

**Department of Fish and Game
Land Management Summaries
June 2011**

<u>Property Name</u>	<u>Page</u>
Bakersfield Cactus Ecological Reserve.....	2
Burcham and Wheeler Flats Wildlife Area	5
Cambria Pines Ecological Reserve.....	8
Liberty Island Ecological Reserve.....	10
San Antonio Valley Ecological Reserve.....	14
Sands Meadow Ecological Reserve.....	17
Vernalis Ecological Reserve.....	19

Bakersfield Cactus Ecological Reserve Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Description

The proposed Bakersfield Cactus Ecological Reserve (BCER) is approximately 658 acres of Valley sacaton grassland and Valley chenopod scrub habitat located east of Bakersfield in Kern County. It consists of 13 parcels currently organized into five management units (Figure 1). The management units are the Hart Park Unit (APN 093-190-05, 093-190-12, 093-190-34, 386-030-05), the Airport Unit (APN 483-010-05, 483-010-08), the Piedmont Oil Company Unit (APN 386-040-28), the Sand Ridge Unit (APN 179-110-01, 179-110-02, 179-110-03, 179-110-06, 179-120-01), and the Breckenridge Unit (387-060-23).

Management Objectives

The primary management objective for the proposed BCER is the protection and long-term preservation of the Bakersfield cactus (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*). Additional objectives include preserving San Joaquin Valley upland habitat features, protecting other special status species and wildlife corridors, and allowing appropriate public access and use. The BCER may also provide some limited opportunities for translocation of Bakersfield cactus and habitat restoration. The BCER supports important species including the Bakersfield cactus and the blunt-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia sila*). Both of these species are state and federally listed as Endangered, and the lizard is also on the State's list of Fully-Protected species. San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), which is state-listed as Threatened and federally listed as Endangered is also known from this property.

Necessity Statement for Proposed Regulation Amendment

The property is proposed for designation as an ecological reserve. The land is currently undesignated Department-owned property located near a high density urban setting and is used by the general public in an uncontrolled manner (e.g., illegal dumping, horse back riding, dogs off-leash, destruction of signs and fencing, off-road vehicle use). Designation of this property will bring it under the protection of the proposed general rules and regulations for Department lands and regulations that pertain to ecological reserves, and allow enforcement of those regulations. This will help to alleviate damaging activities and better protect the state and federally listed species on-site as well as the habitat necessary to ensure their continued existence.

Proposed Regulatory Language

§ 630. Ecological Reserves

(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:

(XXX) Bakersfield Cactus Ecological Reserve, Kern County.

