



# Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians

## Wetland Program Plan

January 2020

Natural Resources Department



2020-2024

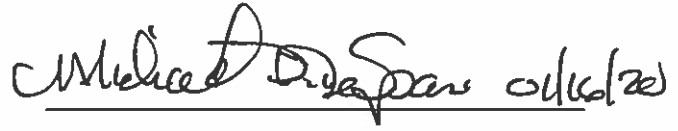
## Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wek Indians Approval Page

This Wetland Program Plan has been reviewed by the Buena Vista Rancheria's Chief of Staff and Natural Resources Director:



Wayne Smith, Chief of Staff

Date



Michael DeSpain, Natural Resources Director Date

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Background Information.....	1
2.1.1	Previous Program Development .....	5
3	Wetland Program .....	5
3.1	Wetland Program Vision .....	5
3.2	Elements of the Wetland Program Plan .....	5
3.2.1	Monitoring and Assessment.....	6
3.2.2	Water Quality Standards for Wetlands .....	7
3.2.3	Voluntary Restoration and Protection.....	8
4	References .....	10

## 1 Introduction

This Wetland Program Plan (WPP) has been prepared to describe a strategy for the next five years regarding how the Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians (Buena Vista Rancheria or BVR) will work to protect and steward the wetlands on its tribal lands. This plan is intended to be used as a living and adaptive document in support of the Tribe's Integrated Resource Management Plan, Tribal Resolution # 2017-002. Buena Vista Rancheria owns three properties each consisting of designated and non-designated wetlands as well as stock ponds and intermittent streams. It is of tribal interest to inventory, monitor, and assess their wetlands and to protect or enhance wetlands where possible while balancing cultural uses and working lands with wetland protections.

## 2 Background Information

Buena Vista Rancheria manages three properties consisting of approximately 213 acres (67 acres in trust status, 81 acres and another 56 acres in fee-to-trust transfer with BIA) (figure 1). The 67-acre Buena Vista Rancheria reservation land is in Amador county on the East side of Coal Mine Road, approximately one mile south of the unincorporated town of Buena Vista, approximately five miles south of Ione, approximately 28 miles northeast of Stockton, and approximately 32 miles southeast of Sacramento. This property is characterized by gently sloping oak woodlands at higher elevation to the south then drops steeply through the midsection, and gradually levels into a valley grassland and wetland area to the north. The reservation land is predominantly used as a cultural epicenter, a source for economic development and natural resource management. It is host to a Casino, drinking water and waste water treatment plants, two homes, a tribal office, cultural center, dance pit, outdoor kitchen, sweat lodge, small garden, and a 6.6-acre wetland preserve (figures 2 and 3).

The 56-acre Cole Mine Road Property is approximately 0.5 miles southwest of BVR reservation land in Ione, CA. It is comprised of blue oak savanna with non-native annual grasslands. It is generally flat with a seasonal drainage that traverses the property in a southeast direction and terminates in a stock pond at the southwest corner of the property. The 56-acres hosts a large barn for hay storage and is leased for seasonal livestock grazing.

The 81-acre Deer Ridge Lane property is approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the BVR reservation land and to the east of the Buena Vista Road and Camanche Parkway intersection in Ione, CA. The property is 0.25 miles north of the Mokelumne River, an important water body to the Me-Wuk Indians. The Deer Ridge property is comprised of blue oak woodlands and non-native annual grasslands. There are seasonal drainages occurring throughout the property with approximately 22 stock ponds located along drainages at varying intervals. The property is currently used for seasonal cattle grazing.

All three properties host designated and non-designated wetlands and ponds, and seasonal drainages. These wetlands and ponds support valuable ecological functions, provide habitat to wildlife, water for cattle and enable the growth of culturally important vegetation. It is important to provide management guidelines in this plan as to how to best steward these resources.

