



## ADVANCE MITIGATION PROGRAM REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL GUIDANCE FOR MITIGATION PROVIDERS

**GUIDANCE NUMBER:** 2

**ISSUE DATE:** March 19, 2026

**TITLE:** Incorporating Conservation Goals and Objectives into Advance Mitigation Projects

### BACKGROUND

This guidance document was developed to support the Advance Mitigation Program's (AMP's) Request for Proposal (RFP) process for establishing credits. Its purpose is to outline how Caltrans expects mitigation providers to incorporate relevant natural resource regulatory agency (NRRRA)<sup>1</sup> regional conservation goals and objectives throughout an advance mitigation project's life-cycle, thereby improving the probability of the advance mitigation project's success.

### Advance Mitigation Planning

Advance mitigation projects undertaken by Caltrans should contribute to natural resource protection, enhancement, and creation, and should yield compensatory mitigation usable by future transportation projects, as specified in SHC § 800 et. seq.<sup>2,3</sup>. Hence, during advance mitigation planning, Caltrans documents its understanding of NRRRA regional conservation goals and objectives, and how they could be applied to advance mitigation projects undertaken within the geographical area of interest (GAI) to offset forecast impacts on natural resources from State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)-eligible transportation projects, in a Regional Advance Mitigation Needs Assessment (RAMNA). These goals and objectives, in turn, provide the basis for one or more advance mitigation projects. Gleaned from regional planning and other documents previously prepared by and/or reviewed by NRRAs, the regional conservation goals and objectives provided in each RAMNA have been corrected and/or augmented through the NRRRA's RAMNA review process<sup>4</sup>.

### PROCESS PHASES

Caltrans AMP divides the RFP process into three phases.

**Pre-Submission Phase:** Mitigation providers should familiarize themselves with the conservation goals and objectives outlined in the RAMNA from which an advance mitigation project was derived, and strive to align their proposals with those goals and objectives that are relevant to their proposal

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<sup>1</sup> NRRAs who are parties to the SAMI MOU consist of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW); California State Coastal Commission (CCC); State Water Resources Control Board (SWB); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS); and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

<sup>2</sup> Conservation goals and objectives are a broad set of regional natural resource sustainability goals and objectives that are consistent with both regulatory requirements and conservation science.

<sup>3</sup> The term "conservation goals and objectives" is defined in the Master Process Agreement between NRRAs and Caltrans, which formalizes a mutually agreeable process for managing and reducing some of the financial, technical, and strategic risks associated with Caltrans investments in advance mitigation planning and advance mitigation project delivery, improving the probability that the mitigation will be approved for use. Please send the AMP an email at [advance.mitigation@dot.ca.gov](mailto:advance.mitigation@dot.ca.gov) to request a copy.

<sup>4</sup> The RAMNA review process was an outcome of the Master Process Agreement described in footnote 3.



(i.e., the aquatic resources goals and objectives for aquatic resource credits [e.g., AR-1] and specific species goals and objectives for species credits[e.g. WILD-1]). Because conservation goals and objectives are broad and general statements, communication will effectively be broad and general. For example, in the proposal the mitigation provider would refer to a specific RAMNA's goal and objective [e.g. WILD-1] and articulate and share that they intend to locate a mitigation site within a specific species of mitigation need's recovery and cite it. Note: a single site doesn't need to meet all goals and objectives in the RAMNA, just those related to the proposal.

**Post-Award Phase:** As soon as the contract is awarded, the mitigation provider will reach out to the relevant NRRAs to discuss the advance mitigation project, specifically regarding site selection and how any selected site will align with relevant conservation goals and objectives outlined in the RAMNA from which the advance mitigation project was derived. Identification and discussion of any potential obstacles to meeting the relevant conservation goals and objectives that may require additional coordination and input from the NRRAs should be performed, as well.

- See [Guidance #1 Natural Resource Regulatory Agency Communication](#).
- See [Guidance #3 Site Selection Best Practices](#).

**Project Delivery Phase:** Site selection should be consistent with NRRRA guidance, which has been compiled in AMP RFP Guidance Number 3 *Site Selection Best Practices*. Once a site is selected, its attributes should be described in terms of the relevant regional conservation goals and objectives provided in the RAMNA from which the advance mitigation project was derived.

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This collaboration effort is consistent with the intentions and objectives of the Master Process Agreement<sup>5</sup> between NRRAs and Caltrans, which formalizes a mutually agreeable process for managing and reducing some of the financial, technical, and strategic risks associated with Caltrans investments in advance mitigation planning and advance mitigation project delivery, improving the probability that the mitigation will be approved for use to offset anticipated impacts from transportation projects. The agreed-upon process helps manage Caltrans' risks when the AMP is justifying its advance mitigation investments using planning-level information.

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<sup>5</sup> Please send the AMP an email at [advance.mitigation@dot.ca.gov](mailto:advance.mitigation@dot.ca.gov) to request a copy.