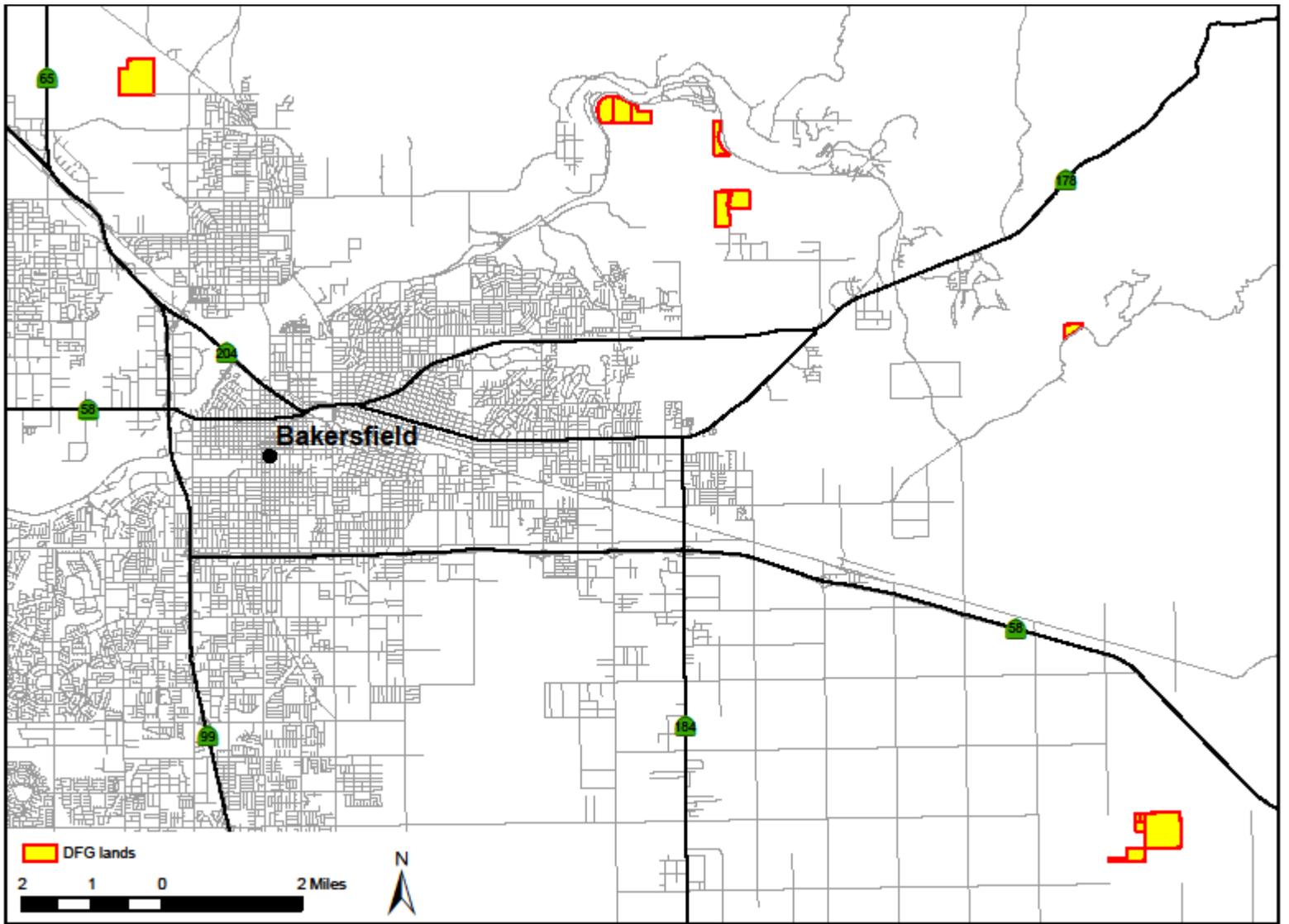


Figure 1. Proposed Bakersfield Cactus Ecological Reserve

T. Reedy
February 2, 2010
D:/LandsAsstFiles

Burcham and Wheeler Flats Wildlife Area Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Description

The proposed Burcham and Wheeler Flats Wildlife Area (BFWFA) is approximately 1,160 acres of sagebrush scrub and meadow habitat located north of Bridgeport in Mono County. It consists of 15 parcels currently organized under one management unit (see attached map). Table 1 below includes the APN numbers and their associated Township, Range, and Section number found within the management area.

Table 1. Burcham and Wheeler Flats parcel information.

Parcel Number	Acreage	Location
03-070-02	40	T7N R23E S16
03-090-02	240	T7N R23E S26
06-090-12	240	T6N R23E S10 and 11
06-130-02	40	T6N R23E S27
06-130-04	40	T6N R23E S27
06-130-05	40	T6N R23E S26
06-130-09	40	T6N R23E S35
06-130-10	40	T6N R23E S35
06-130-20	120	T6N R23E S26, 34 and 35
06-130-21	40	T6N R23E S27
06-130-22	80	T6N R23E S34
03-130-23	80	T6N R23E S34
06-130-24	40	T6N R23E S34
06-130-25	40	T6N R23E S35
06-130-26	40	T6N R23E S35
15 Parcels	1160 Acres	

Management Objectives

The primary management objective for the proposed BFWFA is to conserve and enhance essential wildlife habitat for greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*), and other sagebrush obligate species; and to retain dispersal corridors for migratory mule deer and large carnivores. The area once supported six historical strutting grounds, of which two are currently active. BFWFA still supports nesting and brood rearing habitat (mostly wet meadows) as well as winter habitat for this species. An estimated 3,500-4,500 deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) from the East and West Walker deer herds migrate through the area. In addition, the area functions as a migration corridor, a portion of the spring and fall holding area, as well as summer range fawning habitat.

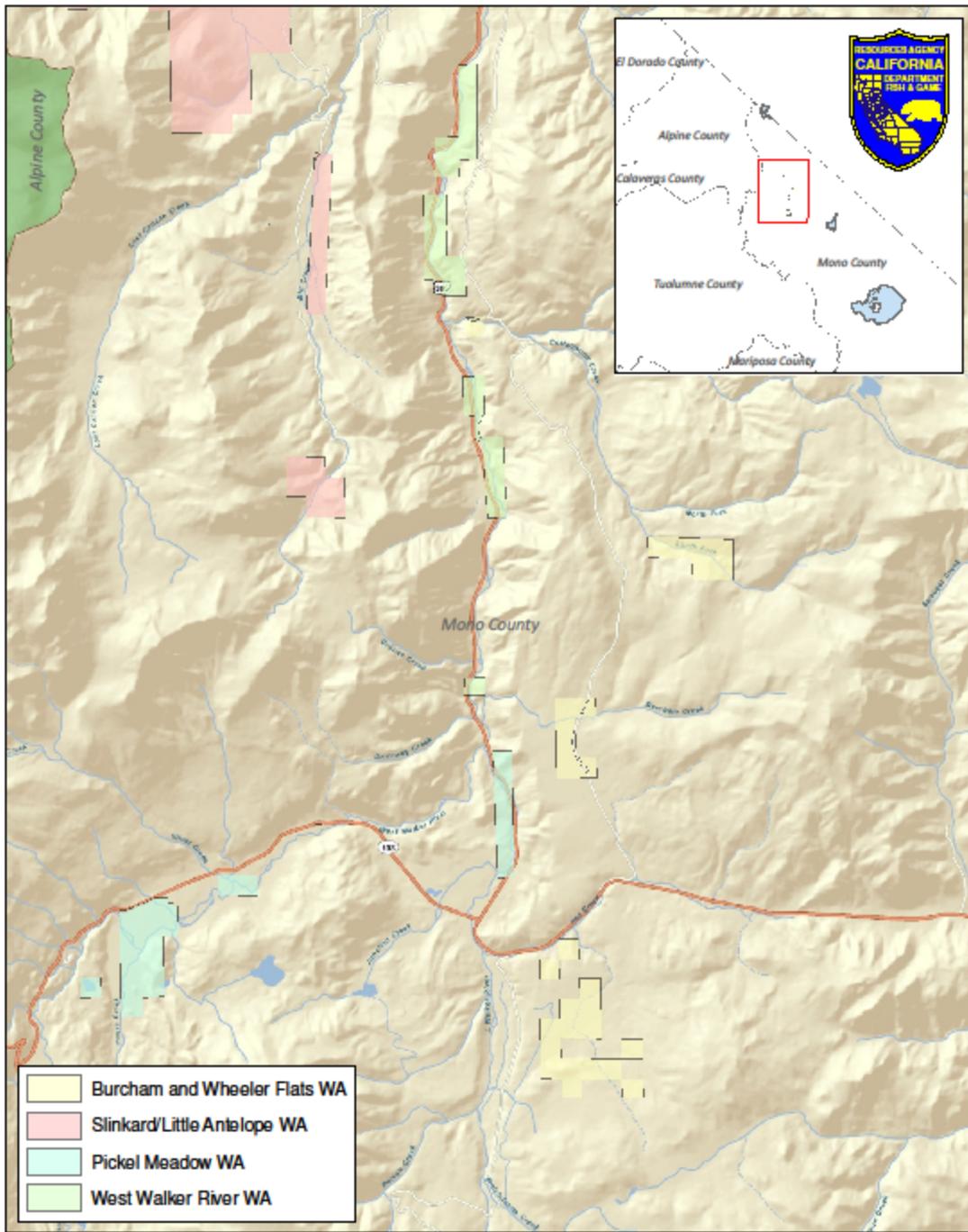
Necessity Statement for Proposed Regulation Amendment

