The BRCP will provide substantial benefits to the participating Cities and County by reducing the uncertainty, time delays and costs of environmental compliance for projects within their jurisdictions. The BRCP offers a simple fee system for project proponents developing projects within Butte County and the participating cities for compliance with federal and state endangered species regulations. Once a project’s impacts have been determined through surveys, and compliance with the BRCP has been demonstrated, a fee is paid and the project proponent receives its permit from the City or County where the project is developed. This fee system eliminates the costly, time delayed process of working with state and federal regulatory agencies in Sacramento. The BRCP’s streamlined permitting will deliver a number of valuable benefits, including:

**CERTAINTY**

Local development projects commonly encounter substantial conflicts when sensitive species and their habitats are affected by a project. The current project-by-project process that is often fraught with uncertainties, delays and higher costs is replaced under the BRCP with a streamlined permitting process that allows the cities and the County to issue permits on projects in their jurisdictions. BCAG, the implementing agency for the BRCP, will be responsible, using impact fees, for implementing project mitigation requirements instead of project proponents. Land developers, the cities, and the County are afforded greater certainty as to the cost and timeline for compliance with endangered species issues for each project.

**TIME & COST SAVINGS**

The BRCP streamlined permitting process will save project proponents time and money by eliminating the current project-by-project requirement of negotiating with state and federal agencies in Sacramento, which is often a slow and costly process resulting in delays to projects. In addition, the requirement for project proponents to acquire mitigation lands and implement mitigation actions themselves is eliminated, and is replaced with a fee system that allows the BRCP implementing entity (BCAG) to be responsible for fulfilling all mitigation requirements. This relieves the project proponent from having to deal with a frustrating, time consuming and expensive process.

*The key benefit of the BRCP is that it will provide a substantial benefit to the cities and County by reducing the uncertainty, time delay and cost of environmental compliance for projects in their General Plans.*

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STREAMLINDED IMPLEMENTATION
OF GENERAL PLANS

For Butte County and participating cities, all activities and projects identified in General Plans with the potential to impact species and habitat will be covered by the state and federal permits already issued with the approved BRCP. These permits will eliminate a significant hurdle to moving forward with project construction.

The BRCP will cover an extensive variety of development, construction, and maintenance activities, including:

• Land use activities such as housing developments, the development of commercial and retail space, agricultural services and industrial facilities.
• Public facilities including construction of government buildings, schools, hospitals, libraries, churches, recreation centers, police/fire stations, and cemeteries.
• Transportation facilities including construction of new roadways and bridges and associated infrastructure, road and bridge widening and capacity improvements, bike lane and bike path projects, airport expansions, and transit facilities.
• Recreation projects including construction of trails and associated pedestrian/bike bridges, new parks, playgrounds, sport complexes, golf courses, campgrounds, nature centers, and amphitheaters.
• Waste and wastewater management facility projects including construction and expansion of wastewater treatment plants, landfills (including the Neal Rd facility), transfer stations and recycling centers and associated facilities.
• Flood control and stormwater management projects including construction of new channels, levees/dikes, flood walls, retention/detention basins, stormwater channel lining, and water quality control facilities.
• Recurring maintenance of all facilities listed above.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Projects covered by the BRCP will be permitted under reduced timeframes, providing a direct economic benefit to land developers. Project permitting under the BRCP will provide significant time savings – possibly as much as a three-month to three-year reduction in time to approval – depending on the size of the project. One study concluded that a one-year reduction in permitting delays can reduce opportunity costs to developers in California by $25,000 per acre – a $500,000 savings for an average 20-acre residential development.

EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENT COMPLIANCE

The BRCP will result in improved environmental mitigation for project impacts. The BRCP includes a new “centralized” process for selecting mitigation and conservation lands, with BCAG responsible. The BRCP requires that BCAG assemble mitigation and conservation lands over time into large, diverse, and ecologically connected preserves and use improved management and monitoring techniques on this land in perpetuity. These preserve lands are expected to be mostly protected through conservation easements with minimal effects on rural land uses. The BRCP will also promote efficient environmental compliance, including streamlined CEQA analysis for biological resources.
Under traditional endangered species, stream, and wetlands permitting processes (Figure 1), project proponents must enter into a costly and lengthy coordination and negotiation process directly with numerous state and federal regulatory agencies to determine what mitigation requirements will be needed in order to receive environmental permits.

With the BRCP, the process will be greatly simplified (Figure 2). Project proponents will no longer be required to coordinate with state and federal agencies to receive their Endangered Species Act (ESA) permits – they will use permits already held by city and county planning departments. Cities and Butte County will hold the ESA permits for any activities conducted under the BRCP. Additionally, BCAG is pursuing a process for streamlining the permitting under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act that is administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Details are still being worked out with USACE on this new process which is expected to provide substantial streamlining compared with the current process.

The BRCP Plan Area encompasses 564,203 acres of land.

The BRCP Plan Area will support new development for approximately 24,000 acres in the Plan Area under what are referred to as “covered activities” in the Plan.

The BRCP covers all land disturbing activities within the Urban Permit Areas (UPA) and more limited activities outside of the UPAs (see map at left). The UPAs were developed to encompass all general plan land use categories that could result in impacts to sensitive species and habitats. Some of the specific covered activities outside the UPAs are indicated in the map at left.
Highway 149 – BCAG and Caltrans Could Have Saved Millions in Mitigation Costs Under BRCP

The Highway 149 widening project incurred around $14 million in mitigation costs. Mitigating the same project under the BRCP would have cost around $5 million. Beyond costs, another significant benefit would have been avoiding the massive delays that the project experienced due to the environmental process and challenges inherent in coordinating with the various state and federal agencies relevant to the project.

The potential for delays is significantly reduced under the BRCP. This can present additional costs savings for projects as would have been the case with Highway 149, where each year the cost of constructing the project increased as steel and concrete prices experienced a rapid rise.

The BRCP has been informed by significant stakeholder involvement throughout the Plan development process. An important venue for involvement has been the BRCP Stakeholder Committee. The first Stakeholder Committee meeting was held on February 14, 2007, and the Committee has held 46 meetings to date. The Stakeholder Committee includes representatives from educational institutions, agriculture, environmental groups, special districts, the development community, hunting interests, federal and state agencies, and water and irrigation districts. The input provided by the Committee has resulted in a balanced Plan that reflects the perspectives of a wide diversity of groups and interests.

Contact Us:
Chris Devine, Planning Manager | Butte County Association of Governments
cdevine@bcag.org | 530.879.2468
www.buttehcp.com