



# The California Department of Fish and Game

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## STRATEGIC PLAN

*Where do we want to be?*



*State of California  
The Resources Agency  
Department of Fish and Game  
May 1, 1995*

*The Department of Fish and Game  
Administrative Report No. 95-1  
1995*

## FOREWORD

California's wildlife diversity and stunning landscape began changing 150 years ago, with the Gold Rush, and the change continues today. The State's population has already eclipsed 32 million and in the coming years, rapid population growth will place increasing pressures on the State's resources. These changes are already producing unprecedented resource management challenges to the California Department of Fish and Game. These challenges alone would be compelling, but there's more - e.g., the sometimes contradictory desires of its numerous stakeholders, the huge stewardship responsibilities placed on it by the Legislature, and the very scope of conservation issues within the State. All of the above are occurring at a time when the Department has less fiscal and personnel resources to do the job than ever before.

The nature of today's conservation demands requires a willingness to adopt new perspectives and to define and approach the day-to-day business of resource stewardship in new and creative ways. To make progress in this contemporary arena the Department acknowledges that it must conserve wildlife within a broad responsibility of governing and that the first aim of governing is to serve the citizens of this state. The public trust doctrine is not just another legal article, it is *the* guiding principle that binds government to the people it serves.

The Department also acknowledges that the will of the public, as expressed by laws, regulations, and land use decisions, ultimately determines the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat to be preserved for future generations.

These realities suggest that the Department adopt a model of action for conserving wildlife habitat that inspires cooperation by placing greater emphasis on educating, motivating, and rewarding the public, landowners, and local agencies. The more positive approach should ultimately allow less emphasis to be placed on rigid regulations and forced compliance.

Some may see this shift in direction as an erosion of the Department's authority; others may claim this is a departure from relying on the scientific approach to making resource management decisions. This should not be the case. We believe that offering incentives for conservation can result in a more enlightened and involved populace - a diverse group of partners with a stake in decision-making who will demand that good science remain a vital part of the decision making process. By contrast, we believe that more stringent regulations will likely engender more frustration, more divisiveness, and even greater enforcement dilemmas.

In keeping with these principles, two of the themes discussed in this Strategic Plan are *Public Service, Outreach, and Education* and *Cooperative Approaches to resource Stewardship and Use*. They are supplemented and supported by the other themes, *Managing Wildlife from a Broad Habitat Perspective* and *Organizational Vitality*.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Process Overview

"A plan is nothing; planning is everything," said Sir Winston Churchill. Since 1990 we have been involved in generating strategies to resolve the myriad issues facing the Department in this decade. In January 1993 we published "A Vision for the Future". It included statements of our mission, values, and goals and recommended that we develop a formal planning system to provide long and short term direction for our employees.

In late 1993, the Director appointed the Strategic Planning Team (SPT) to develop this strategic plan. The SPT reviewed the Department's existing Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Values, as well as material about priorities prepared previously by our employees.

Because understanding the concerns of the public is crucial to building effective support for the Department, the SPT also conducted focus group meetings statewide to generate input and feedback from the Department's "external stakeholders," (defined as any group or individual who is affected by, or who can affect the future of, the Department). Employee teams in regions and divisions reviewed the information from the stakeholder meetings and provided their interpretations of the results.

### Key Themes

Input from our employees and the results from our external stakeholder focus group meetings have been organized in Chapter 2 into the following themes:

- I. **Public Service, Outreach, and Education** - The Department must work to improve communication with the public to find out what people think and want; inform them about the fish and wildlife and their values to the State; and provide better service by streamlining permitting and licensing processes, informing them of recreational opportunities, and making fishing and hunting regulations easier to understand.
- II. **Cooperative Approaches to Resource Stewardship and Use** - The Department cannot be effective in providing for the continued existence and use of fish and wildlife resources without the help of the public and other agencies. We must move away from a late-stage project-by-project review of development proposals to early consultation with project proponents and local land use agencies. We must take advantage of volunteer assistance in managing our lands, and we must work cooperatively with private landowners to make it attractive for them to manage their lands with fish and wildlife in mind. Further, we must collaborate with other agencies to share limited resources and information

- III. **Manage Wildlife From a Broad Habitat Perspective** - We must protect large ecosystems to shift (where appropriate) the focus from a species-by-species approach. Only in this way can we ensure the future existence of viable habitats for a variety of species.
- IV. **Organizational Vitality** - In an earlier document, "A Vision for the Future," we identified our employees as our most important asset. This theme includes identified goals and strategies to support that conclusion. Specifically, we will examine our organizational structure to determine the most effective way to implement the strategic plan, improve understanding among employees about how we operate and make decisions, and give employees the support and freedom to meet challenges without stifling initiative.

The themes, goals, and strategies in Chapter 2 are not in any order of priority.

### Next Steps

To implement this plan we must: (1) align the structure of the Department's budget and the strategic plan so that we can evaluate the cost implications of modifying efforts in various areas; (2) formalize and implement the budgetary and planning cycles so that strategic and operational decisions affect the budget, and not vice-versa; and, (3) begin the steps leading to action plans (for the budget year) to implement identified strategies.

Since form follows function, it is also appropriate to examine the organizational structure of the Department to determine the best way to be organized to effectively implement the plan. Most importantly, we must begin to think strategically. This plan is only the beginning of the journey.

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## MISSION and VISION

### Our Mission

The mission of the Department of Fish and Game is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.

### Our Vision

We seek to create a Department of Fish and Game that:

*...acts to anticipate the future.*

*...approaches management of our wildlife resources on an ecosystem basis.*

*...bases its resource management decisions on sound biological information and a clear understanding of the desires of the public.*

*...is based on teamwork and an open and honest internal communication.*

*...empowers its employees to make most of the "how" decisions.*

*...is committed to extensive external communication and education programs.*

*...creates and promotes partnerships; coalitions of agencies, groups, or individuals; and any other collaborative efforts to meet the needs and management of wildlife resources.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Content Issues

This is a strategic plan. In one sense, strategy has been defined as how one maneuvers forces into the most advantageous position prior to engagement. In another sense it has been characterized as an artful means to some end. Both apply in our case.