The Burcham and Wheeler Flats property is proposed to be designated as a wildlife area. It is currently undesignated Department-owned property surrounded by U.S. Forest Service and/or private land and has been used by the general public in an uncontrolled manner (e.g., illegal grazing, destruction of signs and fencing, off-road vehicle use). Designating this property as a wildlife area under proposed Section 551(b), Title 14, California Code of Regulations will bring it under the protection of the proposed general rules and regulations for Department lands and regulations pertaining to wildlife areas, and allow enforcement of those regulations. This designation will help to control destructive activities and better protect federal and state listed species and the habitat necessary to ensure their continued existence.

Proposed Regulatory Language

§ 550. Wildlife Areas

**(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:
(XXX) Burcham Wheeler Flats Wildlife Area, Mono County.**



Burcham and Wheeler Flats Wildlife Area - Overview

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

1:100,000

↑ N

Cambria Pines Ecological Reserve Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Description

The proposed Cambria Pines Ecological Reserve (CPER) is approximately 106 acres of Monterey pine forest located just east of the town of Cambria, in San Luis Obispo County. It consists of three parcels (APN 013-0151-0043 (portion), 013-0081-0058, and 013-0081-0059) all of which will be managed as a single unit (Figures 1 and 2). This property was originally referred to as Santa Rosa Creek Ecological Reserve although it was never officially designated in the regulations.

Management Objectives

The primary management objective for the proposed CPER is the protection and long-term preservation of a native stand of Monterey pines (*Pinus radiata*) and associated botanical resources. A secondary objective will be to directly and indirectly protect the resources of Santa Rosa Creek through watershed protection and by not utilizing the existing wells on site so that water in this aquifer will be available for the creek. Protection and enhancement of Santa Rosa Creek will provide direct benefits to a number of creek and riparian dependent species including southern steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*), California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*), two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*), and yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia*)