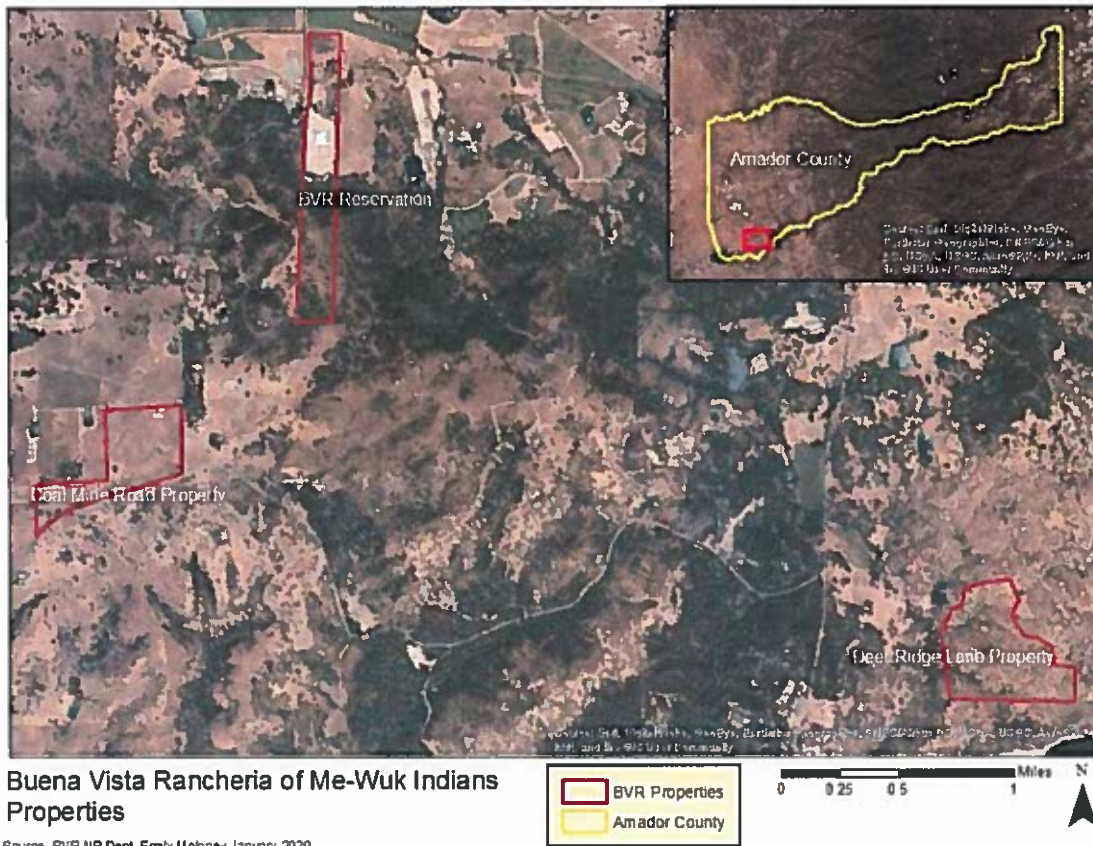
