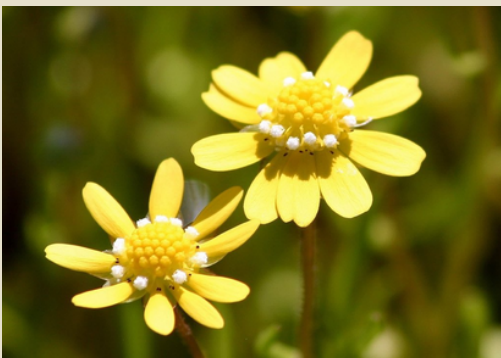


SONOMA COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN AND NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN



Sonoma County has experienced rapid growth in recent decades, as people and businesses move to the region. Sonoma County is also home to many threatened and endangered species and their habitats, protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

Accommodating sustainable economic growth while protecting these species and their habitats is required by local, state and federal laws and requires foresight and good planning.



To address this issue, in 2024, Sonoma County Permit Sonoma began the development of a county-wide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) under Section 10 of the ESA and a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) under California Fish & Game Code Section 2835 (NCCP Act). The program to develop the Sonoma County HCP/NCCP is called **Conservation Sonoma**. The City of Cotati, the City of Petaluma, the City of Santa Rosa, and the Town of Windsor are partners with Permit Sonoma in Conservation Sonoma.



What is an HCP?

An HCP is a planning document required as part of an application for a federal Incidental Take Permit (ITP). An ITP authorizes the lawful “taking*” of a threatened or endangered species incidental to certain covered activities. Take is permitted according to limits and conservation requirements described in the HCP.

What is an NCCP?

An NCCP is the CA state counterpart to the federal HCP. It ensures compliance with the NCCP Act and provides incidental take authorization for state protected species under CESA. An NCCP must contribute to recovery of listed species by protecting habitat at the ecosystem and landscape scale within the area covered by permits.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) share responsibility for administration of the ESA. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is responsible for administering CESA. During development of the Sonoma County HCP/NCCP, USFWS, NMFS, and CDFW will provide technical and scientific information, analyses and advice to assist with the timely and efficient development of a plan that they can ultimately permit.

*Please refer to the FAQ's on our website for federal and state definitions of take: <https://permitsonoma.org/conservationsonoma>

Key Benefits of the Sonoma County HCP/NCCP



- **Increased local control:** The HCP/NCCP will shift management of ESA compliance for public and private activities from federal agencies to the local level. Plan Permittees will administer the permits with oversight from USFWS, NMFS, and CDFW.
- **Streamlined ESA permitting:** With increased local control of the ESA compliance process, permitting times will be reduced. The HCP/NCCP will provide a comprehensive road map for the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of covered species effects, further reducing permitting times, creating certainty around project costs, and reducing litigation potential. Reduced permitting time and increased certainty around permitting requirements will provide an economic benefit to Sonoma County and will facilitate critical infrastructure maintenance activities being completed without delays.
- **Enhanced Conservation:** The HCP/NCCP will provide a more efficient process for protecting natural resources by creating a county-wide approach that will be larger in scale, more ecologically valuable, and easier to manage than individual mitigation sites typical of a project-by-project permitting approach. The HCP/NCCP is applicant-driven, meaning Conservation Sonoma partners will have greater involvement in determining the feasible and appropriate mitigation required.



Get Involved!

Extensive public engagement, including Native American tribal engagement, is critical to the development of a successful HCP/NCCP. The Sonoma County HCP/NCCP will have a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) to solicit input and gather insights to ensure the plan comprehensively considers the needs of all the major interests in Sonoma County.

The public can attend, listen, and comment during regularly scheduled PAC meetings. Meeting dates and materials will be posted on the project website. Conservation Sonoma will maintain a mailing list and regularly contact interested parties and representatives to announce meetings, publication of reports, and other important information about milestones in the development of the Sonoma County HCP/NCCP.

For More Information:

Visit: <https://permitsonoma.org/conservationsonoma>

Email: ConservationSonoma@sonoma-county.org

