



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office Safe Harbor Agreement Program

Pond Enhancement on Private Lands Providing Benefits to Sensitive Amphibians with Landowner Assurances

More than 70 percent of the nation's landscape is in private ownership and nearly two-thirds of endangered and threatened species are found on private lands. Working in partnership with private landowners* to promote the conservation and recovery of listed species assists the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in accomplishing its mission.

* Private landowner – includes any non-Federal landowner

We at the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office envision that our work, through the voluntary efforts of safe harbor agreements, will incentivize private landowners to implement actions that benefit sensitive amphibians, such as California red-legged frogs and California tiger salamanders, and contribute to their recovery on private lands. The assurances associated with a safe harbor agreement provide the landowner a guarantee that they will not become subject to additional regulatory burdens from the Service.



Credit: USFWS

*Stock ponds and natural ponds on rangelands provide important habitats for sensitive amphibians.
Santa Barbara County*

What actions can a private landowner implement under a safe harbor agreement to benefit sensitive amphibians?

Examples of potential pond management activities:

- Install fencing and off-site water troughs to manage cattle in sensitive habitats.
- Install native plants to restore habitat for listed species.
- Remove non-native plants to enhance habitat.
- Remove/discourage non-native predators from aquatic habitats (e.g., bullfrogs, crayfish, or bass) through compatible water management.
- Create new ponds to link existing aquatic habitats.
- Maintain working ponds and surrounding rangelands that are already providing habitat.

What is a safe harbor agreement?

A safe harbor agreement is a voluntary agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a private landowner whose actions contribute to the recovery of threatened or endangered species that are listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Safe Harbor Agreement Assurances provide the landowner:

- The ability to return to baseline.
- Incidental take coverage.
- A guarantee that management activities will not change.
- A guarantee there will be no additional future property-use restrictions.

Safe Harbor Agreements

How does a safe harbor agreement benefit a private landowner?

Participating landowners receive formal assurances from the Service (i.e., safe harbor agreement assurances) that include incidental take coverage and a guarantee of no additional regulatory burdens. These assurances provide the landowner with certainty in land use planning for the duration of the safe harbor agreement. Additionally, the landowner can return the property to the baseline conditions at the end of the safe harbor agreement period.

How do we help private landowners?

Sometimes the implementation of restoration activities has the potential to result in the unintentional (incidental) take of a listed species. We at the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office work with the landowner to develop conservation actions on a case-by-case basis that are feasible for the landowner to implement to benefit sensitive amphibians. Through a safe harbor



Credit: USFWS

Grazing management can benefit upland and aquatic habitat. San Luis Obispo County

agreement, the landowner is covered for incidental take that could result from (1) the implementation of these conservation activities and (2) their ongoing land use. We work with the landowner to build a partnership that provides conservation benefits to listed

species and/or their habitats while the landowner can continue their ongoing land use practices. We can assist the landowner by writing the safe harbor agreement document, conducting surveys and baseline assessments, and developing maps.

The Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office is working in partnership with private landowners to promote the voluntary conservation and recovery of listed fish and wildlife species on private lands. This effort assists the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in accomplishing its mission.

Want to learn more?

Visit the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office's website, safe harbor agreement page. Website address is below.



Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office Area of Responsibility

How to get started?

Contact our office for more information, to discuss safe harbor agreement opportunities, or to initiate the development of one. Contact information below.

We would work with the landowner to identify the baseline conditions and management activities. We may also be able to assist the landowner in developing maps and other technical items associated with the development of a safe harbor agreement.

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