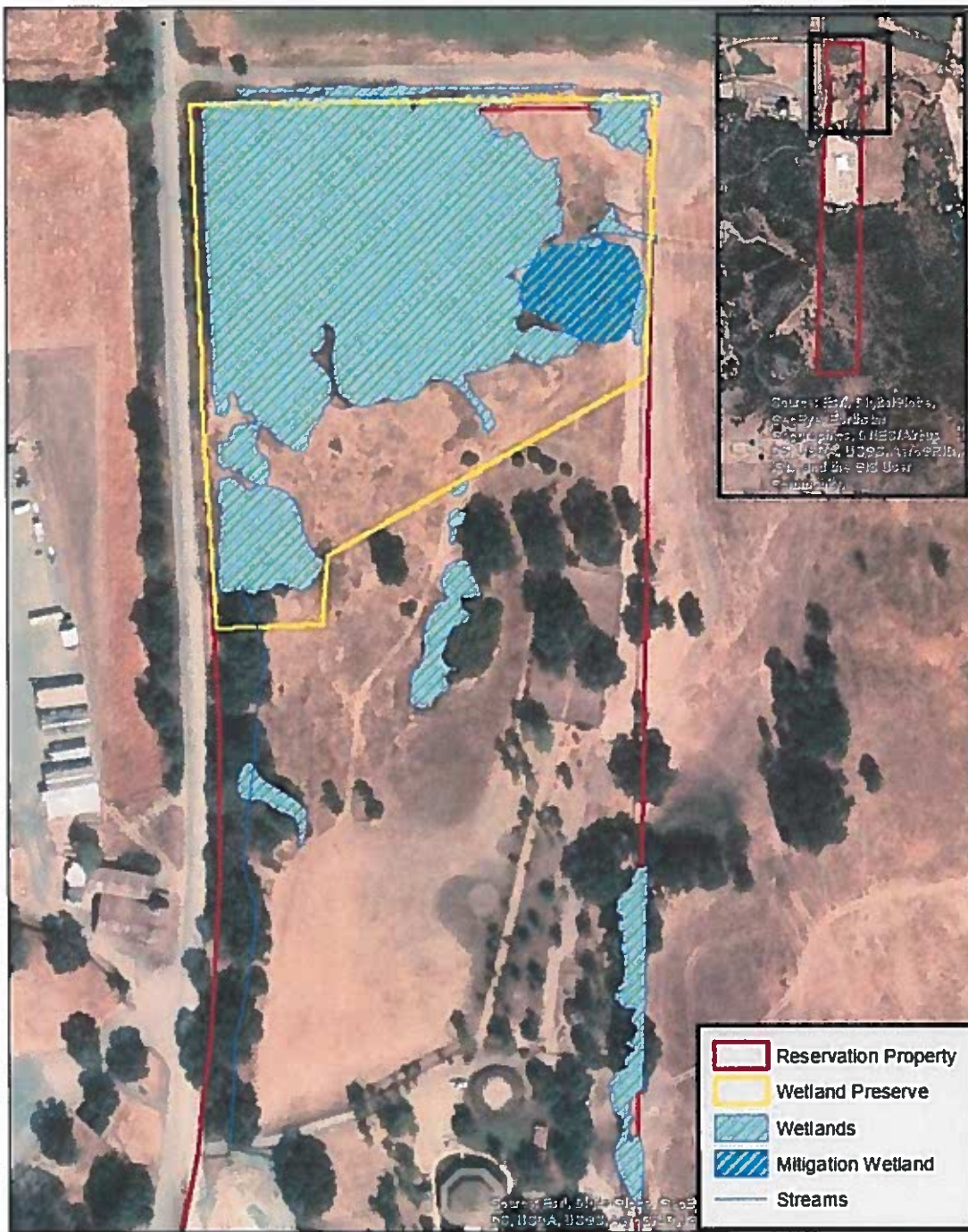


