

## **Suggestions for Measure M Property Acquisition Criteria**

These acquisition criteria were prepared for discussion with members of the Environmental Oversight Committee of M2. The criteria are separated into four distinct categories.

### **BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

The following criteria are listed in order of priority from the viewpoint of the permitting/resource agencies for the mitigation of habitat impacts by Renewed Measure M freeway projects. Each criterion includes a brief definition to clarify any potential misunderstandings. At a future date, and after more research and input, it is expected these criteria will include a weighting system for ranking potential acquisitions.

- **Contains Target Species**  
The potential property includes the presence of endangered, threatened, species of special concern, and other sensitive species impacted by freeway projects.
- **Aligns with Impacted Habitats**  
An inventory of the property shows it includes the same vegetative communities as those habitats lost to freeway projects, including habitats such as: coastal sage scrub, riparian woodlands, grasslands, etc.
- **Enhances Natural Lands Connectivity**  
Acquisition of this property would connect to existing protected areas, examine the effects on multiple taxa (such as birds, large mammals) and could be identified as an essential habitat linkage in regional or local plans.
- **Conserves Sensitive Habitats**  
The property's habitats include the state and sub-species rankings under CNDDDB (California Natural Diversity Database).
- **Considers Property Acreage**  
Generally larger properties are better.
- **Provides for Quality Habitat**  
The property includes mature habitats, and the property ranking considers the extent of habitat fragmentation, invasive non-native plants and animals, and other edge effects, as well as the presence/absence of roads.
- **Determines the Threat of Development and Urgency**  
The evaluation considers where the landowner is in CEQA and other permitting processes, quantifies the degree of the development threat, and determines if this acquisition creates an opportunity for leveraging expiring conservation funding.
- **Enhances Natural Lands Contiguity**  
The property borders existing open spaces and acquisition increases the amount of core habitat.
- **Includes Species/Habitat Diversity**  
The property includes a wide variety of habitat types and species (including subspecies, if known) and high structural and functional diversity (e.g., habitat with a natural flood regime).

### **OTHER CRITERIA**

This list includes the secondary tier of evaluation criteria after the biological criteria are considered. It is expected that these criteria would require a simpler evaluation (such as yes, no, maybe) and the answers may merely play an informational role.

- **Aligns with Resource Agency Priorities**  
The property is included on the DFG & USFWS's list of acquisition priorities.
- **Includes Support from Local Government**  
This acquisition is supported by local cities, appropriate JPA's, the county or other governmental entities.
- **Includes Support from the Community**  
This acquisition is supported by the public, environmental and community organizations.
- **Utilizes Partnership & Leveraging Opportunities**  
Working on this acquisition would be enhanced by existing conservation efforts, partnerships and/or includes existing funding.
- **Includes a Cooperative Landowner**  
The landowner effectively coordinates with the entity responsible for acquisition to complete tasks required for acquisition.

## **CO-BENEFITS**

The following criteria would assist in the event the above criteria are roughly equal. These may take on a simpler evaluation (such as yes, no, or maybe) and the answers may merely play an informational role.

- Archeological Sites
- Cultural Sites
- Paleontological Sites
- Watershed Protection
- Proximity to Underserved Area
- Scenic/Viewshed
- Trail Connectors
- Economic Benefits (supports local businesses)

## **PROPERTY CONSTRAINTS**

In addition to streamlining OCTA's regulatory process, the intent of the comprehensive environmental mitigation program is to provide the greatest possible biological benefit for the region with the available funding. Consequently, the cost of potential acquisitions will be an important factor in selecting mitigation sites. The following criteria are potential constraints to property acquisition, but detailed information regarding some of these constraints may not be available until later in the evaluation process.

- **Understands Management Encroachments**  
The property may have unauthorized users; there are plans for future infrastructure that are inconsistent with habitat mitigation; or the type and quantity of public use inside or adjacent to the property.
- **Conflicting Easements or Inholdings**  
The property may have restrictive deeds, easements, other agreements, and/or inholdings that would limit management/public use options.
- **Considers Neighboring Land Uses**  
Neighboring land uses may decrease the habitat mitigation value of the mitigation property.
- **Determines Hazardous Conditions**  
Through a Phase I – Environmental Assessment, determine the property's historical use and any potential or known hazardous materials on-site.
- **Considers Other Complications**  
The property may have unidentified complications associated with acquisition and management including, vector control, vandalism, inadequate access, significant obstacles to restoring water quality (toxics, pesticides, salts), etc.