Necessity Statement for Proposed Regulation Amendment

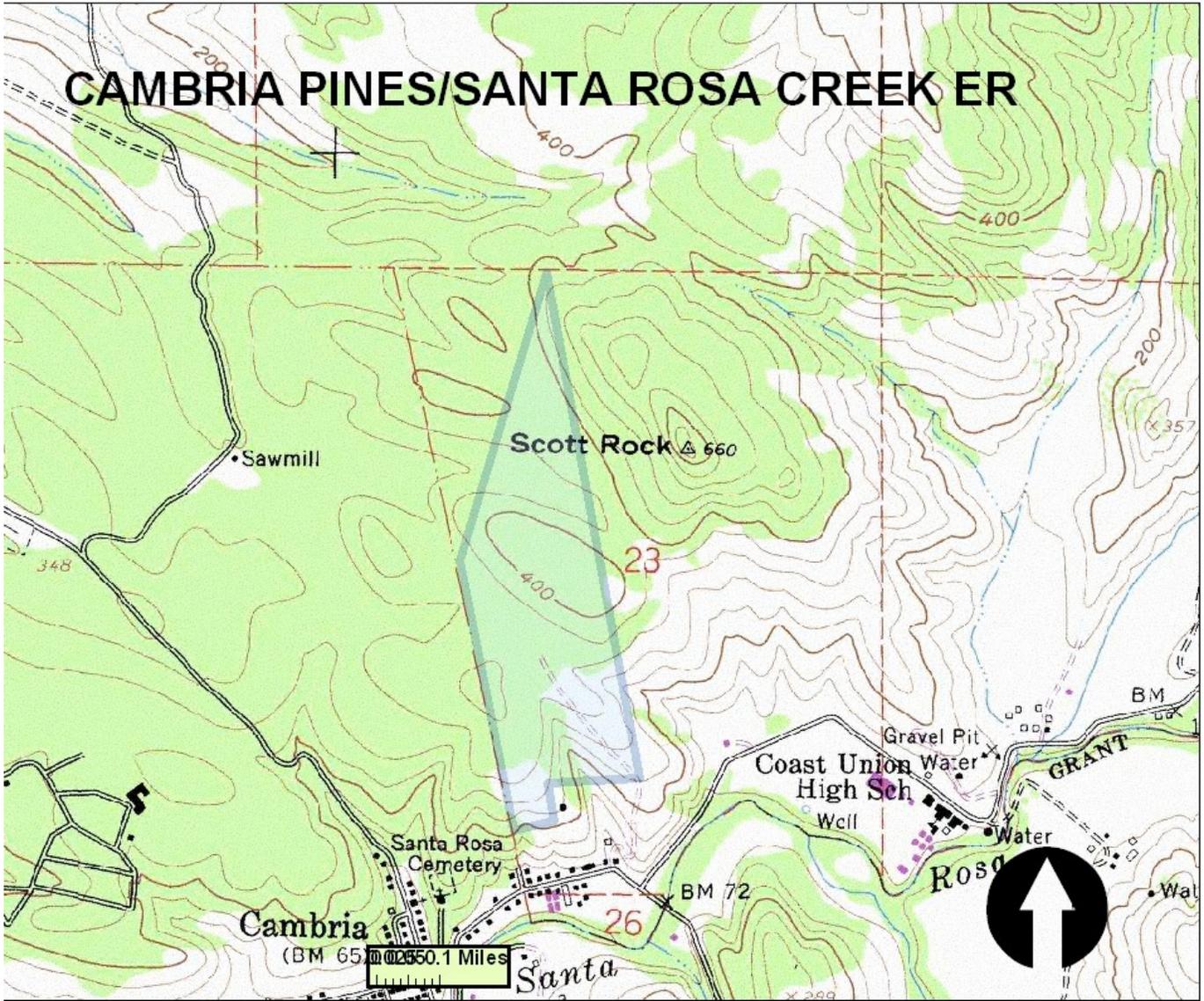
The property should be designated as an ecological reserve. The land is currently undesignated Department-owned property located near an urban setting and is used by the general public in an uncontrolled manner. The following amendment to Section 630, Title 14, California Code of Regulations will designate the property, bring it under the protection of the proposed general rules and regulations for Department lands and those regulations pertaining to ecological reserves, and allow enforcement of those regulations. This will help to alleviate damaging activities and better protect the sensitive resources on site.

Proposed Regulatory Language

§ 630. Ecological Reserves

**(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:
(XXX) Cambria Pines Ecological Reserve, San Luis Obispo County.**

CAMBRIA PINES/SANTA ROSA CREEK ER



Liberty Island Ecological Reserve Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Description

Liberty Island is a 5,209 acre inundated island at the southern end of the Yolo Bypass (Bypass) in the northern Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta adjacent to Prospect Island and Little Holland Tract. The Department of Fish and Game currently holds title to 4,308 acres of the Island that is in Solano County. However, it is anticipated that at some future date the remainder of the island, located in Yolo County, will also be transferred to the Department.

Liberty Island lies approximately twelve miles SSE of the town of Dixon, ten miles north of Rio Vista. It is accessible via county roads that intersect State Route 113 in Solano County. The property is bound by Liberty Cut, Prospect Slough, Little Holland Tract, and the western levee of the Sacramento Deep Water Ship Channel (which is now the eastern Yolo Bypass levee) to the East. Shag Slough and the western Bypass levee bound Liberty Island on the West. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, owned by the Department, lies to the North with agriculture and conservation properties lying directly between Liberty Island and the wildlife area. Liberty Island rises slightly in elevation from south. The southern region of Liberty Island is predominately open water and stands at tidal and subtidal elevations. The area of the Island within Solano County is open to full tidal excursion.

Management Objectives

The primary purpose for accepting transfer of the Liberty Island from the Trust for Public Lands was to protect the developing wetland for special status fish species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has classified lands including and near Liberty Island as "critical habitat" for the Central Valley fall-run chinook salmon and the Delta smelt. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has listed as threatened the Southern Distinct Population Segment of North American Green Sturgeon and designated Yolo Bypass lands as critical habitat for the species.

Positioned at the downstream end of the Yolo Bypass, Liberty Island is within the statutorily defined flood easement protecting urban Sacramento. The Bypass was designed with a capacity to pass 490,000 cfs in a runoff event. Floodwaters from the Sacramento River, Putah and Cache Creeks, Sutter Bypass and Knights Landing Ridge Cut are all tributary to Yolo Bypass flood flows. These flows once spread and mixed with other waters to cover the entire width of the historic flood plain from the Sacramento River four miles to the east. Man-made levees confine flood flows so as to limit the historic extent of flooding. Confinement increases potential velocities and shear forces of flood flows above that of an unconfined historic floodplain condition. The current Bypass configuration does not meet all 200 year event criteria defined in statute.

The Department recognizes the importance of flood control and acknowledges that the management of Liberty Island habitat may be impacted by flood flow accommodation. Flooding is an important ecosystem process that shapes habitat structure and benefits

fish and wildlife. The Department will manage Liberty Island consistent with both flood protection and wildlife needs. Proposed increase of Bypass flood flow capacity may also increase capacity for habitat structure, coverage and diversity and associated hydrologic “roughness”. Liberty Island planning should consider increasing riparian vegetation and other habitat.

