

Public Land Grazing Overview
Report to the RMAC
September 10, 2014

The RMAC has expressed continued interest in identifying barriers and opportunities to grazing on publicly held lands in California. The largest landholding entities of the State are the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Below is a brief overview of each Agencies land holdings, the purpose for which they are held and managed, the process by which management plans are developed, and policies and procedures that either encourage or discourage the consideration of grazing as a management tool.

California Department of Parks and Recreation

The California Department of Parks and Recreation manages approximately 1.59 million acres in 280 unique park units¹. The ownership types most relevant to the RMAC include State Parks, State Recreation Areas, State Vehicle Recreation Areas, State Historic Parks, and State Natural Reserves. The mission of the Agency is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

Each park Unit is guided by a general plan that is updated periodically. There is no set timeline for updates to occur, but a review of the general plans currently under development indicates 15-20 year periods are not uncommon². General plans are developed in a public process with input from interested stakeholders and are approved by the California State Park and Recreation Commission. In addition to approving general plans, the Commission has the authority and responsibility to establish general policies for the guidance of the Director of State Parks in the administration, protection and development of the System³.

There are limited opportunities for grazing on State Park properties. The Public Resources Code Sections 5019 and 5069 discuss uses of State Park lands for "agricultural purposes", which includes livestock grazing. In general grazing can be considered to restore historical authenticity to State Historic Parks, if it was an activity that occurred within the 24 months immediately preceding State Park acquisition, or designated for agricultural purposes in the general plan.

Grazing is further discouraged in the State Parks and Recreation Commission's Statement of Policy II.6 which states in part: *Generally, grazing or agricultural leasing is considered incompatible in units of the State Park System.* It goes on to make allowance for inclusion of grazing in the general plan if *it is found to be fundamental to the enhancement of the visitor experience or resource values, such as historic interpretation or resource management.* This assessment would require the approval of the Director and the concurrence of the Commission⁴.

¹ http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=91. Accessed 9/5/14.

² http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21299. Accessed 9/5/14.

³ http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=933. Accessed 9/5/14.

⁴ <http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/843/files/CommissionPolicies10-21-11.pdf>. Accessed 9/5/14.

The State Park Department Operations Manual addresses grazing in chapters 0317.2.4 Livestock Grazing, and 0317.2.4.1 Livestock Grazing Policy. Chapter 0317.2.4 begins by stating that *grazing has been considered incompatible with park purposes*. Chapter 0317.2.4.1 opens with *livestock grazing is an inappropriate use of parkland resources except under certain circumstances*. There are three specific circumstances listed where livestock grazing *may be permitted*:

- a. *When directly contributing to historic interpretation approved in a unit's General Plan;*
- b. *When necessary for a specific natural resources restoration purpose which normally does not include fuels reduction or an alternative to extirpated ungulate grazing; or*
- c. *When it is a necessary component to an acquisition agreement, including scaled-down grazing to improve natural resources.*

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) manages approximately 1.4 million acres on 731 properties throughout the State⁵. In addition to these lands the Department administers several private lands conservation programs designed to assist landowners with the management of wetlands, riparian habitats, native grasslands and wildlife friendly farmlands⁶. The mission of the Department is *to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public*.

Each property managed by CDFW has a Land Management Plan that establishes appropriate and allowable uses. Plans are developed in a public process and are given final approval by the Fish and Game Commission. In addition to regulating uses of protected lands, the Commission is also charged with setting general policies for the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Fish and Game Code (FGC) Section 1010 allows the Department to *sell grazing permits or otherwise dispose of excess vegetation or other products, produced on lands acquired by the department*. The Department uses grazing to meet habitat management goals on a number of their properties. Both ecological and administrative factors are considered to determine if grazing is appropriate on any given property. If it is, an approved management plan describing grazing as a management tool and a site specific grazing plan are required. In some situations the Department may rely on a partner organization, such as an RCD, to develop the grazing plan⁷.

⁵ <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/factsheet.html>. Accessed 9/3/14

⁶ <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/>. Accessed 9/3/14.

⁷ Policy and Guidance Document for Implementation of Livestock Grazing as a Management Tool on Department Lands. Unknown date. Developed by DFW Lands Division.

California Wildlife Conservation Board

The California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) was created by legislation in 1947 to administer a capital outlay program for wildlife conservation and related public recreation. The WCB is within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife but exists as a separate and independent Board with authority and funding to carry out an acquisition and development program for wildlife conservation⁸. The WCB utilizes various funding sources for to purchase conservation easements, fee title for wildlife habitat, conduct public access projects, and to conduct habitat restoration or enhancement projects. According to their 2007 report “Wildlife Conservation Board: Celebrating 60 Years of Success”, the WCB had spent over \$2.1 million on over 2,600 projects affecting roughly 1.5 million acres⁹.

The primary responsibilities of WCB are to select, authorize and allocate funds for the purchase of land and waters suitable for recreation purposes and the preservation, protection and restoration of wildlife habitat. WCB approves and funds projects that set aside lands within the State for such purposes, through acquisition or other means, to meet these objectives. WCB's three main functions are land acquisition, habitat restoration and development of wildlife oriented public access facilities, which are carried out through its programs which include the Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Program and the Oak Woodlands Conservation Program.

The Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Act of 2002 designated the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) as the lead agency for carrying out the California Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Program. The purpose of the program is to protect California's rangeland, grazing land and grassland through the use of conservation easements¹⁰. The Oak Woodland Conservation Program authorized by the Oak Woodlands Conservation Act of 2001. This program allows and encourages grazing that is compatible with oak regeneration. The funding for these programs is almost all appropriated and it not likely that further funding will be forthcoming in the near future.

⁸ <https://www.wcb.ca.gov/Home/About>. Accessed 9/4/14.

⁹ Wildlife Conservation Board: Celebrating 60 Years of Success. 1947-2007. Available at <https://www.wcb.ca.gov/Reports>. Accessed 9/4/14.

¹⁰ <https://www.wcb.ca.gov/Programs/Rangeland>. Accessed 9/4/14.