This is not an operational plan. Therefore, there is little emphasis on *how* we should or will accomplish specific goals or implement strategies. These subjects will be addressed when we plan at the next step. The dividing line between strategies and action items (which would be expected in operational plans) is not always distinct, however. Where there was doubt about including specific strategies in this plan (or leaving them out to be included at the next step), we left them in.

We have begun to examine our organizational structure so that we become better able to function operationally. This may require right-sizing field and headquarters staffs, formally establishing geographical area teams, and creating interdisciplinary project teams.

The plan emphasizes the directions we need to establish and follow to meet future challenges. It does not describe all of the things the Department currently does. The fact that this plan does not address some ongoing activities should not be viewed as diminishing the importance of those activities. On the other hand, any current activities that do not support the strategic plan need to be examined for possible termination.

There are many ways to organize ideas into themes, and some readers may not be able to find specific references to their subjects of interest. For example, resource assessment is an important issue mentioned by our employees and external stakeholders in virtually all discussions regarding future plans for the Department. The SPT believes that cooperative approaches to resource stewardship will provide the greatest potential for successfully completing these tasks. Collaborative approaches and partnerships with the scientific community will enable the Department to obtain valuable information without increases in staff or expenditures. Working with the State's colleges and universities to obtain resource information will free our own biologists to concentrate on key species when information is required. The need for better resource assessment, therefore, is expressed primarily in terms of better ways of getting it accomplished.

This plan also does not include a detailed discussion of the history of the Department, the forces affecting it and the wildlife of California, or a list of our "mandates." These subjects were included previously in "A Vision for the Future" published by the Department in January 1993.

There was a conscious effort not to highlight in the plan the need for additional, long-term, stable funding for the Department. The need is real, but any discussion of the subject inevitably leads to questions regarding who should pay or who should pay more (or less) or to questions about priorities that require internal scrutiny. These discussions can be

worthwhile, but they are premature until future directions are clearly decided and described; they also can miss the point that we do not have to do all the work alone. We can share the work with others.

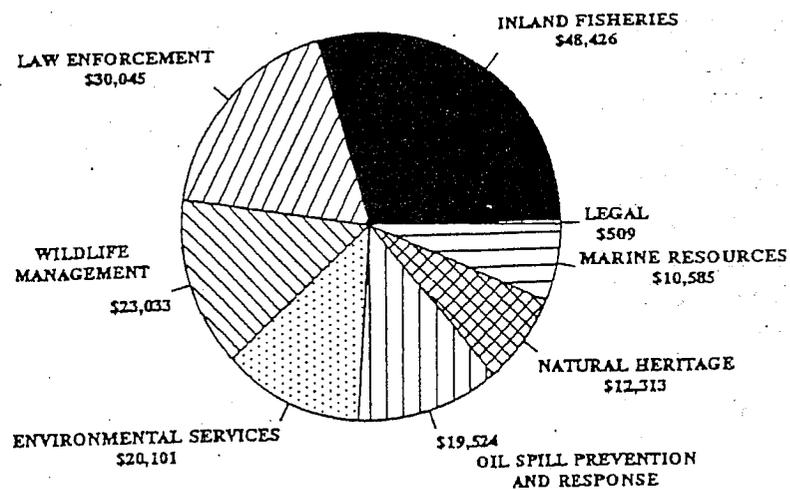
On a related issue, the reader should not assume that we feel we have the financial resources to do everything in the plan at once. Some strategies can be accomplished by doing things differently - without spending additional money. Others involving additional costs may be implemented only after funding mechanisms have been determined.

### Department Overview

In 1870, the Legislature established the Board of Fish Commissioners (forerunner of the Department and the Fish and Game Commission). Its mission was to provide for the restoration and preservation of fish in California waters. It was one of the first wildlife conservation agencies in the country. The same year, they built the first fish ladder on a tributary of the Truckee River, and a state fish hatching house was established at the University of California, Berkeley.

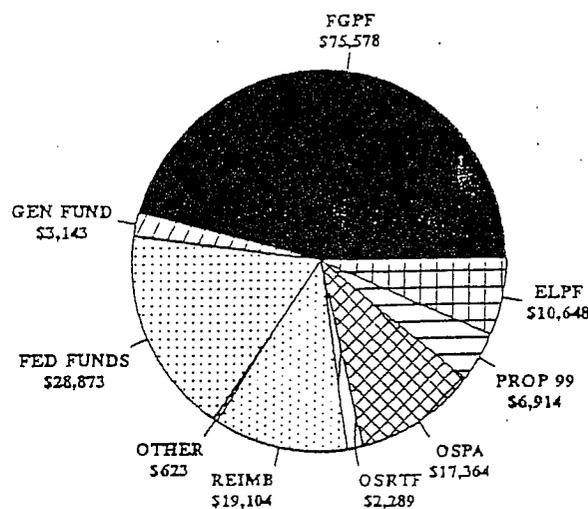
Ever since, the employees of the Department of Fish and Game have worked earnestly to conserve, restore, and enhance habitat for wildlife in California. Today, almost 200 Department-owned wildlife areas and ecological reserves totaling nearly 700,000 acres are protected and managed by dedicated wildlife specialists for wildlife and public use. More than 1800 scientists, wardens, pilots, administrative staff, analysts, and other support employees work to accomplish the Department's mission. The Department of Fish and Game is an integral part of the Resources Agency that oversees the management of California's natural resources.

The Department's nearly \$170 million program budget is shown in the pie chart below. The amount available to each program is significantly less than the amount shown, since a portion from each is used to fund the Department-wide administrative and support program.



DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME 1994-95 PROGRAM BUDGETS (x1,000)

The Fish and Game Preservation Fund (FGPF) includes revenue from the sale of licenses and permits and from fish landing taxes; it generates nearly half (47 percent) of the Department's income. Federal funds total about 17 percent, oil landings fees (OSPAF and OSRTF) about 12 percent, nine percent from reimbursable contracts, six percent from environmental license fees, and five percent from Proposition 99 (cigarette tax). About two percent comes from state General Fund tax revenues, and there are several other small sources that total another two percent. The pie chart below illustrates the relationship of these revenue sources.



1994-1995 EXPECTED REVENUE (x1,000)

The Department is organized by program and geographically. In its headquarters office in Sacramento, Divisions provide technical expertise and coordinate policy statewide. On-the-ground implementation is through staffs in five geographic regions.

## CHAPTER 1: THE PLANNING PROCESS

We began the current planning process in late 1990 when the Director appointed a committee of Department managers to begin developing and articulating the future direction of the Department. The committee held more than 40 meetings with Department employees to solicit suggestions on how to improve our operations and approach the future. Written comments were also received from employees and some interested individuals and constituent groups. The comments we received resulted in a number of recommendations.

In January 1991 the committee issued a draft Vision document containing a mission statement, values, goals, and criteria for any proposed changes on organizational structure. The major recommendation was that "The Department adopt a comprehensive, formal planning system to include both strategic (long-range) planning and operational (short-range) planning."

Although the Vision document was not approved in final form until January 1993, it was used as the foundation for the planning work completed in 1991 and 1992. In January 1991, the committee also issued a comprehensive management system proposal, and in July 1991 the Director appointed a team to develop a preliminary strategic plan. The preliminary strategic plan was completed in March 1992 using the comments and concerns gleaned from prior efforts, but it was not adopted.

In late 1993 the Department faced another in a series of budget reductions. The preliminary strategic plan provided some guidance in making those cuts, but management recommended that a team be appointed to finalize the strategic plan. In December 1993 the Director appointed the existing Strategic Planning Team (SPT); we began to meet in late February 1994.

The SPT used the information developed in the previous three years (including the preliminary strategic plan) as a basis for this plan. Some key issues had been identified and some important goals established, and it was important to us not to overlook the value of those efforts. However, in order to determine how to meet the current and future needs of California's natural resources and the people who use and enjoy them, the SPT agreed that a necessary ingredient was missing from the preliminary strategic plan: input from the public. As a result, we set out to understand the perceptions, attitudes, values, and priorities of a wide cross-section of that public that we call external stakeholders.

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations that have a recognized claim for our attention, resources, or the results of our work, or are affected by our work. Internal stakeholders include our employees; external stakeholders include the traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, commercial fishing and fish buying, aquaculture, license agents, and wildlife rehabilitation groups. They also include conservation groups, timber development interests, agriculture, business/development, Chambers of Commerce, birdwatchers, the judicial system, the livestock industry, local government, utilities, extractive users, hikers, retail businesses, school/education, timber, tourism/recreation, photographers, the scientific community, transportation, the media (paper, TV, radio), and water management agencies to name more than

a few.

We selected and invited a cross-section of external stakeholders to attend meetings in each region to provide their comments on two key questions. We found that conducting the meetings on a regional basis established a link between what the Department does and the current and projected needs of each region.

Stakeholder participants were asked two questions:

1. "In your opinion, what are the most important issues facing the Department of Fish and Game?"
2. "What should or shouldn't the Department do relative to the top five issues?  
(From question 1)"

Responses to these questions allowed participants to share views and helped us to develop and identify the issues and possible strategies that would go into the strategic plan. The meetings with stakeholders also functioned to improve communication between the Department and its stakeholders, and to build support and understanding of Department programs.

The Department's regional and headquarters employee teams processed the information gleaned from stakeholder meetings and developed lists of the top five issues from each meeting. The teams then generated lists that combined information from the stakeholder meetings and previous work done by area and headquarters teams. The results of this effort and our prior work were extraordinary in their similarities. Funding, improved resource assessment, and the need for better internal and external communications were but a few of the common subjects that ran through all the information obtained. The SPT organized the information into the four themes outlined in the Executive Summary and detailed in Chapter 2.

Finally, a draft of this plan was circulated for review to our employees, to the stakeholders invited to our focus group meetings, and to other interested groups and individuals. To the extent possible, we have modified the draft to respond to their concerns and suggestions.

## CHAPTER 2 - Goals and Strategies

### THEME I: Public Service, Outreach, and Education

Public service, outreach, and education are critical to the future of wildlife<sup>1</sup> resources and the success of the Department. We succeed only if we serve the public by conserving the State's wildlife for future generations, and we do so in a manner that involves broad public understanding and support. An important factor for success is how we define the role of each employee in this effort. This role must include improved communication with the public to determine public perceptions and desires and the development of projects or services that address those needs. Communication also means informing the public about the services we provide and how to receive them. We can also do a better job of meeting the needs of wildlife if we educate the public regarding the intrinsic, ecological, economic, cultural, and social values of wildlife resources.

We must provide better public service by improving the efficiency of our permit and license processing, providing timely information to the public on recreational opportunities, making fishing and hunting regulations easier to understand and comply with, and consistently applying our policies and procedures. We must take advantage of opportunities to work with the public and provide opportunities for recreation like the watchable wildlife, Urban Fishing, Junior Hunting, and Outdoor Women programs.

#### GOAL

1. The Department will provide excellent public service.

#### STRATEGIES

- a. Streamline the permitting process and better explain how permit requirements allow the Department to exercise conditions that protect wildlife resources (e.g., eliminate discrepancies and inconsistencies in permitting information, and clarify regulations or guidelines for programs such as streambed alteration agreements, threatened and endangered species take agreements, and suction dredge permits).
- b. Provide the public with timely information about wildlife and recreational opportunities (e.g., prepare newsletters for sport and commercial users and develop a yearly calendar of recreational opportunities).
- c. Make it easier to purchase licenses. Consider alternatives used successfully in other states such as a mail-in license renewal system and an automated point of sale system.

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<sup>1</sup> wildlife, when used alone, means all plants and animals.