Figure 1. Properties owned and managed by Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians

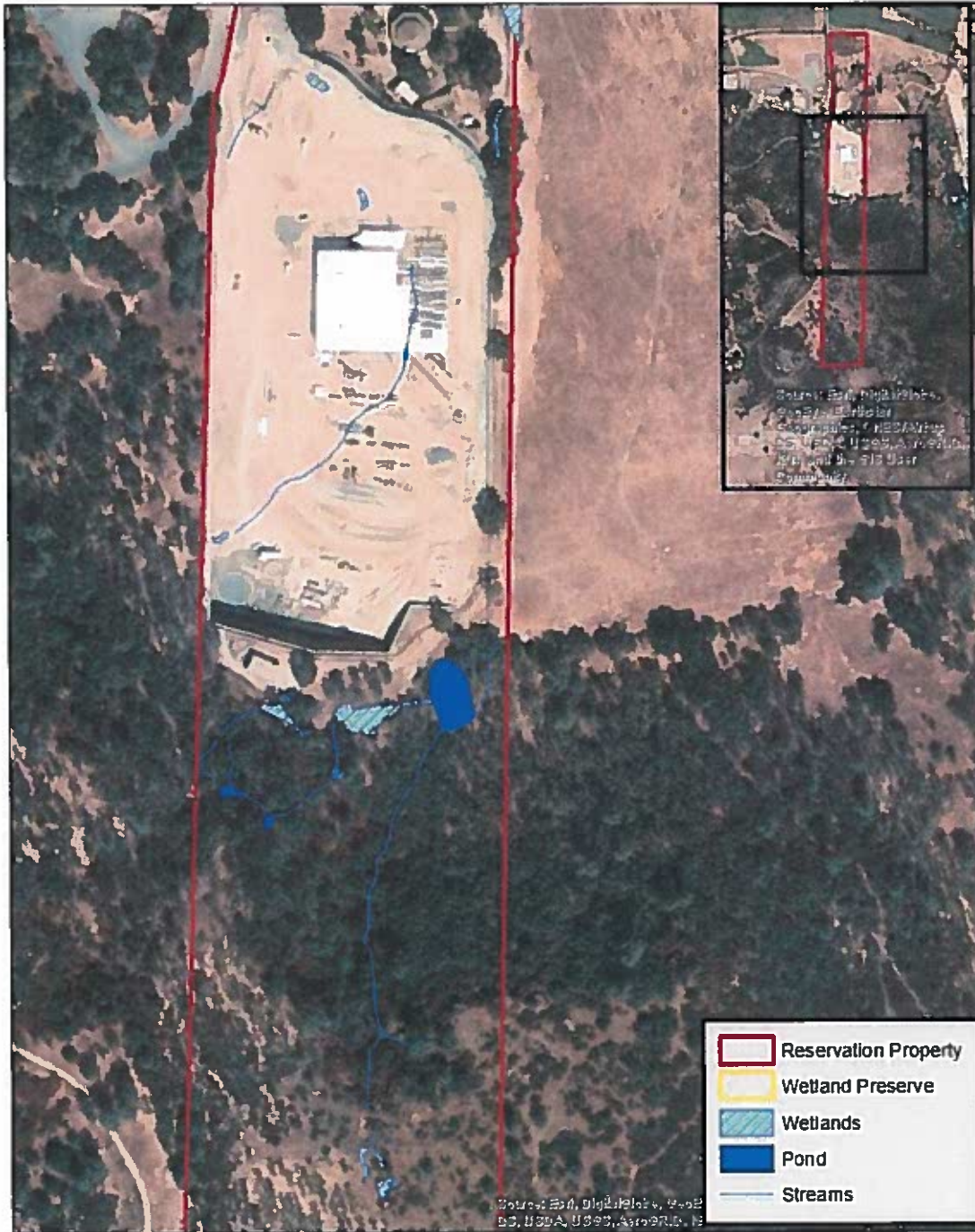




**Buena Vista Reservation  
 Water Resources northern extent of property**

Sources: Monk and Associates,  
 BVR NRD Dept. Emily Moloney 2019

Figure 2. Mapped wetlands on the northern extent of the Reservation.



**Buena Vista Reservation  
Water Resources central extent of property**

Sources: Monk and Associates,  
BVR NRD Dept. Emily Moloney 2019

Figure 3. Mapped surface waters and wetlands on the central to southern extent of the Reservation.



## 2.1.1 Previous Program Development

### 2.1.1.1 *Spring and Surface Water Monitoring Program 2011-Present*

The Rancheria receives EPA Clean Water Act Funding to implement its Spring and Surface Water Monitoring Program. With these funds, BVR natural resources department staff has been monitoring spring and surface water on the Reservation land since 2011.

