



## California Biodiversity Council

### Interagency Alignment Team

#### Charter

(October 18, 2013)

#### Background

California is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. The state's rich natural heritage, wildlife and fish habitat, recreation and aesthetic values, water and air quality provide the basis for California's economic strength and quality of life. Sustaining the diversity and condition of these natural ecosystems is a prerequisite for maintaining the state's prosperity. Public agencies have long shared a commitment to conserve the natural environment of the state. Many laws, policies, plans, and programs are already in place to protect many of the elements of California's natural heritage.

The California Biodiversity Council (CBC) was formed in 1991 to improve coordination and cooperation among agencies with biodiversity conservation responsibilities at the federal, state, and local levels. The Council began with 10 founding state and federal agencies and has expanded over the years to include 42 members from all levels of government. Council members represent the executive leadership of agencies from local, state, tribal, and federal agencies that are responsible for conserving biological resources in California.

The Council now recognizes the need to work in ways that transcend and bridge individual agencies' ownerships, missions, and authorities. This work will involve agencies working together in non-traditional ways that lead to stronger alignment of conservation goals, plans, policies and regulations across ownerships and jurisdictions. In recognition of the need for agencies to work together in new ways, the Council adopted a resolution on April 22, 2013 that describes a desired vision for aligning agency conservation goals and work as follows:

“Over time, the broad goals and conservation measures for biodiversity adopted by agencies from all levels of government are aligned and government operations are more efficient. As a result, the plans, programs, policies, and regulations described in agency documents portray a consistent vision of desired, and regionally-appropriate, conditions for conservation and management of natural resources across California.”

The Council's resolution calls for the formation of an interagency committee to “coordinate alignment activities, evaluate risks and opportunities, and maintain an inventory/description of communication and planning processes and tools”. All interested agencies will be represented. The Committee will provide regular reports to the CBC Executive Committee. The new Committee will be called the California Biodiversity Council Interagency Alignment Team (IAT). This charter describes the goals, duties, and organization of the team.

## **Goals, Guiding Principles, and Recommended Practices**

### **Goals**

The preeminent goal for the IAT will be to increase communication, coordination, collaboration, and alignment within and among all levels of government (federal, tribal, state, local). Improved coordination with stakeholder groups, private landowners, foundations, business, and other interests is also desired. Increased effectiveness will use, where possible, existing networks, relationships, and multiagency venues. Improved alignment of work will include sharing of data, information, tools and science among governments and agencies. Improved coordination is expected to result in better alignment of planning, policies and regulations across governments and agencies; and coordinated and streamlined permitting to increase regulatory effectiveness and certainty and reduce/avoid costs.

### **Guiding Principles**

The Council agrees that alignment works best when agencies adopt the following principles. The IAT will adopt these principles to guide their work:

1. respect and value the roles and responsibilities of other agencies
2. work together to identify common goals for natural resource conservation
3. involve each other early and often during their planning work
4. strive for shared ownership of conservation goals and practices in their plans
5. empower interagency teams to find solutions and resolve areas of conflict
6. seek small, early successes that can lead to broader solutions for larger issues
7. use inclusive, transparent, and collaborative processes to increase trust and improve relationships
8. consider new approaches to long-standing issues
9. use science as an important foundation for planning and policy
10. provide a framework for learning conservation work  
take an outcome-based approach at a regional scale for setting policies and regulations

### **Recommended Practices and Tools**

The Council agrees that alignment works best when agencies use the following practices where appropriate. When discussing alignment of their work with other agencies, team members will strive to:

1. involve other agencies with overlapping authorities at the beginning and throughout their planning process; including representatives state, federal, tribal, and local government
2. start the process by providing clear and concise preliminary goals and objectives
3. identify areas of agreement and respect and acknowledge areas of disagreement
4. adopt collaborative adaptive management for all-party involvement with actions that involve considerable risk and uncertainty
5. engage staff and make resources available to help the alignment of their plans, programs, policies, and regulations
6. coordinate research and data collection activities among programs

## **Membership, Leadership, Working Groups, and Duties**

### **Membership**

Membership of the IAT shall be open to all government agencies. Each agency shall designate one official member and may appoint one alternate. Representatives from other agencies and groups may be invited to participate when their involvement may lead to improved alignment or efficiency in member agency's programs, plans, policies, or regulations. Special attention will be devoted to encouraging and maintaining strong participation by local and tribal governments.

### **Leadership and Sponsors**

The executive sponsors for the IAT will be the co-chairs of the California Biodiversity Council – the Secretary for the Natural Resources Agency and the California State Director of the USDI Bureau of Land Management. The IAT will report directly to the co-chairs of the Executive Committee for the California Biodiversity Council. The California Biodiversity Council will provide oversight and coordination among agency leaders. The Council will be provided with progress reports at each regular meeting. The Council will direct the Executive Committee to work closely with the interagency team evaluate the performance of this program after 24 months.

The initial Chair of the IAT will be the Regional Analyst for the Pacific Southwest Region of the USDA Forest Service. The IAT may choose to rotate the chairmanship or elect other officers as they deem appropriate.

### **Duties**

The primary responsibility for the IAT will be to provide a forum to share information and best practices, and to identify and promote measures for improving the alignment of the conservation programs, plans, policies, and regulations for participating agencies. Important findings will be reported to the California Biodiversity Council through discussions with the Council's Executive Committee.

At a minimum, the committee will discuss and coordinate the following:

1. interagency involvement with planning, programs, policy, and regulation development
2. use of common terminology and metrics (indicators) for evaluating natural resources trends and conditions and the effectiveness of agency alignment
3. aligning the formatting of agency data and documents so they are accessible and portable among agencies
4. an inventory and sharing of natural resources data
5. public involvement processes to improve public service

In addition, the Committee may also choose to coordinate:

1. development of broad conservation goals for use among agencies
2. identification of priority areas for conservation across ownerships
3. a comprehensive planning calendar across agencies
4. a library/inventory of agency conservation data, plans, programs, policies, and regulations
5. training to improve alignment of planning among agencies and public engagement
6. creation of flow chart on agency responsibilities
7. a process for involving tribal leaders
8. timing and procedures for coordinating grant applications

The committee may also wish to develop recommendations for agency alignment around the following topics:

1. climate Change
2. permit Coordination
3. ecosystem Services
4. funding for conservation work
5. opportunities for alignment
6. effectiveness of state and federal programs in local areas
7. invasive species
8. restoration
9. preventative conservation
10. fire, water
11. opportunities for young people to practice conservation

### **Working Groups**

The IAT may convene ad-hoc working groups, as needed, to conduct business on specific topics. These working groups will typically consist of subject matter experts, including technical staff members of IAT organizations as well as outside experts. Working groups will not have a Chair, however each will identify one “lead” member whose responsibilities will be to track and report the progress of the team in completing their assignments to the IAT. Working groups will be disbanded upon completion of the task(s) assigned by the IAT or upon the IAT's request.

### **Design Team**

A Design Team, comprised of a few IAT members, will plan IAT meetings and develop meeting agendas. The Design Team will perform activities such as: defining meeting objectives and topics; outlining key outcomes and deliverables; identifying and preparing presenters; determining needed pre-work and materials; and handling meeting logistics. The Design Team will be informed by the suggestions and proposed meeting topics of IAT members.

### **Meetings**

Meetings will be held bimonthly in the Sacramento area. The meeting agendas, location, and other logistics will be arranged by the IAT chairman, with assistance from staff and contractors for the Biodiversity Council. The Chair of the IAT will provide reports on team activity at all meetings of the CBC Executive Committee and the Biodiversity Council. Summaries of all meetings will be posted on the CBC website.