

# TAKING STOCK in Stock Ponds

Stock ponds are a vital natural resource on California rangelands. Stock ponds provide a natural source of drinking water for livestock and wildlife. They also protect riparian areas and provide critical habitat for species including threatened and endangered ones. During the rainy season stock ponds throughout California are crucial to capturing and storing water, helping with flood control and groundwater recharge. And during wildfires they are a source of water for Cal Fire.

## STOCK PONDS ARE MONITORED AND REGULATED BY THE STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

There are multiple regulations landowners are required to comply with. The three major regulatory requirements for stock ponds in California are:

1. Establishing a water right to divert
2. Measuring use of water
3. Reporting to the State Water Board



**Groundwater recharge**  
“Capturing surface water to artificially recharge groundwater aquifers is an important method for achieving groundwater sustainability,” according to the State Water Board.



**A tool for fighting fires**  
Stock ponds on ranches have given firefighters nearby access to water while fighting wildfires. Helicopters pull water out of ponds that is then dumped on flames.

## STOCK PONDS FOSTER BIODIVERSITY

Dragonflies, bobcats and deer are among the wildlife that use ponds as a drinking source. The ponds are also crucial habitat for many species including the endangered and threatened California tiger salamanders and California red-legged frogs. “California tiger salamanders historically used naturally occurring ponds in valley bottoms to breed. But...over time, many of the ponds were drained permanently and bulldozed over...” a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist says. **“Ranching in the foothills, however, provided large, contiguous open spaces, including grassland and chaparral habitat ideal for salamanders.** The stock ponds that were built by ranchers became suitable breeding grounds for the salamanders and frogs that were pushed out of the valleys.”



Stock ponds along with grazing can provide ideal habitat for California red-legged frogs.

On a ranch in the Bay Area, this pond is key to the California tiger salamanders' survival. Grazing helps remove vegetation around the pond that would otherwise make it inaccessible for the species to get to with their small legs.

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