Regional Advance Mitigation Planning in California

To efficiently meet California's mounting needs for infrastructure and flood protection while advancing regional and statewide conservation goals

What is RAMP?

In 2008, a coalition of infrastructure and natural resource agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic researchers launched an effort to develop a more comprehensive approach to mitigating unavoidable biological resource impacts potentially caused by state infrastructure projects, such as roads and levees. This approach, called **Regional Advance Mitigation Planning (RAMP)**, allows for natural resources to be protected or restored as compensatory mitigation before infrastructure projects are constructed, often years in advance.

Regional Conservation. RAMP enables regional and local representatives from both infrastructure and natural resource agencies to come together to jointly evaluate potential environmental impacts from infrastructure projects proposed for a region, and at the same time ensure that planned mitigation for those impacts contributes to regional conservation priorities.

Advance Time Frame. The advance time frame allows strategic mitigation to be implemented and made functional before an infrastructure project's unavoidable impacts occur. Mitigating in advance allows for more efficient project approvals, more certainty to cost estimates, and takes advantage of conservation opportunities before important land is lost to conversion.

Expected Benefits of RAMP

RAMP will be faster, less expensive, and more effective than traditional project-by-project mitigation, which can result in isolated mitigation sites and delays in infrastructure development and improvements, especially when mitigation lands cannot be easily located and purchased.

Faster. Early coordination between infrastructure and permitting agencies streamlines project permitting. Securing off-site compensatory mitigation lands in advance of potential unavoidable impacts avoids lengthy searches for limited mitigation options, increases flexibility, and allows permitting agencies to readily recommend appropriate mitigation sites.

Lower Cost. Planning of combined mitigation for multiple projects reduces the need to search for mitigation for each individual infrastructure project's unavoidable impacts, which reduces costs and saves staff time. Mitigation lands for multiple projects can be purchased, managed, and monitored early in the infrastructure projects' planning processes, before land prices escalate, achieving economies of scale.

Better Conservation. Mitigation site selection is guided by regional conservation priorities and supported by early input from natural resource agencies, conservation scientists, flood managers, and transportation planners, resulting in improved habitat connectivity, larger preserves, and better conservation outcomes.

Collaborative Effort

The RAMP Work Group was formed in 2008 to explore the potential for regional advance mitigation in California. The work group is composed of representatives from more than 14 organizations.

Department of Water Resources, State of California · Caltrans · United States Environmental Protection Agency · California Fish & Game · California State Parks · NOAA · US Army Corps of Engineers Sacramento District · Water Boards · The Nature Conservancy · WCB State of California Wildlife Conservation Board · UC Davis University of California · Resources Legacy Fund · Federal Highway Administration

Two Key Documents and Pilot Project

The RAMP Work Group recognizes that advance mitigation would be most effectively implemented at a regional scale, but that support and guidance for the approach would be needed at the statewide level to ensure consistency throughout the state. The effort to obtain this statewide support and guidance became known as the RAMP Initiative and involved preparing two key documents and initiating a pilot project.

RAMP Statewide Framework

The RAMP Statewide Framework—the overarching document that describes a vision for RAMP—will offer guidance for establishing and implementing RAMP statewide and regionally. The RAMP Statewide Framework does the following:

- Presents recommendations for creating a statewide management and funding structure for RAMP
- Describes a process for identifying and establishing regional assessment areas
- Identifies the steps for implementing RAMP at the regional level

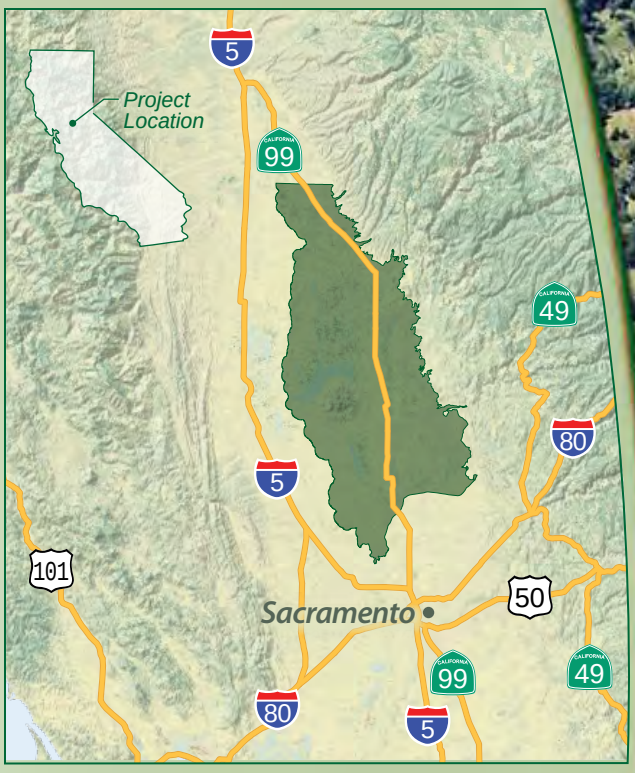
RAMP Manual for Regional Implementation

As a companion document to the RAMP Statewide Framework, the RAMP Manual will provide detailed, step-by-step guidance for planning and implementing advance mitigation within a region so that RAMP is conducted consistently throughout the state.

RAMP Pilot Project

The RAMP Work Group has initiated a pilot project to test and refine the proposed approach to RAMP in California. The pilot project is focused on a 1,500-square-mile area in the central Sacramento Valley and involves three phases of planning.

Regional Assessment. The first phase of the pilot project involves a regional assessment to analyze potential infrastructure projects' unavoidable impacts in the region over the next 20 years and identify opportunity zones that would satisfy potential mitigation requirements while also supporting conservation priorities.



Central Sacramento Valley Pilot Project

Action Plan. The second phase of the pilot project involves matching a cohesive subset of the potential mitigation actions (such as habitat acquisition, restoration, creation, preservation) to a specific spatial and temporal framework that describes mechanisms for implementation. For example, options for purchasing existing credits in a region (private banks) or integrating RAMP into other planning efforts would be evaluated. These alternatives will be proposed in an action plan. Several action plans may be necessary to meet all the potential mitigation requirements that were identified in the Regional Assessment.

Advance Mitigation Implementation. The third phase of the pilot project is implementation. This could include establishing new advance mitigation sites, purchasing existing credits in a region (private banks), and integrating RAMP into other planning efforts. Acquisition of the first advance mitigation site is anticipated in 2013.

For more information about RAMP visit the website at:

https://rampcalifornia.water.ca.gov

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