

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
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**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT STATUTORY EXEMPTION FOR
RESTORATION PROJECTS
CONCURRENCE NO. 21080.56-2026-103-R1**

Project: Goodrich Creek Home Ranch Meadow Restoration Project
Location: Lassen County
Lead Agency: Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District
Lead Agency Contact: Kelsey Siemer; Kmarks@honeylakesvalleyrcd.us

Background

Project Location: The Goodrich Creek Home Ranch Meadow Restoration Project (Project) is located on privately-owned land in western Lassen County adjacent to State Highway 36, approximately three air miles east of the unincorporated town of Westwood, CA in southwestern Lassen County, centered at 40.322905, -120.935712. The Project area contains 223 acres (197.5 meadow acres) located along Goodrich Creek in the Mountain Meadows watershed, upper North Fork Feather River Basin. The Goodrich Creek Home Ranch meadow is part of a larger meadow complex along Goodrich Creek that extends from Mountain Meadows reservoir upstream to McKenzie Meadows. The property is protected by a conservation easement held by the Feather River Land Trust (FRLT).

Project Description: Point Blue Conservation Science (Point Blue), in partnership with the Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District (Lead Agency), proposes to implement restoration activities at Goodrich Creek Meadow to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend.

The Project is designed to address source problems that have led to channel incision and meadow degradation in the meadow and to recover hydrologic and ecological processes that created and maintained meadow function prior to human alterations. The Project will benefit native meadow birds, waterfowl, and other riparian dependent species. The Project includes a variety of treatment techniques to restore hydrology and improve floodplain function to promote growth of mesic meadow plant species, enhance summer flow conditions, and improve water quality by eliminating eroding banks and filtering flood flows on the meadow floodplain surface. The design will achieve this goal through the following mechanisms: increasing floodplain connectivity in oversized and incised meadow channels; decreasing stream power in the meadow system by reactivating historic remnant channels in key locations; and increasing channel and floodplain complexity by promoting the growth of riparian and emergent vegetation.

Project activities include:

- Riffle augmentation will treat incised channels by raising the base elevation of existing riffles.
- Post-Assisted Log Structures (PALs) or Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) will be created in the meadow if the upper reach of Goodrich North proves too wet for equipment access.
- Channel fill treatments will be implemented in the Goodrich North channel in the lower half of the Project area. The Goodrich North channel is suspected to have been anthropogenically altered to drain much of the meadow. Channel fill treatments are expected to help reactivate remnant flow paths, increase channel sinuosity, and reduce water surface heights and shear stress on meadow soils.
- Cross vane structures will be created for all channels receiving riffle augmentation treatments.
- Ditches will be filled to reduce flow conveyance down artificial features, restore natural drainage pathways, and reactivate historic remnant channels. Short reaches of ditches may be left unfilled (partial fill) to create habitat complexity. Linear channels and ditches will be filled following the same techniques as sodded riffle treatments described above.
- Revegetation will occur using local native materials, such as willow (*Salix*), aspen, and cottonwood.

Following initial restoration, the Project will be adaptively managed and maintained until the meadow system is self-sustaining. Furthermore, Point Blue and FRLT will monitor compliance with the terms of the conservation easement and evaluate Project performance and compliance with the site's grazing management plan.

Tribal Engagement: The Lead Agency has made efforts to engage with local tribes via certified letters to tribal contacts provided by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). Specifically, in 2025 and 2026, certified letters were sent to 10 tribes. In addition, the Concow-Maidu of Mooretown Rancheria and Pakan'Yani Maidu of Strawberry Valley Rancheria have been contacted separately to invite further discussion regarding the Project.

Interested Party Coordination: The Project is located on privately-owned land and the Project was proposed at the request of the landowner as part of their commitment to holistic land management. The Project is part of a broader landscape-scale restoration effort in the Mountain Meadows Basin. The landowner and the grazing lessee have engaged with the project team in the conservation of the property and the restoration planning process.

Additionally, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and Wildlife Conservation Board have been involved in the property for over a decade and funded the acquisition of the property's conservation easement, accompanying conservation plan, and ecological monitoring and grazing management plan. FRLT holds the conservation easement, has been engaged in the protection and management of the property and are part of the larger team on this Project.

Anticipated Project Implementation Timeframes:

Start date: July 2026

Completion date: December 2029

Lead Agency Request for CDFW Concurrence: On April 1, 2026, the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW Director) received a concurrence request from the Lead Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (e) (Request). The Request seeks the CDFW Director's concurrence with the Lead Agency's determination on March 26, 2026, that the Project meets certain qualifying criteria set forth in subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of the same section of the Public Resources Code (Lead Agency Determination). The CDFW Director's concurrence is required for the Lead Agency to approve the Project relying on this section of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.).

