

## Conservation Recommendations

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Section 7(a)(1) of ESA directs Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to further the purposes of the ESA by carrying out conservation programs for the benefit of endangered and threatened species. Conservation recommendations are discretionary agency activities that can be implemented to further the purposes of the ESA, such as preservation of endangered species habitat, implementation of recovery actions, or development of information and data bases. The recommendations here relate only to the proposed action and do not necessarily represent complete fulfillment of Reclamations 7(a)(1) responsibilities. The Service recommends that Reclamation:

1. Implement all programs within CVPIA to be consistent with §7(a)(1) of the ESA.
2. Operate the CVP in a manner that is consistent with §7(a)(1) of the ESA.
3. When coordinating with the Service regarding project impacts and effects determinations, include coordination with the Service's Endangered Species Division to assure consistency with §2 and §4 of the ESA.
4. Provide annual assessments to the Service confirming whether or not the **Assumptions** on pages 4-1 and 4-2 are valid.
5. In preparing NEPA documents relative to transferring or delivering water out of the CVP, or contributing selenium to the CVP, fully consider §7(d) of the ESA.
6. Fully implement §3406 of CVPIA prior to delivering or transferring water out of CVP service areas or out of the CVP place-of-use.
7. Conduct studies for the Central Valley Project with particular reference toward releasing more water to restore riparian habitat and contribute to the recovery of the riparian brush rabbit, riparian woodrat, least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoo. The Service will assist in the study design.
8. Release more water from Friant Dam to improve downstream water quality to the extent necessary to restore high-value habitat for listed species.

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9. Follow the strategy set forth by the Service's Habitat Conservation Division on implementation of 3406(b)(3) and 3408(j).
10. Provide more education to Reclamation staff at all levels on upholding the ESA and 7(a)(1) responsibilities.
11. Conduct workshops for Service and Reclamation staff on implementing this biological opinion and on the importance of the concepts of communication, coordination and cooperation that establish the premise of this biological opinion.
12. Provide outreach to the public and to schools on protecting listed species, establishing safe harbors, forming partnerships that foster conservation, and habitat conservation planning.
13. Fund studies of groundwater percolation and contaminant levels through the Service or the United States Geological Survey.
14. Follow ecosystem protection components for the Central Valley and Bay Delta of the Service's Ecoregion Program.
15. Adopt the Plan of Action prepared by the Service's Habitat Conservation Division and utilize the Request for Consultation Services for implementation of 3406(c)(1).
16. Have Reclamation Environmental Affairs staff review Water Management Plans prior to submitting to the Service.
17. Evaluate species of concern and their associated habitats, as listed in Appendix 5, to assess possible adverse effects of CVP actions and identify conservation measures that could protect species populations and help avoid the necessity of listing those species under the ESA.
18. Establish a tracking program for compliance with this opinion and report to the Service any actions which are not consistent with this opinion.

In order for the Service to be kept informed of actions minimizing or avoiding adverse effects or benefitting listed species or their habitats, the Service requests notification of the implementation of any conservation recommendations.