

## California High-Speed Rail Project

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) was established in 1996, as the state entity responsible for planning, constructing and operating an 800-mile high-speed train system serving California's major metropolitan areas. The project was approved by California voters in 2008, to significantly improve the state's transportation infrastructure system and is supported by \$9.95 billion in general obligation bonds. It is a multi-year project, currently in the planning and environmental impact analysis stage, and includes ten rail alignment sections that currently cross five of the Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) six geographic regions.

The scale of the project, alignment sections and identified environmental impacts are unprecedented for DFG and possibly for the State of California. Proposed route alignments, such as the Altamont Pass option, are likely to have significantly fewer adverse impacts to fish, wildlife and plant resources than other alignment alternatives. These routes have support from environmental and conservation organizations, and DFG supports thorough review of such options.

Some of the proposed route alignments will have significant impacts to fish, wildlife and native plants and their habitats. Wetlands, riparian areas, mitigation lands, DFG-owned or managed properties, conserved or planned reserves through Natural Community Conservation Plans/Habitat Conservation Plans, and other regional plans that DFG is involved in developing and implementing will be impacted. Hydrologic connectivity, wildlife movement and migration also will be impacted, which is of specific concern because HSRA's project will span sensitive habitat and wildlife crossing areas that can further fragment wildlife movement corridors and threaten the viability of many species.

As trustee of the state's fish and wildlife resources, DFG is responsible for reviewing all projects with the potential to impact the environment and currently is evaluating HSRA's train system project to identify all potential impacts from this ambitious effort. As part of the process, DFG is partnering with other local, state and federal agencies. DFG staff with expertise in aquatic and terrestrial wildlife resource science, environmental impact assessment, and regulatory permitting and oversight will consult with HSRA, and DFG and HSRA are entering into an interagency agreement that will provide funding to ensure staff participation in and review of these critical areas over the next five years. DFG also will ensure it fulfills its obligations under the California Environmental Quality Act and will consider and when appropriate, issue permits such as Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreements and Incidental Take permits required by the California Endangered Species Act as necessitated by HSRA's expansive project.