Concurrence Determination

The CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency Determination that the Project meets the qualifying criteria set forth in Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive (Concurrence).

Specifically, the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project meets all of the following conditions: (A) the Project is exclusively to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend; or is exclusively to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife; (B) the Project may have public benefits incidental to the Project's fundamental purpose; (C) the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment; and (D) Project construction activities are solely related to habitat restoration. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (g), CDFW will post this Concurrence on its CEQA Notices and Documents internet page: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Notices/CEQA>.

This Concurrence is based on best available science and supported, as described below, by substantial evidence in CDFW's administrative record of proceedings for the Project.

This Concurrence is also based on a finding that the Project is consistent with and that its implementation will further CDFW's mandate as California's trustee agency for fish and wildlife, including the responsibility to hold and manage these resources in trust for all the people of California.

Discussion

- A. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (a), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project will exclusively conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend; or restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife.

The restored hydrology and improved floodplain function will promote more vigorous growth of mesic meadow plant species, enhance summer flow conditions, and improve water quality by eliminating eroding banks and filtering flood flows on the meadow floodplain surface. The restoration of meadow habitat will promote abundance and diversity of avian species such as greater sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis tabida*), yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*), and the willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*). Ponded water and abundant willows created by this Project will create suitable habitat for American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) to expand into the Project area, as well.

- B. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (b), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project may have incidental public benefits, such as public access and recreation.

The Project is located on private land with no public access into the meadow and is exclusively dedicated to the restoration of hydrologic function and improvement of the meadow. Furthermore, the Project does not include any public access or recreation features. As a result, the Project is not expected to include any incidental public benefits.

- C. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (c), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery, and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

Long-term Net Benefits to Climate Resiliency:

Reconnecting the incised channels with the meadow floodplain will allow flows to spread out, attenuating peak velocities and reducing opportunities for flood events downstream. As flows disperse across the floodplain, water is absorbed into meadow soils, providing increased water retention and replenishment of the shallow groundwater aquifer. The increased groundwater retention in turn compensates for the reduced snowpack and projected declines in spring runoff by slowly filtering and releasing water into stream channels later into the summer months. Extending the availability of cold, clean surface water in the meadow and downstream provides resiliency to drought climate impacts on habitats for a multitude of both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species. Moreover, the hydrologic improvements are expected to make the meadow self-sustaining, ensuring this habitat is available for species that have reduced habitat under drier conditions.

The Project will also result in long-term climate resiliency benefits through a two-fold effect of carbon storage: (1) restoring the meadow will prevent continued loss of carbon via oxidation from continued drying of meadow soils; and (2) the restored meadow will act as a net carbon sink as the meadow soils begin to re-sequester carbon through increased aboveground and belowground biomass.

Long-term Net Benefits to Biodiversity:

The Project will result in long-term net benefits to biodiversity by enhancing degraded wet meadow habitat. Increasing wetness, vegetation structural complexity and diversity, as well as more frequent flooding will promote higher quality wildlife habitat.

In conjunction with neighboring restoration efforts, the Project would contribute to long-term net benefits to biodiversity in the area by expanding the contiguous habitat footprint in the basin. This will counter the effects of modeled fragmentation in critically important migratory bird corridor and in the home range of the Lassen Pack gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).

Additionally, the Project will increase the diversity of avian forage and habitat by improving riparian and wet meadow characteristics through much of the Project area. These improvements are expected to enhance breeding for meadow bird species, including willow flycatcher, yellow warbler, and greater sandhill crane. Expansion of meadow habitat would also improve habitat quality for the herd of Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus canadensis nelsoni*) that is expanding in northern California.

Long-term Net Benefits to Sensitive Species Recovery:

The Project's restoration measures will create suitable habitat and support long-term net benefits and recovery for sensitive species documented within and in the vicinity of the Project area. Restored riparian shrub habitat will also support breeding of two special status meadow bird species: willow flycatcher, listed as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), and greater sandhill crane, which is known to be present in the Project area and listed as threatened under CESA.

Long-term vegetation changes due to restoration of meadow floodplain function will increase the amount of wet meadow habitat within treated areas and reduce sediment input due to erosion. High winter and spring flows will spread across the restored and vegetated meadow floodplain, naturally filtering sediment, saturating meadow soils, and raising groundwater levels, which in turn will provide increased and/or extended duration of base-flow later in the season within the treated meadow stream systems. Increased vegetation and habitat near breeding ponds and increased number of temporary pools of water provide breeding sites, benefitting amphibian species, such as Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (*Rana sierrae*), listed as threatened under CESA and endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act, and southern long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum sigillatum*), listed as a CDFW Species of Special Concern.

American goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), listed as endangered under CESA, are expected to benefit due to the expansion of pooled water habitat along with increased prey diversity and abundance in and around the Project area. Sandhill cranes, and other migratory birds, are expected to benefit due to the expected improvement and expansion of ponded water and wet meadow habitat for resting, foraging, and potential nesting cranes.

Sierra Nevada mountain beaver (*Aplodontia rufa californica*) will benefit from meadow soils retaining moisture longer, supporting herbaceous and willow vegetation in the meadow and providing deep ponds for protection that are lacking in existing channels.

Procedures for the Protection of the Environment:

The Project includes the following procedures for the protection of the environment:

1. Restoration work will occur during the dry season (typically August 1 through October 30) when flows are reduced.
2. Dewatering will be part of the Project. This will be preceded with a plan to complete a fish rescue effort at the onset of water diversion activities in the north channel within the Project area and as far downstream as is deemed necessary.
3. Existing vegetation (meadow sod and riparian shrubs) in disturbance areas will be salvaged and replanted as needed.
4. Ground mats will be utilized along the main entry pathways, where multiple passes would be required. A temporary crossing will be installed to cross the Goodrich North Channel.
5. Crews transporting materials will avoid trailing in wet areas, and dispersed paths will be utilized when these areas must be accessed.
6. All work will be conducted in accordance with a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.
7. Point Blue shall contact CDFW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to verify the presence, or lack of presence of, wolf activity near the Project area. If an active den or rendezvous site is located within two miles of the Project area, mitigation measures would be implemented, and/or refined, based on the direction of CDFW and USFWS biologists.
8. Restoration is anticipated to start in August/September 2026, outside of the breeding season for greater sandhill cranes and yellow warblers. Should implementation commence prior to this timeline and during breeding season, the team will conduct preconstruction nesting surveys of all meadow habitat within a ¼-mile of the proposed work area no more than 30 days prior to the start of the Project.
9. The Project will include mitigation measures and education efforts for rare plants identified during botanical surveys.

Ongoing Management for the Protection of the Environment:

Visual inspection of the Project area will occur in Spring 2027 to identify the potential need for any adaptive management activities. Point Blue will collect ecological monitoring data (Soil carbon, vegetation, birds) in 2028 to compare to pre-project data collected from 2020 - 2024.

The Project area is entirely within a conservation easement held by FRLT and restricts activities that would degrade the environment. FRLT conducts annual easement compliance monitoring on the property. As part of the easement, The Home Ranch Conservation Plan was prepared, and was most recently updated in 2025. The Conservation Plan provides grazing, water, and vegetation management guidelines for

the property's meadow and riparian habitats. It also provides objectives, performance measures, and a monitoring strategy for the property. The Conservation Plan may be regularly updated as needed due to changing climatic conditions, evolving management approaches, and monitoring feedback. The Project area will be restricted from grazing for at least two years to allow recovery of the area. Following this period, grazing may be cautiously re-introduced, ensuring levels of use are compatible with a continued positive trend of ecological conditions.

- D. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (d), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project does not include any construction activities, except those solely related to habitat restoration.

The sole purpose of the Project is to restore the meadow floodplain function by re-establishing the channel-floodplain connection. All Project's activities are related to restoring or enhancing habitat in the Project area. The Project includes a variety of treatment techniques to raise the water table and spread flow across the floodplain, including riffle augmentation, cross vane structures for channels receiving riffle augmentation, beaver dam analogs and/or post-assisted log structures in the upstream most reach, channel fill treatments in the Goodrich North Channel, and ditch fill. Heavy equipment will be used to transport fill material to the channel, place it, and shape the final surface to match the floodplain slope. Sod will be salvaged and placed over the final surface, where present. After riffle augmentation, cross vane, and ditch fill treatments, riparian trees and shrubs such as willow, aspen, and cottonwood will be planted along and adjacent to treated areas.

Scope and Reservation of Concurrence

This Concurrence is based on the proposed Project as described by the Lead Agency Determination and the Request. If there are any subsequent changes to the Project that affect or otherwise change the Lead Agency Determination, the Lead Agency, or any other public agency that proposes to carry out or approve the Project, shall submit a new lead agency determination and request for concurrence from CDFW pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56. If any other public agency proposes to carry out or approve the Project subsequent to the effective date of this Concurrence, this Concurrence shall remain in effect and no separate concurrence from CDFW shall be required so long as the other public agency is carrying out or approving the Project as described by the Lead Agency Determination and the Request.

Other Legal Obligations

The Project shall remain subject to all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and this Concurrence shall not weaken or violate any applicable environmental or public health standards. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21080.56, subd. (f).)

CDFW Director's Certification

Signed by:

By: _____
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Date: 5/18/2026

Meghan Hertel, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife