

Species Evaluation

To determine which species would be the focus of the Conservation Strategy, comprehensive lists of 52 special-status plants and 69 special-status wildlife species that occur or may occur in the study area were compiled (Tables 1A and 1B). These lists were developed by reviewing the following sources.

- California Natural Diversity Database (2008).
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS) (2008) Online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California.
- CDFG list of Special Plants (California Department of Fish and Game 2008)
- CDFG lists of Special Animals (California Department of Fish and Game 2007).
- An animal species list obtained from the USFWS website for Alameda County (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2008).
- A list of special-status species expected in Alameda County compiled for the County General Plan update of the Resource, Conservation, and Agricultural Elements (Jones & Stokes 2007).
- Personal communication with local experts including Wildlife Agency staff; local agency biologists; and representatives of local environmental/conservation groups.

Definition of Special-Status Species

Special-status species are defined as plants and animals that are legally protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), California Endangered Species Act (CESA), or other regulations, and species that are considered sufficiently rare by the scientific community to qualify for such listing. These species are typically the focus of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Special-status plants are species with one or more of the following characteristics.

- Listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under ESA (50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 17.12 [listed plants] and various notices in the Federal Register [FR] [proposed species]).
- Candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA (70 FR 24870–24934, May 11, 2005).
- Listed or candidates for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under CESA (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 670.5).
- Listed as rare under the California Native Plant Protection Act (California Fish and Game Code Section 1900 et seq.).
- Determined to meet the definitions of rare or endangered under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15380).
- Considered by CNPS to be “rare, threatened or endangered in California” (Lists 1B and 2 in California Native Plant Society 2008) or vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens listed as having special status by CDFG (California Department of Fish and Game 2008).

- Listed by CNPS as plants about which more information is needed to determine their status and plants of limited distribution (Lists 3 and 4 in California Native Plant Society 2008) that may be included on the basis of local significance or recent biological information that suggests they warrant inclusion on Lists 1B or 2.

Special-status animals are species with one or more of the following characteristics.

- Listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA (50 CFR 17.11 [listed animals] and various notices in the FR [proposed species]).
- Candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA (70 FR 24870-24934, May 11, 2005), or as species of concern (NMFS).
- Determined to meet the definitions of rare or endangered under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15380).
- Listed or candidates for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under CESA (14 CCR 670.5).
- Fully protected species under the California Fish and Game Code Section 3511(birds), Section 4700 (mammals), Section 5515 (fish), and Section 5050 (reptiles and amphibians).
- Species with no formal special status but thought by experts to be rare or in serious decline and to warrant special status based on recent information.

Focal Species Criteria

For each special-status species with potential to occur in the study area information was gathered on status, population trends, distribution, threats, conservation efforts, and management efforts. The following criteria were then applied to each species to determine whether it would be a focal species for the East Alameda County Conservation Strategy. To be considered as a focal species, a species had to meet all four of the following criteria.

Range: The species is known to occur or is likely to occur within the study area, based on credible evidence, or the species is not currently known in the study area but is expected to occur in the study area in the foreseeable future (e.g., through range expansion or reintroduction to historic range).

Status: The species meets at least one of the following statutory criteria.

- Listed under the ESA as threatened or endangered, or proposed for listing.
- Listed under CESA as threatened or endangered or a candidate for such listing.
- Listed under the Native Plant Protection Act as rare.
- Expected to be listed under ESA or CESA within 25 years. Potential for listing is based on current listing status, consultation with experts and Wildlife Agency staff, evaluation of species population trends and threats, and best professional judgment of the biologists working on the Conservation Strategy.

Threat: The species or its habitat is in decline locally and regionally and threatened by development activities in the study area.

Data: Sufficient data on the species' life history, habitat requirements, and occurrence in the study area are available to adequately evaluate threats to the species and to develop a conservation strategy to mitigate these threats to levels specified by regulatory standards.

Species proposed as focal species for the Conservation Strategy were limited to those species for which impacts from project activities were likely to occur and for which mitigation is often required. However, it is important to note that many other special-status species and common species are expected to benefit from the Conservation Strategy.

References

- California Department of Fish and Game. 2007. Special Animals list. October. 55pp.
- California Department of Fish and Game. 2008. Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List. January. 69 pp.
- California Native Plant Society. 2008. Online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California. Species list for Alameda County. February.
- Jones and Stokes. 2007. List of special-status species compiled for the Alameda County General Plan update of the Resource, Conservation, and Agricultural Elements. *Revised* May 2007.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. Threatened and Endangered Species list for Alameda County. February.