- d. Critically analyze existing regulations and eliminate those that are not necessary.
- e. Make hunting and fishing regulations more consistent and easier to understand and follow (e.g., use more graphics and maps).
- f. Develop companion documents to regulations that explain the biological, social, and/or legal rationale for the regulations.
- g. Reduce the time used to pay bills (e.g., allow regions to process routine fiscal transactions and establish a credit card purchase process for minor purchases).

## GOAL

- 2. The Department will involve external stakeholders in program development, will keep them informed, and will develop programs to meet their needs consistent with the maintenance of sustainable wildlife populations.

## STRATEGIES

- a. Meet regularly with members of the general public and with specific constituent groups.
- b. Develop an effective government (federal, state, and local) outreach program. For example, continue to attend local government meetings (board of supervisors, city council, etc.) and identify liaison positions to work with local legislative staffs.
- c. Encourage, establish, fund, and expand programs to inform and recruit more people to become users and supporters of wildlife programs (e.g., Outdoor Women, Urban Fishing, Junior Hunting and Fishing, and Watchable Wildlife programs).
- d. Identify contemporary issues (such as living with mountain lions) and establish community meetings inviting divergent points of view to discuss and explain the Department's roles.
- e. Provide the public with information on the process by which they can influence wildlife conservation at the local, state, and federal level.

## THEME I (cont'd)

### GOAL

3. The Department will understand how the public perceives us and our responsibilities in managing and protecting wildlife and the environment.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Survey the public to determine its perceptions and expectations of Department.
- b. Educate Department personnel regarding the public's perceptions of the Department and its attitudes toward wildlife.
- c. Commit the Department to hold local meetings to discuss the public's expectations and the Department's success in meeting those expectations.
- d. Commit Department personnel to attending constituents' meetings on a regular basis to receive suggestions and comments and to share timely information about current activities.
- e. Address problems where public perceptions and expectations of the Department are not consistent with its authorities, responsibilities, or legal mandates.

### GOAL

4. The Department will increase the public awareness of the ecological, economic, and aesthetic values of maintaining and enhancing wildlife populations and habitats.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Promote the intrinsic values of wildlife and the economic contribution that wildlife and their habitats make to state and local economies. Distribute this information to the public (e.g., through service groups, at meetings of chambers of commerce.)
- b. Develop and encourage wildlife oriented recreational opportunities that contribute to local economies. Increase information for tourism and provide information about wildlife-oriented recreation.
- c. Articulate the Departments position regarding the value of wildlife in all Department publications and programs.

## THEME I (cont'd)

### GOAL

5. The Department will develop an integrated program that addresses identified needs and opportunities in education and communication.

### STRATEGY

- a. Develop a plan to address communication and education opportunities through (a) direct involvement by Department employees (or volunteers) with the public, (b) the distribution of information materials, and (c) the existing school systems. The plan should also include how the Department's education program should be organized.

### GOAL

6. The Department will increase communication with the public (and encourage their participation in the decision-making process) when developing hunting and sport and commercial fishing regulations. We must recognize that public values, attitudes, and perceptions are critical to the effective implementation of regulations.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Share with the public information regarding objective population and harvest levels for each key sport and commercial species. Circulate, as appropriate, comprehensive management plans for key sport and commercial species.
- b. Continue to conduct, including opportunities for public comment, environmental reviews on the effects of sport and commercial management programs.
- c. Conduct public surveys to determine the existing and future level of demand for wildlife-associated activities.

### GOAL

7. The Department will reduce losses of wildlife due to illegal activities.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Identify the locations of most significant wildlife loss from pollution and loss of habitat and focus the Department's response in those areas. Establish teams representing the various Department functions to respond to reports of wildlife losses.

## THEME I (cont'd)

- b. Use the results of the Department's study of law enforcement needs titled "Personnel Allocation Study and Technical Application of Criteria" to increase the number of wardens.
- c. Concentrate law enforcement efforts on catching wildlife criminals who do the most damage to resources. Take strict enforcement action against those who knowingly violate resource-related laws and regulations for personal gain or profit; use education and other methods short of court to solve non-resource or unintentional violations.
- d. Develop enforcement priorities and deploy the necessary resources from throughout the State to bring a halt to the illegal take of wildlife (e.g., use experts from each region to stop the illegal take of abalone on the north coast).
- e. Train personnel in the identification of threatened and endangered wildlife to improve enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.
- f. Seek legislation to increase the maximum fine for Section 5650 Fish and Game Code violations to make it a clear deterrent (civil and criminal) to adverse impacts on wildlife from water pollution.
- g. Make broader use of civil remedies and penalties to recover damages from illegal loss of wildlife.
- h. Train non-enforcement personnel in obtaining proper information for prosecuting violations. Use all Department employees to develop civil and criminal cases.

## GOAL

- 8. The Department will deal effectively with emergencies that threaten wildlife.

## STRATEGIES

- a. Train Department employees in the Incident Command System. Develop action plans for typical incidents and use them to respond to unanticipated incidents.
- b. Develop and formalize cooperative rapid response teams to respond to and assess impacts on wildlife caused by unanticipated events.
- c. Establish expertise in restoration of native plant communities to work with Oil Spill Prevention and Response staff on spills or incidents.

## THEME I (cont'd)

- d. Seek legislation to fund oil and hazardous spill prevention and response capabilities for inland habitats.
- e. Coordinate with CDF on wildfire response to minimize damage to important ecosystems.

### GOAL

- 9. The Department will seek recovery of natural resource damage from parties responsible for accidental or purposeful acts.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Develop and maintain a damage assessment core team comprised of legal, biological, toxicological, economic, and law enforcement components with expertise in natural resource injury determination and damage assessment.
- b. Develop damage assessment procedures and protocols for Department personnel to use in response to acts or activities harmful to wildlife resources.
- c. Develop a training program for Department personnel in resource damage assessment.
- d. Evaluate development of a statutory resource damage assessment penalty schedule.