### 2.1.1.2 *Wetland Mitigation Project*

In 2008, Buena Vista began planning to construct a Casino on its Reservation land. Monk and Associates was hired to inventory surface waters and wetlands on the 67-acre property and determined that 0.081-acres of wetland and other waters would be filled by construction activities. BVR was required to construct mitigation wetlands and again hired Monk and Associates to plan and implement the construction of 0.16-acres of mitigation wetlands on the northern portion of the property. Monk and Associates then conducted 5 years of monitoring on the mitigation wetland to ensure it met Army-Corps of Engineers requirements for mitigation.

### 2.1.1.3 *2014 Wetland Preserve*

In 2014 BVR had a perpetual Deed Restriction record a 6.6-acre wetland preserve on the reservation property. This 6.6-acre wetland preserved contains the mitigation wetland as well as another 4.06-acres of wetlands on the northern extent of the 67-acre reservation.

### 2.1.1.4 *2019 CRAM Assessments*

In 2019 BVR Natural Resource Department staff in partnership with California State University at Sacramento Professor, Dr. Michele Stevens conducted two CRAM assessments, one on the mitigation wetland within the wetland preserve, and a second on a pond in the central region of the property. These assessments have been entered into the e-CRAM database portal and will be available for public viewing.

## 3 Wetland Program

### 3.1 Wetland Program Vision

Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians wishes to protect wetland resources and continue to monitor and assess wetland health to prevent habitat loss and wishes to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge to inform eco-cultural restoration within and around the Tribal wetlands.

### 3.2 Elements of the Wetland Program Plan

This Plan outlines an adaptive management strategy to guide BVR Natural Resources Department (NRD) in its approach to manage wetlands for ecosystem structural and functional benefits and eco-cultural health while also managing wetlands within a working lands context as outlined in the BVR Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP) of 2016.

The objectives outlined in this plan will enable BVR to establish processes for implementing its program. The following actions will also enable BVR to better understand its wetland resources and make informed decisions regarding land management decision making processes, including: economic development, use of water resources or implementation of other land management techniques such as grazing or prescribed fire. These objectives and actions are drawn directly



from the EPA’s *Core Elements of an Effective State and Tribal Wetlands Program* and are used to integrate EPA’s process for creating an effective wetland program into BVR’s strategy.

Each element within the Wetland Program Plan (WPP) is described and outlined with objectives, actions and a suggested timeline. Achieving the WPP as outlined is dependent on project funding and available staff time. The timeline and goals are subject to change as Tribal priorities shift and funding allows.

**3.2.1 Monitoring and Assessment**

BVR’s objectives for monitoring and assessment will draw from its current EPA CWA Surface Water Quality Monitoring and Non-point Source Pollution Prevention Programs to inform its Wetland Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Program (WIMA). BVR NRD will develop a monitoring design and approach for wetland inventory and ecosystem monitoring and assessment. Having a clear approach will enable the NRD to maintain quality and continuity in its program over time. Another foundational step for the WIMA program is to develop a data management system to allow for easy storage and acquisition of wetland data for analysis over time.

<b>Objective 1: Develop a monitoring and assessment strategy for BVR to use to manage wetlands according to our objectives</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
(a) Identify program decisions and long-term environmental outcomes that will benefit from a wetland monitoring and assessment program	X	X			
(b) Define wetlands monitoring objectives and strategies	X				
(c) Develop methods for inventory, assessment and monitoring of wetlands	X	X			
(d) Select a core set of indicators to represent wetland conditions or a suite of functions	X				
(e) Update the WPP as needed		X		X	
(f) Write new WPP for next project period					X
<b>Objective 2: Implement a sustainable monitoring program consistent with the wetlands monitoring strategy</b>					
<b>Action</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
(a) Ensure the scientific validity of monitoring and laboratory activities (Integrate into water monitoring QAPP)		X	X		

(b) Monitor wetland resources as specified in strategy (WQ monitoring is annual, CRAM and bioassessments conducted every other year)	X	X	X	X	X
(c) Establish reference conditions for wetlands and create baseline standards from monitoring and assessment data		X	X		
(d) Track monitoring data in an accessible system that is integrated with other tribal water quality data	X	X	X	X	X
(e) Analyze monitoring data to evaluate wetland extent and conditions/function	X	X	X	X	X

### 3.2.2 Water Quality Standards for Wetlands

BVR's objective is to develop wetland-specific water quality standards, which will provide a foundation for protecting and enhancing tribal wetlands. WQ Standards will be based on baseline studies of Tribal wetland conditions, reference wetland conditions, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), literature review and federal and state guidelines. WQ standards will also provide a scientific and cultural basis for a variety of actions pertaining to wetland restoration and land management decision making processes.

