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8.1 PENDING PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT

8.1.1 BOND FUNDS APPROVED BY VOTERS FOR PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT

Funds specifically allocated to the Conservancy to provide for Parkway capital development have been included in the following voter-authorized bonds:

In 2000, the voters of California approved the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Proposition 12), which contained \$15 million for the Conservancy to acquire property and provide for habitat enhancement, public access, and recreation.

In 2000, the voters also approved the Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Bond Act (Proposition 13) which contained \$10 million for the Conservancy to acquire property.

The Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Proposition 40, Resources Bond) approved by the voters in March 2002 included an additional \$25 million for Parkway land acquisitions and public access and recreation projects.

The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act (Proposition 84, 2006) included \$36 million for the Conservancy to acquire property and provide for habitat enhancement, public access, and recreation.

The bond funds are authorized for acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration and protection of land and water resources to achieve the mission of the Conservancy. Bond funds may only be used for land acquisitions and capital improvement projects, not for operations, management, maintenance, administration, and other on-going programs.

The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act (Proposition 1, 2014) included \$10 million for San Joaquin River multi-benefit ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects implemented by the Conservancy (PRC §79731(g)). The bond fund allows the Conservancy to carry out local assistance and capital outlay projects associated with watershed climate change adaptation, river parkway restoration, state obligations of the SJR Restoration Program settlement, reducing wildfire risks and surface water pollution, and other projects consistent with Proposition 1, statewide priorities, and the Conservancy's mission and plans.

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As of the public release of this plan, the Conservancy has available a balance of approximately \$34 million in voter-authorized bond funds to invest in future land acquisitions, and habitat restoration, watershed protection, public access and recreation, and environmental education projects. The Conservancy partners with other agencies and non-profit organizations to invest Conservancy bond funds in high-priority public access and recreation projects, where those projects will be operated and maintained by the partnering entity.

The Conservancy's bond funds are appropriated in the California Wildlife Conservation Board's (WCB's) budget. Any acquisitions, improvements, or grants using these funds are at the direction of and require approval by the Conservancy, as well as the WCB.

The available bond funds will provide for significant development of the Parkway in the near term; however, they will not fund full build-out of the long-term planned Parkway. As the currently authorized bond funds are expended, other sources of funding for acquisition and development of the Parkway will need to be secured.

8.1.2 PRIORITIES FOR BUILDOUT

The Conservancy, in conjunction with its member agencies and nonprofit partners, has successfully secured for future generations almost two-thirds of the nearly 5,900 acres targeted in the San Joaquin River Conservancy Enabling Act for the Parkway, without the use of eminent domain. The San Joaquin River Conservancy has acquired 2,595 acres on the San Joaquin River for conservation and public access purposes along with 1,250 acres of other lands in public ownership within the Parkway before the Conservancy was created.

Achieving the Conservancy's mission requires land acquisition and infrastructure development. All Conservancy land acquisitions and projects must be in conformance with the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan and Program Environmental Impact Report approved and certified by the Conservancy governing board in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

The Board sets priorities for specific acquisitions and projects based on extensive evaluations and recommendations by staff and the Conservancy's Interagency Project Development Committee. The committee evaluates potential land acquisitions and capital improvement projects in light of established criteria. Site visits are included in the evaluation process.

THE LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM

Conservancy land acquisitions for the Parkway must be offered by willing sellers and be within the Conservancy's planning jurisdiction: the San Joaquin River floodplain and adjoining lands from Friant Dam to Highway 99. All of the lands acquired by the Conservancy to date have been held in state ownership and managed by the Conservancy or other state agencies. The Conservancy may award funds to assist local agency and nonprofit partners in acquiring lands, where this would more effectively accomplish

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Parkway development and management objectives. All lands must be purchased from willing sellers at no greater than fair market value as established by independent appraisers.

Acquiring lands to complete the 5,900-acre Parkway is the highest program priority, driven by development threats, real estate values, and the momentum of concurrent negotiations. The San Joaquin River Parkway is within the path of northern urban growth within Fresno County, and southeastern urban growth in Madera County.

The Interagency Project Development Committee is involved in making land acquisition recommendations to the Conservancy Board. In addition, an ad hoc subcommittee of the Conservancy Board may review the technical recommendations and make recommendations to the full Conservancy Board.

The Conservancy evaluates offered properties to prioritize potential acquisitions in light of established evaluation criteria, which may be expected to evolve over time. The Conservancy evaluates:

- Habitat values; the potential for habitat enhancement, connectivity for wildlife movement within the river corridor and other key linkages, such as tributary watersheds; benefits associated with the San Joaquin River Restoration Program;
- Cultural and historic resource values;
- Public access and recreation potential, river frontage, and connectivity for trails;
- Contiguous public lands and uses;
- Potential resources for management, potential lease/concession revenue; and
- Threats of urban/suburban development, need for conservation.

Final priorities for property acquisition consider price and terms of the negotiations, and are set by the Board. The Conservancy does not have the power of eminent domain; therefore, the process of prioritizing lands to purchase is and must be flexible.

Land acquisitions funded by the Conservancy must be approved by the Conservancy Board and WCB (as long as the funds are appropriated to WCB). Working cooperatively, the Conservancy and WCB oversee appraisals, environmental site assessments, title documents, and negotiate purchase agreements. The State Lands Commission provides surveys of state sovereign lands to protect the state's rights along the San Joaquin River.

As the state invests in these properties, the demand for public use is generated, and, after years of degradation, habitat restoration can proceed.

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IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS:

Parkway projects include environmental enhancement and restoration, public access and recreation, education, cultural and natural resource conservation.

The Parkway Master Plan generally identifies the areas appropriate for wildlife habitat enhancement, natural and cultural resource conservation, and for managed low-impact recreation, public access, and outdoor education. As an ongoing planning process, the Conservancy, its member agencies, the Parkway Trust, other nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders evaluate capital improvement needs. Site- and project-specific refinements are made over time.

While the Conservancy and its partners have been successful in acquiring land for future Parkway purposes, there are currently limited opportunities for the public to access acquired lands for recreation and education purposes. There is need and demand for improved public access.

Candidate projects to be sponsored or approved by the Conservancy must be consistent with the Parkway Master Plan. The Interagency Project Development Committee is involved in making improvement project recommendations to the Conservancy Board. The Conservancy evaluates possible projects in light of established evaluation criteria, which may be expected to evolve over time:

- Projects may proceed through the planning process if there is a potential long-term operator; a project may only proceed to final design and construction if an entity is committed to long-term operations and maintenance;
- Net new costs;
- Public demand and acceptance;
- Possible environmental impacts and benefits;
- Connectivity for trails, other public uses, and wildlife movement and habitat;
- Project readiness;
- The independent function of the project, without relying on future improvements;
- Serving an underserved population or user group;
- Achieving long term as well as short term benefits;
- Demonstrates Parkway success;
- Meets member and partner agency needs;
- Potential for grant or outside funding and in-kind support;
- Potential lease revenue, users fees, and concession operations;
- Complexity—multiple jurisdictions, competing interests and values;

- Capital, operations, and maintenance costs.

The Conservancy's Proposition 1 Multi-Benefit Water Quality, Water Supply, Ecosystem and Watershed Protection and Restoration grants are solicited, evaluated, and awarded competitively in accordance with adopted Guidelines.

Capital improvement projects funded by the Conservancy must be approved by the Conservancy Board and WCB boards (as long as the funds are appropriated to WCB). Implementation of preliminary design, environmental review, development of working drawings, and construction of improvements is phased to stay within appropriated funds and cash flow schedules, secure operations and maintenance resources, and develop functional, sustainable public facilities.

Any project must be conducted in accordance with an agreement among the Conservancy, WCB, and the contractor or local assistance grantee. The objectives, scope, and budget are developed under the direction of the Conservancy and WCB. The Conservancy may contract for and oversee projects directly; funds for Parkway projects may also be awarded by the Conservancy governing board to local agency and nonprofit partners.

Final documents for all habitat enhancement, watershed protection, public access and recreation planning projects funded via Conservancy-directed bond funds are maintained by the Conservancy and WCB and are made available to the public.

8.2 PARKWAY MANAGEMENT

The San Joaquin River ecosystem is dynamic, therefore, the Master Plan Update has a considerable degree of flexibility as it is carried out over time. Implementation will require adaptive management to achieve Parkway goals.

8.2.1 RECREATION AREAS

The Master Plan Update proposes more intensively developed hubs of Parkway recreation facilities near and adjacent to existing recreation facilities located at Lost Lake Park, the Coke Hallowell River Center, Woodward Park, and the crossing at Highway 41, and near Highway 99. Impacts of more intensive recreation will be reduced by improving and expanding these existing facilities rather than accommodating them at new locations along the river. Impacts can be minimized by using existing access routes, sharing support facilities, and concentrating uses away from environmentally and archaeologically sensitive areas. The proposed recreation areas will, where possible, capitalize on opportunities associated with the reclamation of former sand and gravel operations.

Parkway recreation areas will be linked by a continuous Parkway multi-use trail. The trail system will include surfaces for pedestrian, equestrian, bicycles and wheeled uses, and ADA accessible surfaces. There will be other trails that serve as feeders from pedestrian and bicycle routes in nearby urbanized

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areas. The internal trail system will include the Parkway multi-use trail and additional supplemental hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails and narrow footpaths. In addition to the land-based trails, the river itself will serve as a blueway trail for non-motorized watercraft. Canoe facilities will include put-in and take-out areas, spaced to provide opportunities for canoe and paddling trips of varying lengths. Canoe rest areas with vault toilets will be located so as to reduce trespass problems on private land adjacent to the river.

