

Sustainable Conservation partners with agriculture, business and government leaders to find practical ways that the private sector can protect clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems.

Restoration on Private Lands

We help landowners be good stewards of the environment by facilitating restoration projects and species protection.

Sustainable Agriculture

We promote the adoption of innovative farming practices so that farmers can protect the environment, boost their bottom lines and keep their land.

Sustainable Business

We stop pollution at the source by working proactively with business and regulatory agencies to solve problems through cooperation, rather than litigation.

THE Bridge

LETTER FROM THE **Executive Director**

Dear Friends,


Finding practical private-sector solutions to complex environmental problems is a cornerstone of Sustainable Conservation's work. That's why I was so enthusiastic when Environmental Defense approached us three years ago about expanding the use of an innovative tool in California that encourages landowners to create and restore endangered species habitat on their properties. This conservation tool, called a Safe Harbor Agreement, does what the Endangered Species Act cannot: provide incentives for landowners to help endangered species recover.

I believe Safe Harbor Agreements can be a powerful tool for species recovery around the nation, and broadening their use in California is ideal. With more than half of U.S. land privately owned – and more than half of all rare animals and plants making their homes on private property – the fate of endangered species depends heavily on the decisions of private landowners. Here in California, we have both vast private lands and are second only to Hawaii in the number of rare species.

While the Endangered Species Act has effectively prevented the extinction of many animals and plants since its enactment in 1973, there are some unintended consequences that inhibit recovery efforts. If landowners enhance wildlife habitat on their properties and an endangered species takes up residence – or is harmed during a conservation project – they may face new land-use restrictions and even fines. A Safe Harbor Agreement protects the landowner from these risks with a legally binding assurance.

These agreements are a powerful win for wildlife and committed property owners overseeing the nation's wildlife resources. As you'll read inside, Sustainable Conservation is now implementing this strategy around California to protect some of the state's more than 300 threatened and endangered species. We're also helping landowners secure funding and other assistance for on-the-ground conservation projects statewide.

Sustainable Conservation is excited to expand the use of this important tool to promote habitat restoration across California and the country – and reward landowners for their help in keeping many endangered species from the brink of extinction.



By promoting the use of Safe Harbor Agreements on private lands in California, Sustainable Conservation is helping reward landowners for their efforts to save endangered species.

Warm regards,



Ashley Boren
Executive Director

Creating a “Safe Harbor”

Imagine – what if one day you found a threatened California red-legged frog paddling in your stock pond? Or the threatened California tiger salamander lounging along a stretch of creek in your back yard? Initially you’re delighted they’ve taken up residence on your property. Then it occurs to you, because these animals are protected by endangered species laws, you also have some added responsibilities to protect them. This may seem far-fetched if you live in the city or suburbs, but for farmers, ranchers and rural landowners across California, it’s a serious concern.



Through Safe Harbor Agreements, Sustainable Conservation is promoting populations of the threatened California red-legged frog – whose numbers have plummeted dramatically during the last century.

With the discovery of an endangered species on their properties, landowners are subject to the Endangered Species Act and may face land-use restrictions which can limit normal day-to-day activities and potentially their livelihoods. If a landowner inadvertently harms or kills an endangered species, he or she could be fined and might not be able to use the land as he or she did in the past. This risk can make even the most conservation-minded landowner wary of establishing, restoring or protecting healthy habitat.

Yet, wildlife habitat is crucial to the nation’s imperiled species. About half of all endangered species in the U.S. live on private land and about half of all U.S. land is in private hands. California has the largest number of rare animals and plants in the continental U.S. Without the active, voluntary participation of private landowners, there can never be enough healthy habitat to restore declining species.

Sustainable Conservation has been working diligently to engage landowners in species recovery, forging partnerships with state and federal wildlife agencies,

landowner groups and individual landowners to create Safe Harbor Agreements. These agreements encourage property owners to build habitat for endangered species and award them the legal assurance that increased populations will not bring additional restrictions on the ways they use their land.

Sustainable Conservation also helps individuals access funding programs, and drives collaborative restoration and recovery efforts with the help of landowners, local landowner groups and government agencies. Our work is unlocking the door to conservation across the state – benefiting a whole host of native animals and plants.

Safe Harbor Agreements can be replicated across the country and across species – from owls to flowers to everything in between. Recently, Sustainable Conservation has been advancing two projects to save the threatened California red-legged frog – celebrated by Mark Twain and once so abundant it was consumed at countless California dinner tables.

At the start of the last century, the frog’s habitat extended as far north as Redding down to Baja California. The species has lost an estimated 70% of its original habitat over the last 100 years and 90% of its population through predation (both by humans and introduced amphibians), logging, water diversion, grazing, pollution and urban development.

