

Implementing a Wildlife Conservation Board Grant as part of the Caltrans' Project Delivery Process



The California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) allocates grant funds for the protection and restoration of wildlife connectivity projects, including wildlife undercrossings, overcrossings, and removal of instream impediments to fish passage on the State Highway System. The applicability, alignment, and use of WCB grant funds to support Caltrans' connectivity projects requires an understanding and integration of WCB grant funding with Caltrans' project delivery process.

What is the WCB?

The Wildlife Conservation Board aims to protect, restore, and enhance California's natural resources in partnership with conservation groups, agencies, and Californians. The WCB sits within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife but is a separate and independent Board with authority and funding to implement a land acquisition and wildlife conservation development program.

Who represents the WCB?

The President of the Fish and Game Commission, the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Director of the Department of Finance, and four public members—two appointed by the legislature and two by the Governor. A Legislative Advisory Committee—three members of the Senate and three members of the Assembly—provides legislative oversight.

What does the WCB do?

The WCB selects, authorizes, and allocates funds for the purchase of land and waters suitable for the preservation, protection, and restoration of wildlife habitat and associated recreation. The three main functions of the WCB are land acquisition, habitat restoration, and development of wildlife-oriented public access facilities, which are carried out through its programs.

Where does WCB funding come from?

A total of five proposition funds provide funding for WCB programs. **Proposition 68** funds **Wildlife Corridor and Fish Passage**—construction of wildlife overcrossings and undercrossings, restoration of habitats that provide a visual screen in wildlife corridors, and removal of instream impediments to fish passage. Propositions 1, 84, 40, 50 and other discretionary funds provide funding to enhance stream flows, fund safe drinking water and water conservation, protect and restore habitats, and support public recreation.

How often is funding available?

Grants are accepted either on a continuous basis or during the solicitation period. For example, the Proposition 68 Wildlife Corridor and Fish Passage Program has an annual solicitation, however, the Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Program accepts grant applications on a continual basis.

What information is needed to apply?

- Project information developed by the Project Delivery Team
 - Project name, summary of project, total project cost and amount requested, project start and end date, habitat type in acres, supporting maps and photos
- Project location information
- Description of project and how it will benefit wildlife and/or their habitat
- Environmental review information (e.g., CEQA document, or why project is exempt from CEQA)
- Other project funding sources
- Support letters

Steps to incorporate awarded WCB Grants into Caltrans' Project Delivery:

1. Project Management needs to be involved in grant applications, managing details of the grant agreement, payments, and other reporting. If possible, include a partnership with a non-profit organization that manages the surrounding lands to help define long-term goals for the wildlife connectivity project.
2. The Project Delivery Team, consisting of the Project Manager, an environmental planner, biologist, and engineer, develops roles and responsibilities for coordinating the grant and moving forward on planning and development of the connectivity feature(s).
3. The Project Manager creates the Expenditure Authorization (EA) that will allow the Project Delivery Team members to initiate the Project Initiation Document (PID). The grant agreement can be signed by either the Environmental Deputy Director, Project Manager, or District Director. Note: PID work is charged to Program Code 40.50.
4. Grant Agreement language for monthly billing and 10% withhold should be discussed with the Project Manager (PM); consider one payment at the end of the project.

Examples of Caltrans projects that have qualified for and received WCB grants

Caltrans District 1 – Stone Lagoon Wildlife Connectivity Planning - Humboldt 101 Wildlife Bridge Crossing and Wildlife Viewing Area

U.S. Highway 101 in northern Humboldt County is an impediment to migratory movement of wildlife, bisecting important corridors for numerous terrestrial species that inhabit adjacent coastal forest, prairie, lagoon, and marsh habitats. A 1-mile segment between post miles 114 and 115 (about 0.25 miles south of Stone Lagoon) receives significant public visitation during the summer as park visitors stop on the roadway to view Roosevelt elk. Identified by CDFW as a Wildlife Movement Barrier with high priority for remediation and to reduce large mammal-vehicle collisions, the WCB grant will use Prop 68 funding for site assessment and scoping, identification of design alternatives and permits, a preliminary environmental review, and to support needed wildlife movement studies, to include a monitoring plan. These activities will ultimately support the construction of a wildlife bridge crossing and wildlife viewing area. Caltrans received approval to use WCB's Grant Agreement on WCB's standard template, avoiding red tape associated with having to execute a special grant agreement between WCB and Caltrans.



Figure 1. Roosevelt elk crossing Highway 101 near Stone Lagoon.

Caltrans District 7 – Liberty Canyon Wildlife Overcrossing is an estimated \$87 million 165-foot project that has received funding from numerous grant sources. A nonprofit, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), has applied for, received, and managed all grant funds for this project. Caltrans is unable to contract directly with NWF because of their nonprofit status, thus Caltrans is receiving the WCB grant funds from NWF through the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority via a Cooperative Agreement. This process is lengthier and requires various partners to agree to overhead cost, reimbursable strategies, invoicing, and other project-related issues.



Figure 2. A rendering of Liberty Canyon wildlife crossing. Source: Living Habitats LLC and National Wildlife Federation.

Caltrans Project Delivery

Caltrans projects are delivered in six phases, including long-range planning to develop a project work plan (Pre-K Phase), project initiation to identify environmental issues and design and cost solutions (Phase K), project approval and environmental documents (Phase 0), plan specifications and estimates (Phase 1) to define the project limits and footprint, best management practices, and approval of construction contracts, right-of way (Phase 2) to relocate conflicting utilities and ensure access, and construction (Phase 3). **Note:** Most WCB grants involve Caltrans' planning and design phases, including **Phase K, Phase 0, and Phase 1.**

Helpful links to more information:

- [WCB Grant Announcements, Documents and Templates](#)

If you have questions about planning, or implementing, WCB grants, please contact Luz Quinnell, Caltrans HQ-Division of Environmental Analysis, Biological Studies and Innovation, at (916) 210-9851, or Luz.Quinnell@dot.ca.gov.