

STRATEGIC PLAN
Cantara Spill Restoration Program

Cantara Trustee Council

Approved March 11, 1997

I. INTRODUCTION

“It is the mission of the Cantara Trustee Council to ensure that the proceeds of the Cantara Settlement are used effectively to restore natural resources and to replace resource values that were lost as a result of the 1991 metam sodium spill (Cantara Spill) into the upper Sacramento River.”

The Cantara Trustee Council (CTC) was established in 1995 to administer approximately \$14 million received in settlement for natural resource damages caused by the July 14, 1991 spill of metam sodium into the upper Sacramento River in Shasta and Siskiyou Counties, California. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlined the terms of the settlement and gave the CTC sole responsibility for the expenditure of funds deposited in the Upper Sacramento River Account. Under the terms of the MOA, funds from the account may be used for the following purposes:

“resource protection; restoration; rehabilitation; enhancement; acquisition; study and research; and program and administrative support for these activities.”

The MOA also established general priorities for selecting projects to be funded from the special deposit account. These guidelines identify priorities based on resource types and proximity to the area affected by the spill. Highest priority is given to projects that are both “in-kind” and “on-site.” In-kind is defined as those resource types injured by the spill (montane riparian and cold water lotic communities) while on-site is defined as within the watershed of the upper Sacramento River between Shasta lake and Box Canyon Dam. Lower priorities are assigned to projects benefitting “out-of-kind” resource types at “off-site” locations.

In 1996, the CTC invited applications for restoration grants from both the public and private sectors. An evaluation tool incorporating the priorities outlined in the MOA was used to score and select projects for funding. The CTC received 39 grant applications with a total dollar amount well in excess of its \$1.8 Million in available first year funds. Following evaluation by its Technical Review Committee, the CTC selected 17 projects totaling nearly \$1.5 Million in the first year of its restoration program.

II. WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

While the MOA establishes guidelines for evaluating individual projects, the CTC recognizes the need for an overall plan to guide decision making over the life of the CTC's restoration program. The CTC believes that a coordinated approach to restoration planning and resource protection is necessary to maximize the benefits of its program. Without an overall vision of its program goals, the CTC could continue to evaluate and fund individual projects, but the result would be an uncoordinated effort with lower value to habitat types injured by the spill and the wildlife species that depend on them for survival.

It is important to note that this document is a "strategic" plan as opposed to an "operational" plan. This document attempts to answer the question, "What should we have accomplished when all settlement funds have been spent?" The plan focuses on goals identified by the CTC at its May 16, 1996 meeting, and identifies strategies that the CTC will pursue to achieve its overall mission.

Individual operational plans are also being developed to implement several of the strategies discussed below. These include an Aquatic and Fishery Management Study Plan, a Water Quality Management Plan, a Public Relations and Education Plan, and a Conceptual Habitat Acquisition Plan. A draft Expenditure Plan outlining projected annual expenditures for the CTC was released for public review and comment on October 18, 1996.

III. TRUSTEE COUNCIL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The CTC's goals have been grouped in four key areas or themes. Each of these themes is critical to the ultimate success of the CTC's restoration program. The first three focus on restoration and long-term protection of natural resources on the ground, while the fourth deals with project evaluation and the CTC's decision making process. The four themes are:

- I. Restoration and Replacement of Resource Types Injured by the Spill
- II. Planning for the Long-term Health of the River Ecosystem
- III. Public Outreach and Promotion of Resource Stewardship
- IV. Effective use of Settlement Funds

Theme I. Restoration and Replacement of Resource Types Injured by the Spill

Restoration of injured resources to their prespill conditions is the focus of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process, and is a primary objective of the CTC. In addition to direct restoration actions, the CTC believes that continued recovery monitoring will be needed. Recovery monitoring will provide data to identify restoration needs and to determine when resources have returned to baseline levels. Research may also be appropriate to assess the technical feasibility and ecological risks of some restoration projects. The CTC will solicit off site projects to restore or enhance resource types that were injured by the spill as a means of compensating for ecosystem values or services that have been lost during recovery. Where resources cannot be restored, the CTC will consider acquiring equivalent resources at off site locations.

GOAL

1. Restore injured natural resources to their prespill conditions to the greatest extent possible.

STRATEGIES

- a. Implement restoration projects that will accelerate or otherwise augment natural recovery of those species and habitats with the longest projected recovery periods.
- b. Continue monitoring (as long as necessary or feasible) the recovery of key

natural resources and populations to identify future restoration needs and evaluate the performance of actions already implemented.

- c. Protect recovering resources from actions that would retard or hinder their return to prespill conditions through special regulations and increased environmental review and enforcement. This should include retention of wildlife protection personnel assigned to the watershed.
- d. Evaluate the technical feasibility and ecological risks associated with reintroducing selected species from populations in tributaries and/or adjacent watersheds.

GOAL

- 2. Replace natural resource values (including human use values) that have been lost by restoring, enhancing, or acquiring equivalent resources at off-site locations.

STRATEGIES

- a. Fund restoration of riparian and cold-water lotic communities on neighboring drainages to compensate for habitat losses during the recovery of the upper Sacramento River.
- b. Maximize the cost-effectiveness of restoration efforts by focusing on those systems with high restoration potentials.
- c. Explore cooperative approaches to enhancing or restoring riparian and cold-water lotic communities on private lands.
- d. Purchase and protect equivalent natural resources to offset habitat losses that cannot be replaced through restoration and enhancement.
- e. Enhance opportunities for public access to river resources.

Theme II. Planning for the Long-Term Health of the River Ecosystem

The long-term health of the aquatic and terrestrial communities of the upper Sacramento River depends on the activities that occur there and on tributaries and adjacent uplands. For this reason, the CTC believes that a watershed or ecosystem approach is needed to insure a healthy river system. This approach should consider both the natural environment and the needs of the people who live, work, and recreate within the watershed.

GOAL

1. Develop an ecosystem approach to protecting terrestrial and aquatic communities within the upper Sacramento River watershed.

STRATEGIES

- a. Identify biologically significant resources and community types within the watershed. Integrate this effort with ongoing inventory and mapping efforts by the Department of Fish and Game.
- b. Establish a forum for discussing resource protection issues with public and private stakeholders within the watershed.
- c. Pursue cooperative approaches to resource protection.
- d. Develop a Conceptual Acquisition Plan to identify and rank areas for habitat acquisition or other resource protection measures.
- e. Assemble and manage resource and land use data within the existing Geographic Information System operated by the Cantara Program to support acquisition and resource protection planning.

GOAL

2. Develop a plan to ensure the survival of a self-sustaining, wild trout fishery on the upper Sacramento River for the use and enjoyment of the angling public.

STRATEGIES

- a. Provide sound scientific data on the status of the recovering wild trout population to facilitate future regulation changes.

- b. Identify current angling use patterns and preferences on the river through creel surveys and other standard techniques. Use these data to support angling regulations that are compatible with sustaining the fishery.
- c. Develop and implement an Aquatic and Fishery Management Study Plan for the upper Sacramento River.

GOAL

- 3. Protect and improve water quality in the upper Sacramento River and its tributaries.

STRATEGIES

- a. Develop a Water Quality Management Plan for the watershed.
- b. Establish a monitoring program to document baseline water quality conditions and identify areas where improvement is indicated.
- c. Provide for increased regulatory presence by the Regional Water Quality Control Board and Department of Fish and Game for stream bed alteration agreements and other activities in the watershed.

GOAL

- 4. Preserve the ability of the upper Sacramento River to recover from future spills or other catastrophic events.

STRATEGIES

- a. Identify significant sources of recruitment of fish and other organisms to the river. Determine which tributaries have contributed to recovery of aquatic organisms following the 1991 spill and take steps to preserve them.
- b. Remove artificial barriers to fish passage in tributaries which could provide additional spawning and rearing habitat. This effort should target barriers which can be corrected in a cost-effective manner and where removal will not facilitate introgression of wild and hatchery trout stocks.
- c. Identify important upland habitats and buffer zones adjacent to the river. These areas may include suitable nest trees for osprey as well as movement corridors for terrestrial wildlife.