<b>Objective 1: Ensure wetlands are treated as waters within Tribal water quality programs</b>					
Actions	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
(a) Adopt an appropriate definition of wetland ensuring it is at least as inclusive as the CWA definition			X		
(b) Ensure the wetlands definition is included in the water quality standards (WQS)			X		
<b>Objective 2: Develop wetland-specific water quality standards</b>					
Actions	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
(a) Gather and analyze monitoring data and other information including Traditional Ecological Knowledge that will form that basis of WQ Standards			X		
(b) Establish and adopt appropriate wetland-specific designated uses			X		
(c) Establish and adopt narrative criteria that qualitatively describes wetland standards to be achieved			X		

(d) Establish and adopt numeric criteria for chemical, physical and biological parameters as thresholds to protect or restore designated uses			X		
(e) Include a tribal antidegradation policy in the WQS.			X		
<b>Objective 3: Incorporate wetland-specific water quality standards into decision making processes</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
(a) Use water quality standards as a basis for regulatory decisions			X	X	X
(b) Use WQ standards as basis for evaluating restoration/protection project and mitigation/compensation projects			X	X	X
(c) Incorporate WQ standards into monitoring and assessments program			X		

### 3.2.3 Voluntary Restoration and Protection

BVR is interested in incorporating voluntary restoration, enhancement and protections to its wetlands where needed and intends to couple the WIMA data with Traditional Ecological Knowledge to inform restoration activities that restore or enhance wetland structure, function and tribal tending of the ecosystem. Wetland ecosystems are tended by native people who use materials from plants and animals in their everyday lives. Restoring BVR wetlands for cultural use is an important aspect of ecosystem restoration known as eco-cultural restoration. It is important to BVR to tend the wetlands for culturally important plants as a process of restoring traditional practices to the land. The overall objective is to restore wetland acres, conditions and functions on BVR Tribal lands, and to monitor and track progress over time. BVR would also like to restore wetland functions in order to benefit tribal cultural uses.

<b>Objective 1: Describe restoration and protection goals on tribal territory</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
(a) Establish restoration goals	X	X			
(b) Integrate other Natural Resource objectives when selecting restoration/protection sites	X	X			
(c) Develop or adopt a restoration guideline that clarifies Tribal restoration management and techniques	X	X			
<b>Objective 2: Protect Wetlands from degradation or destruction</b>					

Action	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
(a) When applicable create wetland preserves on BVR lands or leverage partnerships to locate and implement wetlands protections or restoration elsewhere			X	X	X
<b>Objective 3: Restore wetland acres, condition, and function</b>					
Action	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
(a) Improve natural wetland conditions and functions through restoration and TEK management practices	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Objective 4: Monitor and track progress over time, document results, and modify practices as appropriate</b>					
Actions	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
(a) Track restoration/protection projects in a tracking database			X	X	X
(b) Monitor restoration/protection sites to ensure to ensure proper implementation and to inform adaptive management decisions			X	X	X



#### 4 References

- 1) Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians (2016), *Integrated Resource Management Plan for the Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians*
- 2) Environmental Protection Agency. *Core Elements of an Effective State and Tribal Wetlands Program*
- 3) Monk & Associates (2016), *Mitigation Wetland Annual Monitoring Report 2015-2016 (year four)*
- 4) Zedler, J., Stevens, M. (2018), *Western and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Ecocultural Restoration*. San Francisco Estuary & Watershed Science