Use levels should be monitored to ensure that facilities can handle demands. In protected areas, such as near or in the natural and ecological reserves, a permit system for certain activities, users fees, escorted tours in sensitive habitat areas, or other management techniques could be implemented. In sensitive areas access will be restricted to escorted, supervised or guided groups. Temporary trail or area closures may be necessary seasonally or at other times because of conditions such as flood hazard, agricultural spraying, or the presence of sensitive wildlife.

8.2.2 NATURAL AREAS

Focusing more intensive recreation areas adjacent to existing recreation and away from the river helps accommodate a continuous corridor of wildlife habitat, with buffers, along the length of the Parkway. Natural and ecological reserves adjoining or within the Parkway will be clearly demarcated to better protect these sensitive areas. The Conservancy will collaborate with CDFW, the SJR Restoration Program, and other regulatory agencies and jurisdictions with natural resource protection responsibilities to monitor, study, and gather data.

Monitoring will also be utilized to assess the status of habitat restoration projects and their use by wildlife. These analyses could determine the effectiveness of wildlife corridors, baseline conditions, and habitat succession.

8.2.3 SAFETY

Effective management and operation of the Parkway will be crucial to minimizing undesirable activities and unlawful conduct, improving acceptance by adjacent landowners, and protecting environmentally and archaeologically sensitive areas. Undesirable or unlawful activities such as vandalism, after-hours use, and loitering should be controlled with a regular patrol presence by working with local law enforcement agencies.

Adjacent landowners have expressed concerns regarding trespass, vandalism, and other undesirable activities. While these fears are understandable, and sometimes based on past experiences, they are generally absent in well-managed parkland. The experiences of landowners adjacent to similar facilities throughout California show that in most cases the undesirable activities are actually reduced when open land or land with no obvious purpose becomes a trail or other recreational facility with proper management. One such study documented landowner attitudes before and after a trail was developed and showed that in most cases, landowners had a better than expected experience living next to the trail

(East Bay Regional Park District; A Trails Study, Neighbor and User Viewpoints, 1978). The presence of legitimate users and park personnel in the Parkway will discourage undesirable activities and unlawful conduct, thereby creating a climate where those activities will not be tolerated and where there will be a larger number of potential witnesses to report inappropriate conduct.

The creation of controlled, gated access with the payment of a day-use fee will deter entrance by persons with no legitimate recreational pursuit. In addition, cooperation should be sought from private parties having legal control of access routes into the riverbottom to reduce opportunities for persons to enter the Parkway and nearby private property and engage in undesirable conduct.

A "Park Watch" program, with appropriate signs throughout the Parkway, could be implemented to encourage visitors and residents to be alert and report suspicious activities to law enforcement authorities.

Vandalism can be reduced by regular maintenance and cleaning of Parkway facilities. Vandalism is less likely to occur when a high level of maintenance is visible.

A volunteer program to supplement maintenance of the Parkway should be encouraged when problems occur. Volunteers should limit their assistance to reporting undesirable or unlawful activities to law enforcement personnel.

Interpretative programs offer an effective method of managing visitors and informing them about the Parkway and its sensitive and fragile features.

8.3 OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Secure resources for comprehensive and long-term operation and maintenance (O & M) of the Parkway have not been identified. At the time the Conservancy was established one school of thought was that the entire Parkway would eventually be operated and maintained as a single entity, perhaps becoming a unit of the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Over the last decade or so, a variety of challenges associated with operating and managing a river corridor as diverse as the San Joaquin River Parkway have become evident. A more gradual and practical approach has evolved to handle the operating and maintenance needs of the Parkway, which is still a work in progress.

Parkway operations, maintenance and management resources must be developed and sustained. Adequate long term management resources must be identified before each project is authorized for construction. The Conservancy and its partners are working to develop long-term strategies for operating and maintaining the Parkway through cooperative projects, public and political support, stewardship agreements and leases, and other opportunities. As part of the Master Plan Update process, an O & M FUNDING TOOLBOX: An Analysis of Options for Funding Ongoing Operations and Maintenance was developed; see Appendix B. The funding toolbox identifies appropriate resources and strategies for

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maintaining and operating projects identified in the Master Plan Update and makes the following recommendations:

- Continue to use the mosaic model for providing services for the near to mid-term.
- Look first to established entities with previous partner experience.
- Expand the support from user fees where possible.
- Expand the support from concession and lease agreements where possible.
- Capture the value added to private real estate.
- Cultivate relationships with one or more foundations and seek endowments.
- Monitor growing public support for a general regional tax support measure.
- Strategically foster general public support.
- Tactically consider specific opportunities as they arise.

See Appendix B for additional information on O&M strategies.