Liberty Island already supports significant existing wildlife and has outstanding potential for restoration, floodplain management, and endangered species recovery. Restoration has been occurring by allowing natural processes to function since the cessation of agricultural operations in 1997. Tule (*Schoenoplectus* spp.) and cattail (*Typha* spp.) quickly colonized edge and shallow water areas. This natural process approach to the restoration of Liberty Island habitats is envisioned to continue along the present trajectory. Management approaches that allow wetland and riparian vegetation to establish naturally will be utilized preferentially. However, enhancement may include creating additional breaches, filling agricultural ditches, leveling roads and excavating sloughs to prevent fish stranding.

Seven primary management concerns pertain to the Liberty Island Ecological Reserve:

1. Endangered Species/ Critical Habitats: To protect, restore, and enhance native habitats, aid the recovery of federally and state listed endangered and threatened species.
2. Biodiversity: To protect, manage, and restore the riparian woodlands, tidally-influenced wetlands, tidal open water, and non-tidal open water habitats representative of the biological diversity of the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta.
3. Connectivity: Provide habitat linkage and migration corridors for wildlife in the Yolo Bypass and Cache Slough Complex to adjacent habitats.
4. Cooperative Management: To coordinate land management activities with Federal, State, and local governments and agencies, private conservation organizations and citizens in support of fish and wildlife resource protection in Liberty Island Ecological Reserve (LIER).
5. Wildlife: To provide breeding, migration, and wintering habitat for migratory birds, resident birds; aquatic habitat for spawning, rearing and refugia for endangered or threatened native fish such longfin smelt, delta smelt, splittail, salmon and other fishes and, provide habitat for mammals such as otters, beaver, muskrat and others.
6. Public Use: To provide limited, safe, and high quality opportunities for compatible educational and recreational activities that foster public appreciation of the unique natural heritage of the Bay/Delta Ecoregion.
7. Flood Flow Conveyance: To facilitate flood flow conveyance and the transportation of additional flows through the LIER in a manner that benefits wildlife by managing local LIER conveyance features through nonstructural improvements.

Reason for Proposed Regulation Amendment

The Liberty Island property is proposed for designation as an ecological reserve. The land is currently undesignated Department-owned property located near an urban area and is used by the general public in an uncontrolled manner (e.g. illegal dumping, destruction of signs, unregulated hunting, overnight camping, unauthorized structures). The following amendment to Section 630, Title 14, California Code of Regulations will designate the property, bringing it under the protection of the general regulations for Department lands (proposed Section 550, Title 14) and ecological reserves (proposed Section 630) and allow enforcement of those regulations. This will help to alleviate damaging activities and better protect Federal and State listed species and their habitat.