Theme III. Public Outreach and Promotion of Resource Stewardship

Increasing the public's understanding and appreciation of the natural values of the river ecosystem are critical to achieving the CTC's restoration and resource protection goals. A primary goal of the CTC in this area is to promote the development of a stewardship ethic for natural resource types that were damaged by the spill. The CTC also believes that it is important to keep the public informed of the status of the river's recovery and the CTC's restoration program.

GOAL

1. Include the public in the ongoing restoration and recovery of the river.

STRATEGIES

- a. Conduct open meetings.
- b. Provide opportunity for public review and comment on CTC documents and plans.
- c. Continue the current grant program as a means of soliciting restoration proposals from the public.
- d. Implement a mini-grant program to encourage participation by volunteer groups, service organizations, schools, and clubs.

GOAL

2. Inform the public, resource user groups, and other interested parties of CTC programs to restore natural resources.

STRATEGIES

- a. Prepare a Public Relations and Education Plan to identify effective ways to communicate CTC information and programs. These may include newsletters, brochures, interpretive displays, events, and videos.
- b. Annually publish and distribute a report that summarizes the status of recovery and the results of CTC programs.
- c. Form partnerships with other organizations such as the California Welcome Center to provide interpretive displays and educational materials to a large audience.

- d. Prepare a slide program on the Cantara Spill and recovery for presentations to schools, clubs, and local interest groups.

GOAL

- 3. Encourage the development of a stewardship ethic for resource types that were damaged by the spill.

STRATEGIES

- a. Continue to fund watershed education programs that actively involve students in recovery monitoring, riparian restoration, or enhancement.
- b. Increase public access to the river and improve facilities at existing access points.
- c. Support public participation in local adopt-a-river and river clean-up programs.
- d. Increase public contacts by resource professionals within the upper Sacramento River watershed.
- e. Sponsor events which increase public awareness of the value of local riverine and riparian habitats.

Theme IV. Effective use of Settlement Funds

As managers of the Upper Sacramento River Account, the CTC must make sure that these funds are used to achieve restoration goals as cost effectively as possible. In an era of increasingly limited funds for natural resource management and restoration, the CTC must also maintain the focus of its program in the face of a variety of worthy programs seeking funding. The CTC has developed a rigorous evaluation process to make consistent, defensible funding decisions within its grant program. A similar process will be used to evaluate individual CTC proposals to insure that they are consistent with the goals and priorities expressed in the MOA and adopted by the CTC.

GOAL

1. Maximize the effectiveness of funds administered by the CTC.

STRATEGIES

- a. Supplement CTC funds with those from outside sources through partnerships, cost-sharing, and in-kind matching.
- b. Reduce administrative costs of the CTC's program.
- c. Use the competitive bid process to reduce costs of procuring services on CTC projects.
- d. Develop work plans and budgets for Cantara Program support staff over the life of the restoration program.

GOAL

2. Use a consistent evaluation process when selecting projects to be funded from the Upper Sacramento River Account.

STRATEGIES

- a. Apply the evaluation model used in the grant program to all CTC programs and projects as one measure of their relative value to the program.
- b. Fund only those projects that are consistent with actions outlined in the Strategic Plan, Expenditure Plan, or individual operational plans that have been adopted by the CTC.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing this strategic plan will be an ongoing effort over the life of the CTC's restoration program. In order to achieve the restoration goals expressed by the CTC, however, it will be necessary to complete individual operational plans as soon as possible. To maximize the effectiveness of CTC expenditures, we propose to complete the following operational plans by March 1997:

- Water Quality Management Plan
- Aquatic and Fishery Management Study Plan
- Public Relations and Education Plan
- Conceptual Acquisition Plan

A Conceptual Acquisition Plan for the upper Sacramento River watershed will outline the criteria and methodology to be used in developing habitat acquisition and resource protection priorities in the watershed. Identification of individual areas for protection will be accomplished using the Cantara Program Geographic Information System. This portion of the work will require additional time and is dependent on bringing existing resource data layers into the system, as well as identifying areas where new data need to be acquired.