Sustainable Conservation recently penned a Safe Harbor Agreement to enhance the frog’s habitat in the 604,000-acre Cottonwood Creek watershed that spans Shasta and Tehama counties – and another along Pine Gulch Creek near Bolinas. These

agreements were forged with local conservation groups and landowners to protect both habitat and the people living there. In exchange for creating and maintaining habitat, participating landowners are awarded assurances that their actions – which will likely attract more frogs and a host of other species – will not result in future restrictions.

The Cottonwood Creek agreement is the second regional, “programmatic” agreement in California – compared with previous agreements that covered only one property. Potentially, properties covering up to 500,000 acres within the Northern California watershed could benefit.

Meanwhile, Sustainable Conservation and its partners are also coming to the rescue of a unique little bug, the Valley elderberry longhorn beetle. Until the mid-1800s, this tiny creature was abundant throughout much of California’s Central Valley. Today, only about 10% of its original habitat remains.

Last year, Sustainable Conservation developed a Safe Harbor Agreement that enables River Partners, a Chico-based conservation organization, to restore and maintain nearly 260 acres of riparian habitat along the Sacramento River in Glenn County.

According to Sustainable Conservation Project Manager Susan Kester, “This agreement is a great example of how voluntary partnerships can balance the needs of people and wildlife, and be a big ‘win’ for everyone.”

With the agreement in place, River Partners will plant approximately 1,500 elderberry bushes to restore the flood-prone region to riparian habitat. The new bushes will connect previously fragmented areas of vegetation along the river, and establish a wildlife corridor benefiting the beetle and an array of wildlife dependent on insects for food.

Spearheaded by Sustainable Conservation, these Safe Harbor Agreements pave the way for farmers, ranchers and other private landowners to establish, restore and protect important habitat – benefiting imperiled wildlife and landowners’ way of life.

Getting to Know Your Neighbors

California is home to hundreds of diverse threatened and endangered species – from the 1-inch desert pupfish to the 50-foot humpback whale. Get acquainted with two local species Sustainable Conservation is helping not just survive, but thrive, through Safe Harbor Agreements.



CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG

STATUS: Federally listed as threatened in 1996.

BACKGROUND: The California red-legged frog has lost 70% of its original habitat over the last 100 years – with the overall population declining by 90%.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

VALLEY ELDERBERRY LONGHORNED BEETLE

STATUS: Federally listed as threatened in 1980.

BACKGROUND: Valley elderberry longhorned beetle habitat has dwindled by 90% since the mid-1800s.

“This agreement is a great example of how voluntary partnerships can balance the needs of people and wildlife, and be a big ‘win’ for everyone.”

Susan Kester, Sustainable Conservation Project Manager

Milestones

Getting our Newsletter by Email
If you prefer to receive our newsletter by email, please send a message to suscon@suscon.org with "Newsletter" in the subject line. You will receive subsequent issues as an email attachment. You can also download our newsletter from our website at www.suscon.org.



Campaign to Combat Invasive Plants Launched

Sustainable Conservation's effort to keep invasive plants in check is hitting the road. Following months of planning by the members of our California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP) project, the PlantRight campaign was unveiled recently to educate the horticultural industry about the threats of invasive plants in California – and their safe alternatives. Cal-HIP will use this powerful communications program to develop an information-packed website and customized educational materials to prevent the sale of more than 20 plants known to be invasive across the state. Learn more about the invasive plants in your area and what you can do to help protect California's wildlands by visiting www.PlantRight.org.



Pacific Gas and Electric Harnesses "Cow Power" for California Homes

Building on groundwork laid by Sustainable Conservation, including the development of a ground-breaking report on the promise of "cow power," PG&E will soon be powering the equivalent of more than 50,000 homes in California with methane generated from cow manure. This exciting project, the first of its kind in the U.S., provides a new model for producing climate-friendly, renewable energy that results in economic benefits for California agriculture.

California Abandoned Mine Cleanup Project Gets Underway

Thanks to funding from the California Department of Water Resources, Sustainable Conservation has started our Abandoned Mines project – a pioneering effort to clean up mine-related pollution and restore critical watersheds in California. We're utilizing a recently created U.S. Environmental Protection Agency program called the "Good Samaritan Initiative," which alleviates liability for landowners engaging in voluntary cleanup to protect water quality, wildlife and human health. Our test case is a large mercury mine located at the base of Mount Diablo in Contra Costa County. The mine is bordered by Mount Diablo State Park, and poses a serious threat to Marsh Creek – a tributary to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay/Delta ecosystem. Cleaning up the mine will reduce the release of mercury into Marsh Creek, and could promote the recovery of salmon and steelhead trout populations in the watershed.

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