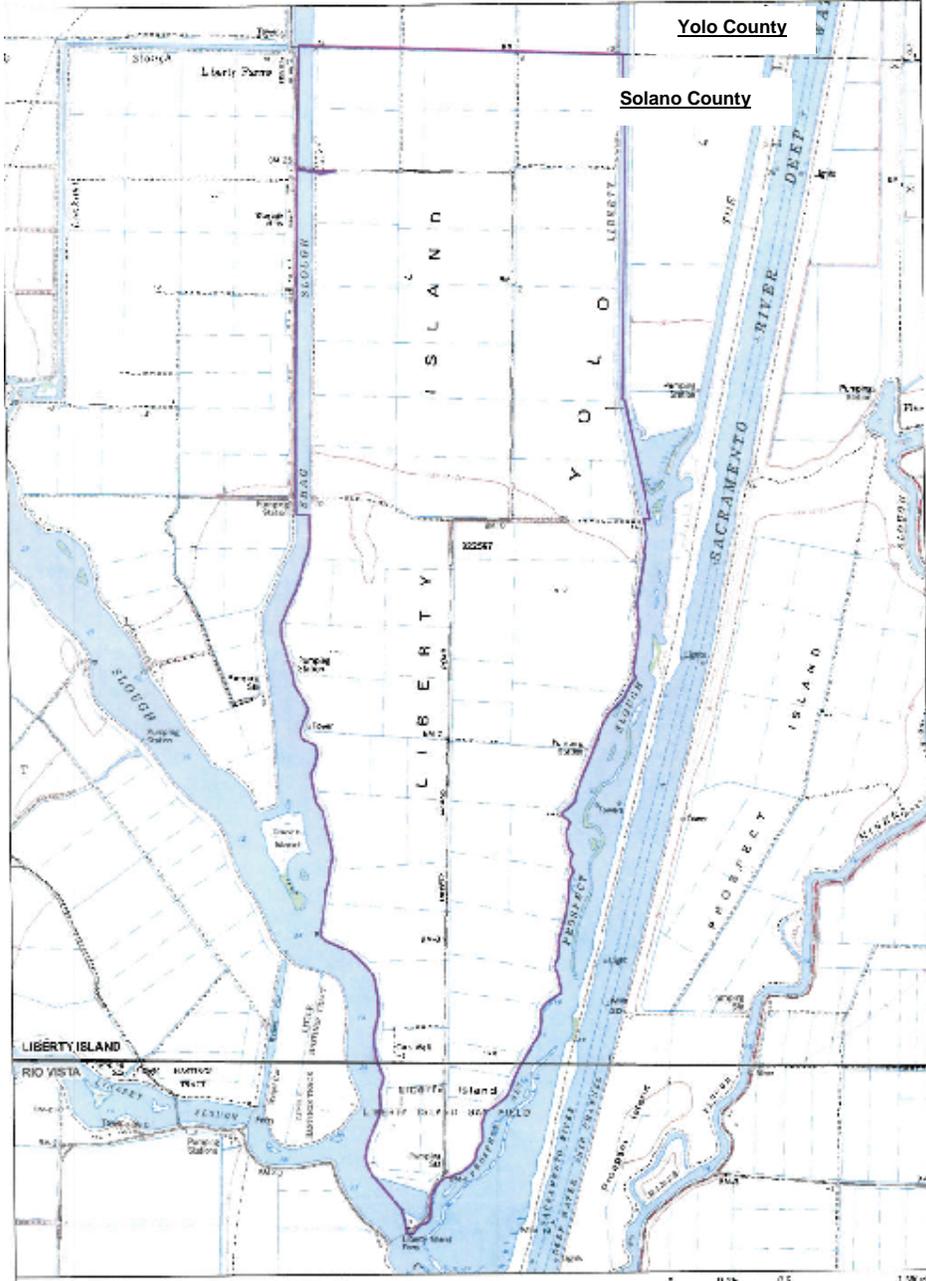
Proposed Regulatory Language

§630. Ecological Reserves

(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:

(XXX) Liberty Island Ecological Reserve, Solano County.

**Liberty Island
Solano County**



New Boundary Using Assessor Parcel Boundary and Integrity
 LEGISLATIVE TOPO
 Total GIS Acreage: 3882.74

DATA SOURCE: Assessor Parcel - Line Maps
 LEGISLATIVE TOPO: 2013
 Aerial Imagery: 10/10/10
 Date: 10/10/10
 0200211

San Antonio Valley Ecological Reserve Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Background

San Antonio Valley Ecological Reserve (SVER) is approximately 2,899 acres located in the Upper San Antonio Valley within the Hamilton Range in Santa Clara County. For generations the primary use of SVER was cattle grazing. The primary management objective is protection of its habitat types and native species.

Plant communities found at SVER include vernal pools, moist meadows, native forb communities (wildflower fields), native perennial and non-native annual grasslands, woody riparian vegetation, chaparral, and blue oak and valley oak woodland. Oak seedlings, saplings, and trees of various sizes, throughout the blue oak woodlands, are evidence of successful recruitment over a long period and may provide an opportunity to investigate conditions that facilitate oak recruitment. Other evidence for the integrity of the blue oak woodlands, and pine-oak woodlands, is the rich native plant flora in the understory. Lichen cover is conspicuous and comprised of several species.

U.C. Berkeley floristic surveys at SVER found six special status vascular plant species at multiple locations. In addition, it is believed that other special status plant taxa have a high probability of occurring, but were not detected due to the late initiation of the survey, limited survey time, conducting survey in a single year, and early high temperatures.

Tule elk (*Cervus nannodes*) were re-introduced to the Mt. Hamilton Range in the 1970s. Currently a herd of roughly 150 elk resides in the valley and adjacent woodlands. Pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) were also re-introduced to the area but are slowly decreasing in numbers, currently numbering around six.

Designation

The Bay Delta Region recommends designating the subject property as an ecological reserve. SVER has six special status vascular plant species and it is believed that other special status plant taxa have a high probability of occurring. The site also contains suitable habitat for six sensitive or listed species of amphibians and reptiles that have been observed at the adjacent state park. A regulation to allow hunting only at such times, areas and for species as designated by the Department is proposed.

There is no local opposition anticipated from State Senate (15th District) or Assembly (28th District).

Preliminary Management Goals for SVER

The primary management goal of SVER is protection of its habitat for native species and to reduce impacts of cattle grazing on sensitive habitats and native species. Additional goals include the following:

➤ Biological Elements

Habitats

- Protect and enhance riparian habitat
- Protect and enhance vernal pool habitat
- Protect and enhance habitat in and around stock ponds
- Protect and enhance habitat around seeps
 - Inventory and map
 - Fence to protect from pig rooting where appropriate

Wildlife Populations

- Improve quality and quantity of forage, cover, water availability
- Monitor wildlife population trends and habitat use
- Survey for occurrences of special status reptiles and amphibians

Plant Populations

- Monitor special status plant populations
- Monitor regeneration in oak woodland
- Monitor for incipient infestations of highly invasive non-native plants

Hunting

- Determine feasibility of establishing special hunt opportunities

Numerous organizations have expressed interest in partnering with the Department on projects on SVER. Opportunities to partner with different groups will be explored and encouraged as appropriate.

Proposed Regulatory Language

§ 630. Ecological Reserves

(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:

(XXX) San Antonio Valley Ecological Reserve, Santa Clara County.

Sands Meadow Ecological Reserve Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Description

The proposed Sands Meadow Ecological Reserve (SMER) is approximately 120 acres of montane meadow, stream and forest habitat located at the headwaters of the North Fork of the Stanislaus River in Tuolumne County. The property is completely surrounded by the Stanislaus National Forest and is wholly contained within a designated Game Refuge. APN# 016-200-01.

Management Objectives

The property was acquired primarily for the protection of montane meadow, stream and forest habitat which provide the essential needs for species native to the Sierra Nevada. Management objectives would be to survey and manage for potential special status species including great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*) and willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), both of which are state-listed as Endangered. Other focus species include a suite of mesocarnivores including Sierra Nevada red fox (*Vulpes vulpes necator*, state-listed as threatened), wolverine (*Gulo gulo*, State-listed as Threatened), fisher (*Martes pennanti*) and marten (*Martes americana*). The management of this property as an ecological reserve would also facilitate protection for the adjacent 40 acre conservation easement held by the Department.

Necessity Statement for Proposed Regulation Amendment

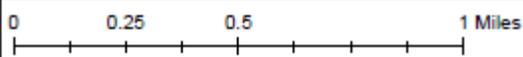
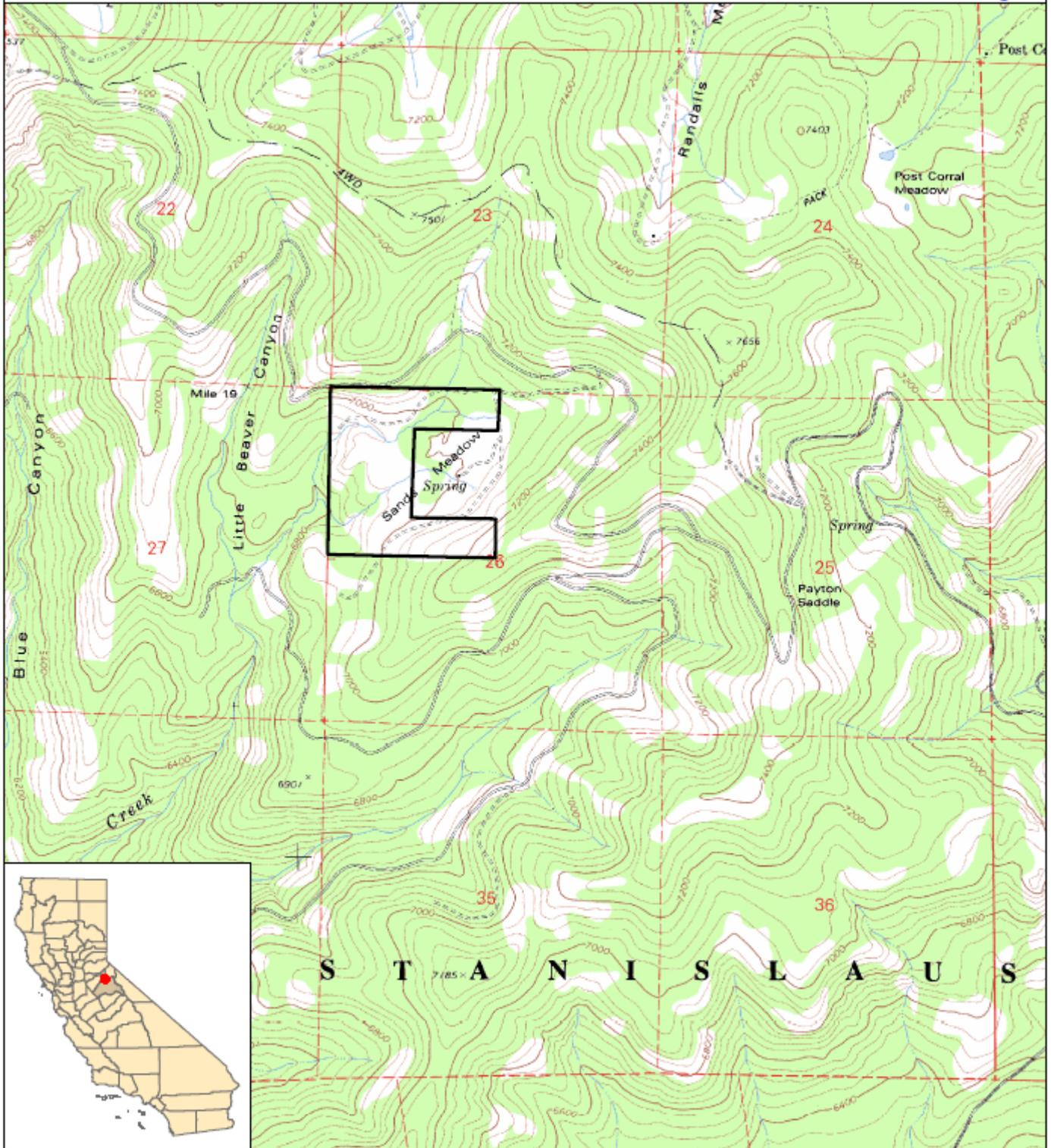
The Sands Meadow property is proposed for designation as an ecological reserve. The land is currently undesignated Department-owned property located within a designated State Game Refuge. Trespass and unauthorized hunting have occurred on the property. The Department is considering whether to recommend the removal of Game Refuge designations statewide. Designation as an ecological reserve will bring the property under the protection of the proposed general regulations for Department lands and regulations pertaining to ecological reserves. This will help to alleviate damaging activities and better protect sensitive species known from this area and the associated habitat.

Proposed Regulatory Language

§ 630. Ecological Reserves

**(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:
(XXX) Sands Meadow Ecological Reserve, Tuolumne County.**

Sands Meadow Ecological Reserve Tuolumne County



DATA SOURCE
DFG Lands, July 2011
USGS Topographic 1:24,000

 Sands Meadow ER
Total GIS Acreage: 115.17

LIBERTY HILL

Wildlife Branch, Lands Program
Lisa Ohara
7/6/2011

Vernalis Ecological Reserve Land Management Summary Spring 2011

Description

The proposed Vernalis Ecological Reserve (VER) is approximately 136 acres of seasonal emergent wetland and riparian habitat, located along the San Joaquin River, south of Manteca in San Joaquin County. It consists of two parcels, identified as the Vernalis and Dredger Island management units (Figure 1). The Vernalis unit (APN 00241-0100-0004) is 115 acres in size and consists primarily of seasonal emergent wetland vegetation, along with a few small scattered cottonwoods. The Dredger Island unit (APNs 00241-0200-0008 and 00241-0200-0010) is 21 acres in size and is a remnant stand of riparian habitat dominated by large cottonwoods and valley oaks, with some willows, elderberry, and other native shrubs in the understory. Both parcels are within the floodplain of the San Joaquin River.

Management Objectives

The primary management objective for the proposed VER is to conserve the property's seasonal wetland and riparian habitat and provide public recreational opportunities in the form of fishing and hunting. Other than permitted access across private farm land that borders both properties, the only access is by boat from the San Joaquin River, or by walking one to two miles along a levee from a public road. Most anglers access the properties by boat. Recreational use of the properties is low, but illegal activities such as off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, trash dumping, target shooting, and campfires are fairly common. Department (Department) law enforcement personnel regularly patrol the property and eject individuals engaged in these activities. Designation of the property as an ecological reserve under Section 630(b), Title 14 will provide the level of protection appropriate for the site and allow for more effective law enforcement.

The Vernalis unit was acquired in 1990 by DFG in fee title at no cost from the Federal Farmers Home Loan Administration, under the Federal Agricultural Credit Act of 1987 that donated surplus farm land with significant wildlife values to state wildlife agencies. The transaction also included a conservation easement retained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that requires that the property be perpetually managed for the maintenance of wildlife habitat, the conservation of soil and water, and maintenance of the natural plant species and ecology of the area. The conservation easement also allows for public use and recreation that is consistent with the dominant uses for fish and wildlife and the conservation of the natural environment of the area. Fishing and hunting are compatible uses of this property, but the only feasible hunting opportunities occur during the pheasant season when birds fly to the property, over the levee from

the adjacent alfalfa fields. The Stockton's Sportsmen's Club leases the alfalfa fields every fall to conduct public pay-for-access hunts with pen-raised pheasant.

The Vernalis unit may benefit from some habitat improvement activities, but a plan describing the existing vegetation and proposed actions to benefit and/or increase native vegetation would need to be developed by the Department, and likely approved by USFWS. Currently, no management plan exists for the Vernalis unit, but it is anticipated to be completed (along with updating the current plan for Dredger Island unit) by the end of 2011.

The Dredger Island unit is owned by the Central Valley Flood Protection Board (Board) (formerly known as the State Reclamation Board) and managed by the Department under a 50-year lease acquired in 1977. The lease expires on April 1, 2027, but staff at the Board stated that it is common for these leases to be renewed for another 50-year term. The lease was obtained by the Department to preserve the property's wildlife habitat value and provide public recreational use. The Department has on file a signed photocopy of the lease, including a legal description of the boundaries as required under Title 14 for Ecological Reserve designations (confirmed by Department HQ Lands Staff).

The Board reserves the right to use Dredger Island "for the purpose of maintaining, constructing and operating flood control works," and "may suspend...this agreement for any period or periods of time for levee reclamation or flood control purposes..." However, to date the riparian habitat on the property appears to be quite healthy and intact, therefore, it appears that few, if any, impacts from flood control maintenance have actually occurred. The Board will need to approve the designation of the property as an ecological reserve by amending the lease, and that action will be completed prior to the Department's official designation. The Department's wildlife management biologist for San Joaquin County (North Central Region) is currently working with the Board's Staff Environmental Scientist to amend the lease. This process includes updating the current Department management plan for Dredger Island, written in 1990.

The primary management objective for the Dredger Island unit is to conserve the property's riparian wildlife habitat and to provide public recreational opportunity in the form of fishing. At only 21 acres, the parcel is too small to sustain an upland game (primarily quail, dove, or rabbits) hunting program. The property is also approximately one mile north of a San Joaquin County school, so safety issues further preclude use of the property for hunting.

Dredger Island is remnant San Joaquin River riparian habitat that occurs within an area known to be used by nesting Swainson's hawks. Valley elderberry longhorn beetle may also exist on the property, along with small populations of birds and small mammals that are typical of Central Valley riparian habitat. Neighboring properties along the east side of the parcel are large farms that grow alfalfa and row crops.

Necessity Statement for Proposed Regulation Amendment

The properties need to be designated as an ecological reserve. They are currently undesignated and are subject to illegal vehicle use (primarily OHVs), trash dumping, target shooting, and illegal fires have occurred. Local Department law enforcement personnel regularly patrol the property and eject individuals engaged in these activities. The following amendment to Section 630, Title 14, California Code of Regulations will designate the properties, bringing them under the protection of the proposed general regulations for Department lands and regulations that govern ecological reserves, and enable enforcement of those regulations. This added protection will help to prevent damaging activities and better protect the habitats, while still allowing continued use by the public for fishing and hunting on the respective units.

Proposed Regulatory Language

§ 630. Ecological Reserves

**(b) Areas and Special Regulations for Use:
(XXX) Vernalis Ecological Reserve, San Joaquin County.**

