

I. Introduction

- A. What is an NCCP?** A Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP or "plan") is a plan for the conservation of natural communities that takes an ecosystem approach and encourages cooperation between private and government interests. The plan identifies and provides for the regional or areawide protection and perpetuation of plants, animals, and their habitats, while allowing compatible land use and economic activity. An NCCP seeks to anticipate and prevent the controversies caused by species' listings by focusing on the long-term stability of natural communities.
- B. Legal Authority.** NCCPs are authorized by the NCCP Act of 1991, codified as Chapter 10 of Division 3 of the California Fish and Game Code (2800 et. seq.). Approved NCCPs provide the basis for issuance of state authorizations for the take of species specifically identified in the plan, whether or not a species is listed as threatened or endangered, and may provide the basis for issuance of federal endangered species permits.

An NCCP will be approved by the Department for implementation upon meeting the statutory standards for natural community conservation (Fish and Game Code 2820 et. seq.) and other applicable laws and regulations. It is important to note that the NCCP process must ensure consistency with the federal and state Endangered Species Acts.

- C. Purpose of the Guidelines.** These guidelines, adopted pursuant to 2825 of the Fish and Game Code for the general application of the NCCP Act, are designed to help planners provide for regional protection and perpetuation of biological diversity, meet NCCP regulatory requirements and to allow for flexibility in plan development. Further guidelines may be adopted in the future for the application of the NCCP Act to specific ecosystems or regions of the state.
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