### GOAL

- 10. The Department will respond to public safety issues and conflicts involving wildlife in accordance with the best interest of the public. We will invite public participation in determining how to balance our response considering the ecological and aesthetic value of wildlife, the value of crops damaged by some wildlife, and threats to public safety.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Develop contingency plans, policies, and guidelines for resolving public safety problems with wildlife such as mountain lions, bears, diseases that may be harmful to the public, and fish that may not be suitable for consumption. Develop the plans with the input of the public and other agencies. Train Department employees in implementing the plans and require their consistent use.
- b. Cooperate with the California Department of Health Services in the collection of shellfish to monitor for paralytic shellfish poisoning and contamination.

## THEME II: Cooperative Approaches to Resource Stewardship and Use

To achieve its mission, the Department must adopt cooperative approaches to the conservation of resources for their intrinsic values and for their existing and future use and enjoyment by people (Resource Stewardship). These approaches should include federal agencies, other State agencies, local agencies, members of resource user groups, and the general public.

In developing cooperative approaches with local land use authorities we must take advantage of, and complement, public policy objectives in areas such as agricultural preservation, open space, recreation, flood control, water management, mitigation banking and permit streamlining. We must strive to provide early consultation on projects with the objective of promoting and transitioning to broad ecosystem solutions adopted in General Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans, and/or mitigation banks. Adversarial positions by the Department should be preceded by clear, effective opportunities to resolve conflicts with project proponents and/or land use authorities.

Private lands include a major portion of wildlife habitat in the state and represent a tremendous opportunity to build upon existing cooperative programs to benefit wildlife. We must create strong partnerships with private landowners by sharing resource and wildlife management information and providing incentives for private land owners to conserve and enhance wildlife. Voluntary development and enhancement of wildlife resources cannot be perceived as a liability which will place the landowner under threat of unreasonable regulation in the event a threatened or endangered species colonizes a previously non existing habitat. Accordingly, the Department must offer regulatory assurance that this voluntary stewardship does not create a landowner liability.

### **GOAL**

1. The Department will develop collaborative approaches and create partnerships to restore, enhance, manage, and protect wildlife and their habitats.

### **STRATEGIES**

- a. Increase the number of cooperative projects with private landowners, governmental agencies, and businesses.
- b. Conduct local stakeholder meetings to receive input on desired management activities and to encourage local support for management of Department land.
- c. Emphasize projects that have measurable results and include ongoing multi-species habitat conservation planning and implementation efforts.
- d. Develop additional volunteer programs to aid the Department in meeting stewardship responsibilities and opportunities.

## THEME II (cont'd)

- e. When appropriate, use local, state and private organizations and individuals to provide assistance in maintaining Department lands.
- f. Participate in cooperative efforts to promote conservation of biological diversity (e.g., the California Biodiversity Executive Council, the Coordinated Resources Management and Planning Council).

### GOAL

- 2. The Department will concentrate its efforts reviewing development and other land and water use changes that pose the greatest threat to wildlife resources or that provide the best opportunity to conserve important habitats.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Work cooperatively with local agencies to develop General Plans and other large-scale planning efforts such as the Natural Communities Conservation Planning, Habitat Conservation Planning, and mitigation banks to better protect wildlife and habitat.
- b. Increase consulting efforts with project proponents early in the planning process. Strive for a better understanding of wildlife needs and have protective measures built into projects.
- c. Continue to develop working relationships with agricultural interests to take advantage of opportunities to enhance wildlife habitat.
- d. Establish Department liaisons with land use planning and permitting agencies to present and explain Department strategies and represent the Department's position.
- e. Continue ongoing efforts to improve the California Environmental Quality Act, the California Endangered Species Act, and other environmental laws to more adequately protect the environment while making the permit process more consistent and workable.
- f. Work with federal, state, and local lead agencies to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of large-scale planning efforts, wildlife status and trends, pollution enforcement efforts, and the implementation and success of mitigation measures.
- g. Develop a policy to set priorities for project reviews recognizing that the Department does not have the resources to adequately review all projects.

**THEME II (cont'd)**

**GOAL**

3. The Department will seek incentives for private landowners and nongovernmental organizations to conserve and enhance wildlife.

**STRATEGIES**

- a. Meet with landowners to identify meaningful incentives.
- b. Seek authority for tax incentives or other benefits for conserving and enhancing wildlife. Promote expansion of the Private Lands Management program.

**GOAL**

4. The Department will promote coordinated gathering and sharing of natural resource information to avoid duplication of effort and take advantage of common goals.

**STRATEGIES**

- a. Establish policy and a process for data gathering and exchange with other state, federal, and local agencies; local college and universities; and parties using or affecting natural resources. Make maximum use of existing Geographical Information Systems and databases (e.g., the California Environmental Resources and Evaluation System, the Natural Diversity Data Base).
- b. Establish partnerships with local colleges and universities to encourage applied research which provides answers to unresolved wildlife conservation issues.
- c. Encourage and support conferences and workshops to exchange data and information.

### THEME III: Manage Wildlife From a Broad Habitat Perspective

The Department must adopt a more comprehensive approach to fish and wildlife management, while recognizing that individual project review and single species management are statutory obligations that can assist us in doing so. Although we recognize that sometimes conservation of small critical habitat areas may be necessary to provide protection for certain species, we must concentrate on the protection of large aquatic and terrestrial areas that provide essential habitat for a variety of wildlife in California. Habitat diversity and wildlife communities must be emphasized in long-term plans with local land use decision makers and local, state, and federal interests developing major infrastructures such as roads, flood control, water delivery and storage. We need to concentrate our efforts on lands and waters that have high wildlife values or the potential to ensure the continued existence of self-sustaining populations.

#### GOAL

1. The Department will emphasize multi-species planning, analysis, and management for large aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

#### STRATEGIES

- a. Identify habitats at risk and set priorities for conservation planning and implementation.
- b. Establish a Department conservation strategy to coordinate local agency and public participation in the creation of Habitat Conservation Plans and train Department staff in managing ecosystems and in methods for accomplishing and implementing this strategy.
- c. Develop adequate databases on wildlife communities to support conservation planning and ecosystem management.
- d. Develop statewide policies such as the current "no net loss of wetlands" policy to underscore the need to protect high priority habitats.
- e. Integrate existing Department plans for managing species and habitat.
- f. Strengthen our partnerships with other federal agencies having existing ecosystem management strategies.

