces to take a much more active role in compiling and assessing data, developing projects, and facilitating information exchange. Over the past year, the Task Forces have become a vital part of the WRP engine. The WRP will work to identify and secure long-term funding for the work of the Task Forces.

WRP Lead: Public Advisory Committee and County Task Forces.

- 7.5 **Secure funding for the Science Advisory Panel and SAP Research Program.** As discussed under Action 4.4, the Board of Governors tasked the Science Advisory Panel with developing and implementing a research program to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of WRP projects. The SAP is ready to initiate this program once funding has been identified. The WRP will also work to secure long-term funding for staff support to the SAP.

WRP Lead: Board of Governors, Public Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Panel.