

PROTECTING VERNAL POOLS USING THE CWSRF

STATE PROGRAM: California Water Resources Control Board

ASSISTANCE RECIPIENT: Trust for Public Land (TPL)

ASSISTANCE AMOUNT: \$9.5M

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Since 1998, EPA's Region 9 (Pacific Southwest) has worked with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to support the work of ten land trusts and Resource Conservation Districts throughout California's Central Valley.

Under this partnership, the local land trusts and conservancies have worked with an array of federal and state agencies to leverage millions of dollars in conservation spending — including \$9.5 million in Clean Water State Revolving Fund loans.

The Central Valley encompasses 15 million acres of land and serves as the great watershed for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. Vernal pool wetlands represent one of the Valley's most imperiled ecosystems. These wetlands mostly occur on the floor of the Valley and support a diversity of specialized plants and animals that occur nowhere else in the world.

To date, the partnership has protected more than 40,000 acres of vernal pool landscapes and related natural communities (e.g., oak woodlands, table-top plateaus). The partnership enables land trusts and conservancies to acquire easements on, or fee title to, properties rich in wetland resources, rare and endangered species, and valuable grasslands.

In 1999, the Nature Conservancy (TNC), lead the way in using SRF loans from the California Water Resources Control Board to safeguard vernal pools. TNC paired an \$8 million loan from the State with \$6 million raised from private and public sources to add the stunning, 12,362-acre Howard Ranch to the Cosumnes River Preserve in South Sacramento County. The ranch was threatened with subdivision, and the purchase effectively prevented nonpoint source pollution and the degradation of water quality and habitat that would have resulted from development. The local Sacramento Valley Conservancy quickly followed suit by landing a \$1 million SRF loan to advance the establishment of the 3,000 acre Sacramento Vernal Pool Prairie Preserve.

To read more about this case study, please visit https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-10/documents/2004_10_25_wetlands_state_rev_fund.pdf.