### THEME III (cont'd)

#### GOAL

2. The Department will direct activities toward maintaining, enhancing, and restoring wildlife communities on lands managed by the Department for wildlife benefit.

#### STRATEGIES

- a. Conduct a systematic evaluation of Department-managed lands (excluding public access or use areas) to determine where wildlife sustainability can be maintained for the foreseeable future. Dispose of lands where long-term viability cannot be assured.
- b. Use Department cross-functional teams to determine priority work on Department lands that meet wildlife community conservation goals.

#### GOAL

3. The Department will work to ensure that there is sufficient water (quantity and quality) for wildlife.

#### STRATEGIES

- a. Purchase or otherwise secure water rights to sustain and/or improve wildlife habitat.
- b. Develop a more specific definition of a stream for consistent application and enforcement of environmental laws.
- c. Monitor water diversions to insure compliance with water rights where the remaining water is important to wildlife resources.
- d. Participate in water rights and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hearings to ensure adequate water for wildlife; advocate for wildlife with the state water boards and the Bureau of Reclamation.
- e. Continue and complete in-stream flow studies to determine how much water is needed to establish suitable habitat types and water quality.
- f. Establish a water quality program in each Department region. (a) Provide centralized laboratory support facilities to ensure adequate analysis capability to monitor the protection of aquatic ecosystems and wildlife communities from pollution and (b) Provide technical and analytical support, including testimony, to support compliance with water quality standards and statutes.

### THEME III (cont'd)

- g. Continue to work with appropriate agencies to minimize negative effects on fisheries, wildlife, or habitat by the operation of managed lakes, reservoirs, and diversions.
- h. Evaluate the take of anadromous fish by water diversions and develop a screening priority list based upon impact.

#### GOAL

- 4. The Department will focus inventories, research, and resource assessment efforts on high priority habitats, species at risk, and key recreational and commercial species.

#### STRATEGIES

- a. Identify key species and wildlife communities and increase efforts to collect baseline biological information on them. Coordinate this activity with our conservation planning efforts.
- b. Develop a ranking system for species and habitat research based on the amount of current information, the status as a listed species or sensitive habitat, and the immediate need for the research for planning and management application. Use the ranking to determine where to put our efforts.
- c. Improve expertise in population dynamics (how various populations interact, depend on, and compete with each other).
- d. Develop Department capabilities for conducting rapid bioassessment surveys of aquatic ecosystems to detect and correct pollution problems. Develop baseline information in areas with high potential for wildlife damage from pollution.

#### GOAL

- 5. The Department will manage and control the impacts of prohibited/detrimental species on natural ecosystems in California.

#### STRATEGIES

- a. Expand Department's role in prohibiting the introduction and spread of non-native pest species in terrestrial and aquatic natural communities (e.g., expand our role in dealing with accidental introduction). Lead efforts to eradicate detrimental animal and plant species from wildlife communities;

**THEME III (cont'd)**

where appropriate establish and promote opportunities to harvest detrimental species.

- \* b. Train Department employees in prohibited species identification. Increase awareness and enforcement of prohibited species laws.
- c. Seek legislation to reduce the number of exceptions in the law that allow prohibited species to be imported and to increase fines and penalties for the introduction of illegal species into the wild.

## THEME IV: Organizational Vitality

Form follows function, therefore we must critically examine the function(s) of the Department established in the strategic plan and implement an organizational structure that fosters efficiency, clear designation of responsibility with attendant authority, clarity of purpose, adaptability, and leadership. An organizational structure which emphasizes ecosystems over species must by design incorporate multi-disciplinary teams who are informed of emerging issues and provided with a clear understanding of opportunities, policy direction, and how the Department makes and implements decisions. The organizational structure and leadership must foster timely communication, recognize and support initiative, recognize individual and team contributions, foster a safe working environment, and provide opportunity for professional advancement and diversity. Performance expectations must be clearly stated and employees must be provided the tools, training, and budget to perform their assigned tasks. Supervision must exhibit leadership and consistency in reviewing employee performance and recognizing quality performance as well as addressing substandard performance.

We must continue to implement a Comprehensive Management System to state clearly our expectations and to link strategic planning to the budget cycle. The Department will also operate more efficiently if we improve administrative support and services to regions and divisions and strengthen our leadership, management, and supervision through employee training programs aimed at developing future leaders.

### GOAL

1. The Department will align its organizational structure and resources with the priorities of the strategic plan and will use the Comprehensive Management System to plan, conduct, and evaluate its actions.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Evaluate the current organizational structure and make recommendations necessary to implement the strategic plan efficiently and effectively.
- b. Link the Department's budget structure to the strategic plan, and determine annual budgets through a sound operational planning process.
- c. State clearly to internal and external stakeholders what existing activities can and cannot be done when additional duties are assigned or budget reductions are made.
- d. Through the evaluation process of annual work planning, review the Department's activities for consistency with the strategic plan.

## THEME IV (cont'd)

- e. Create a calendar and agenda for future management team meetings based on the legislative, budgetary, and regulatory cycles. Include dates in the calendar for operational planning, periodic monitoring of high priority projects, information technology (computer) planning, annual evaluation of progress toward meeting strategic goals, and updating the strategic plan.
- f. Conduct periodic reviews of all Department policies and procedures to ensure that they are consistent with our mission and the strategic plan.

### GOAL

2. The Department will increase employee understanding of and participation in the resource decision-making process.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Involve employees in the policy and decision-making processes. Before major decisions are made public, inform involved employees of the issues, considerations, and factors leading to the final decision by providing feedback on how and why their recommendations were modified.
- b. Communicate events, accomplishments, new policies, procedures, and laws (e.g., use the Wildlife Protection Division's training bulletin as a model, use electronic bulletin boards).
- c. Hold regular briefings for all employees where projects and accomplishments of all functions are reviewed and discussed.
- d. Soon after each Joint Executive/Management Team meeting, write a summary and distribute to appropriate offices/employees.
- e. Regional Managers and Division Chiefs should (1) regularly visit outlying offices and facilities, (2) conduct regularly scheduled staff meetings and communicate the results, and (3) establish discussion forums.
- f. Conduct Directorate (the Director and Deputies) visits at least annually to field offices.
- g. Circulate Department-wide monthly updates of active legislation, including the Department's recommended position.

### GOAL

3. The Department will make the best use of available funds.

THEME IV (cont'd)

STRATEGIES

- a. Identify possible cost saving measures (e.g., set up a reinvestment process to recognize units that reduce cost and meet performance objectives. Create a working group to explore the feasibility of privatizing some elements of Department programs).
- b. Comprehensively evaluate and improve the current Department budget and financial systems (e.g., make better use of information technology and recognize and reward employees who meet performance objectives and stay within their budgets).
- c. Leverage existing funds through public/private and public/public partnerships (e.g., find sponsors to cover publication costs of the regulations booklets).

GOAL

- 4. The Department will strive to secure adequate funding from appropriate sources to achieve its mission.

STRATEGIES

- a. Gain the support of stakeholders to obtain adequate funding (e.g., form a "stakeholders group" to develop and support legislation that broadens the Department's financial base; inform the general public of funding needs, availability and sources, and of consequences of not funding programs).
- b. Develop new revenue sources (e.g., solicit and receive contracts and grants from private corporations, foundations, and other governmental agencies and seek funds to manage existing and new land acquisitions).

## THEME IV (cont'd)

### GOAL

5. The Department will recognize the value and reward the contributions of employees and teams.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Expand or make better use of recognition programs (e.g., expand Officer of the Year Award to other functions in the Department and include additional training opportunities and temporary outside assignments as awards).
- b. Recognize significant accomplishments and outstanding performance of employees or teams through citations in the Department's newsletter.

### GOAL

6. The Department will provide employees with the knowledge, skills, equipment, and information to be consistent, safe, and effective in their jobs, and also provide them effective leadership and guidance.

### STRATEGIES

- a. Implement an orientation program for new employees and conduct interdisciplinary training annually for all staff.
- b. Fully implement the Field Training Biologist program.
- c. Develop a training program for all Department employees similar to the Field Training Biologist and Field Training Officer programs and provide Department employees with temporary training assignments that will expose them to different Department functions.
- d. Make technical training available to staff and provide for attendance by appropriate staff at scientific conferences and symposia.
- e. Require that work plans and other appropriate tools/techniques be used by all supervisors to ensure that clear expectations exist and that objective information is available to evaluate employee performance.
- f. Develop a comprehensive program to train supervisors and middle managers to prepare them for increased responsibility. Explore the feasibility of developing a "Management Academy."

## THEME IV (cont'd)

- g. Expand the current evaluation process for supervisors beyond the practice of an annual review by their supervisor to include an evaluation by their subordinates.
- h. Dedicate a portion of each employee's work-time for continuing education and specific training.
- i. Improve managerial knowledge and skills by encouraging managers to rotate to different programs on a short-term (six months or less) basis.
- j. Recognize safe behavior by discussing safety on performance reports, and in exceptional cases, with safety incentive awards.

## GOAL

- 7. The Department will provide problem solving and administrative support and services to its employees.

## STRATEGIES

- a. We will improve all customer-oriented services using Total Quality Management or similar methods to improve our responsiveness to both Department staff and the public.
- b. Delegate more administrative authority to regions and divisions to process routine transactions.
- c. Link regions/divisions/administration with a wide area computer network to make all applicable data readily accessible.

## GOAL

- 8. The Department will develop short, mid, and long-term recruitment programs to maintain a diverse, high quality work force.

## STRATEGIES

- a. Project current and future needs for job skills and broaden the academic disciplines (planning, economics, geology, etc.) utilized by the Department to meet the objectives of the strategic plan.
- b. Emphasize employment opportunities to urban/changing ethnic populations with the intent to make all segments of the public aware of Department employment opportunities (e.g., make public presentations in

THEME IV (cont'd)

urban settings about the Department and employment opportunities and develop a program to financially assist potential candidates through college in exchange for a work commitment).

- c. Conduct more open examinations; simplify and speed up the exam process with spot exams and continuous testing.
- d. Participate in job fairs throughout the State.
- e. Develop and implement role model/mentor and internship programs.
- f. Work with the Department of Personnel Administration to develop and implement strategies to bring pay and benefits to competitive levels with other state agencies and the private sector.
- g. Provide opportunities for career advancement to specialists who do not want to manage or supervise.
- h. Provide incentives for promotions and lateral (new but generally equivalent position) transfers. Work with the Department of Personnel Administration to eliminate salary range overlap and ensure that salaries reflect promotional status.

## CHAPTER 3: PLANNING THE NEXT STEPS

### The Comprehensive Management System (CMS)

The CMS cycle generally includes the following four steps:

#### Inventory - Where are we?

Inventory is an assessment of the current status of the Department to identify issues and opportunities. This phase includes identification of existing department assets, mandates, efforts, and constituents. Systematic gathering of input from employees and constituents is vital. This step was accomplished primarily through the efforts leading to the Vision Document, published in January 1993, and through the products resulting from area, region, and division team meetings that occurred prior to beginning work on the strategic plan.

#### Strategic Planning - Where do we want to be?

Strategic planning is statewide, department-wide, and general; it leads to a mission statement, department values, identified goals and issues, and strategies to address issues and accomplish goals. A strategic plan is dynamic, usually with a three to five year life. Periodically, a strategic plan is reviewed and revised. No part of the plan is static.

Our mission, vision, and values were developed previously as part of the Vision Document. The strategic plan includes the goals and strategies aimed at moving the Department in a direction consistent with the preferences of our employees and other stakeholders. This is where we are now in the cycle.

#### Operational Planning - How do we get where we want to be?

Operational planning is more detailed and focused. Operational plans include projects or objectives that are short-range, specific and measurable. Operational plans differ from year to year and may not address all of the strategic goals in any given year. The Executive Team, with recommendations from the Management Team, makes a decision annually regarding which goals to pursue based on the resources available to achieve them. The Executive Team then requests that operational plans be developed to meet their stated focuses.

This will be our next step in the CMS process. Plans will be created by project teams in the next year to address specific issues (focuses). In future years we expect to develop operational plans with more of a "bottom up" approach. Operational plans will ultimately include work plans for each employee and for each organizational unit. Once operational plans have been approved, management will provide the necessary resources, monitor and record actions and progress, and suggest adjustments to the plans as necessary.

### Evaluation - How did we do?

Evaluation determines whether operational plans were successful, on time, and within budget. It involves diagnosing the reasons why some objectives may not have been met and determining what needs to be changed. Once the evaluation phase is complete the process begins anew.

### Approach

The long-range goal of Departmental planning is to have the "program drive the budget." At present, the budget is approved as a block and program managers divide the budget to see what can be funded which, in a very real sense, allows the budget to drive the program. Utilizing the Comprehensive Management System process and teams as described herein, our goal is to develop a plan that shows what ought to be done, develop projects to accomplish that work, and propose a budget to get the work done.

How we approach the planning cycle is of vital importance to the future of the Department. The Department's roles have changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Even greater changes are anticipated during the next 20 years. We have evolved into an organization with a wide variety of environmental responsibilities that are interrelated and demand a more comprehensive approach. CMS institutionalizes the ability to respond to change and embrace a variety of issues and concerns simultaneously through an annual cycle of implementation, evaluation, and adaptation.

To make this happen will require a concentrated effort to move from a reactive to a proactive mode, a change in how workloads are assigned and monitored, and a change in the way the Department communicates, both internally and externally. It will also require that we set achievable goals with an emphasis on wildlife communities. To be successful stewards of California's fish, wildlife, and plant resources, we must embrace these changes.

### Teams

The full, ongoing implementation of CMS will probably make use of functioning teams within the Department. Those teams are envisioned as follows:

#### Executive Team

The executive team determines annually which strategic goals to pursue; it also reviews and approves the annual Department operational plan and any revisions to the strategic plan. It is made up of members of the Directorate.

#### Management Team

The Management Team recommends to the Executive Team the Department strategic plan, annual strategic goals to emphasize, and the annual operational plan. This team brings a Department-wide perspective to the planning and management system; it is where differences are resolved. This team is composed primarily of Regional Managers and Division Chiefs.

### Division Teams

Division teams will provide coordination and technical expertise on statewide issues. They: 1) provide the directorate with advice and support on programmatic issues; 2) develop and oversee statewide policies, goals, plans, and objectives; 3) identify important statewide needs and issues and make recommendations for change; 4) convene and facilitate some project teams; 5) facilitate the flow of products and information from other teams; 6) assist all other teams by providing: key technical expertise, applied research, study and sampling design and standardized methodologies, design of information systems and computer applications; 7) form partnerships with other public agencies and private interests, the scientific community, and the general public; and 8) develop and review statewide legislation and regulations.

Division teams include all employees of a division, except those who work outside of the division headquarters and are on area teams.

### Administration Teams

Administration teams provide support for implementation of the Department's strategic and organizational plans. Each office and branch within administration has a team which develops an annual operational plan, meets as necessary to coordinate administrative programs, and makes recommendations for improving services.

### Regional Teams

Regional teams will coordinate efforts among the area teams, review and compile area plans into region plans, and recommend prioritized region plans to the Management Team.

The regional team provides planning and coordination to ensure that all projects within areas meet the needs of the entire region.

### Area Teams

Area team members are all the employees who work within area boundaries or who have some of their workload within (or adjacent in the case of marine positions) the boundaries. There are now four to seven area teams in each of the existing regions.

Most of the time area team members of various functional specialties (e.g., fisheries, wildlife, plant ecology, law enforcement, etc.) would probably continue to work within their specialties. Projects requiring cross-functional representation are expected to occur; however, assembling all the members of an area team to work together briefly on a specific issue or task would probably occur only on rare occasions.

Area teams will facilitate better communication within the Department and with our customers in local government and the general public. They should establish a personal point of contact for service issues. They can foster partnerships by developing better working relationships with local land use planning agencies, and they are intended to allow issue resolution at the earliest stage and at the lowest possible level.

Area teams identify important local needs, assist in projects to develop watershed or landscape conservation plans, and then help implement them. They contribute to regional and statewide conservation goals, providing the Department's primary on-the-ground implementation.

### Project Teams

Project teams are temporary teams, designed to work across functional, organizational, or geographic boundaries on specific issues. They: 1) are sized and prescribed for a specific period of time to produce a specific product; 2) operate at the state, regional, or area level, including members of other agencies and the public as necessary or appropriate; 3) provide expertise on certain species/habitats, programs, or project types; 4) compile and analyze issue-specific information; 5) recommend priorities and policy changes to resolve issues; or 6) develop conservation plans.

Like area teams, project teams will build partnerships with other agencies and the public. They will also ensure Department accountability across the organization and break down "turf" problems that can develop geographically. They facilitate ecosystem planning by their design. They can respond to our customers concerning complex problems over large areas and multiple jurisdictions.

### Responsibility

Many of our strategic goals identify work we are already doing; others give our work new emphasis. Two new emphases are to improve communications and to focus on service to all of our customers. Another new emphasis is to be more consistent in our actions, such as in how we implement laws, regulations, and policies, and in the conservation guidelines we recommend. We are committed to meeting these challenges in all that we do throughout the Department.

Our collective challenge is to pursue our vision with as much honesty, courage, and intensity as we can generate. How successful we are in meeting this challenge will require a commitment of the Department's leadership, but ultimately it is each employee's responsibility.