

Butte Regional Conservation Plan

A Cooperative Planning Effort



Butte County Association of Governments | City of Biggs | City of Chico | City of Gridley | City of Oroville | County of Butte

Informational Brochure

What is the Butte Regional Conservation Plan?



Sandhill Crane

If you care about the conservation of ecosystems, wetlands, and species...



If you care about opportunities for economic growth in Butte County...

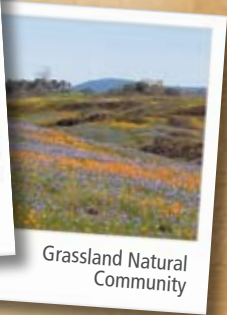


If you care about Butte County's rich agricultural heritage...

Then please read on to find out about the Butte Regional Conservation Plan!



Science Advisory Panel



Grassland Natural Community

Counties In Northern California Developing HCP/NCCPs

- Yuba County
- Sutter County
- Yolo County
- Solano County
- Placer County
- Sacramento County
- Contra Costa County

Local agencies have joined together to prepare the Butte Regional HCP/NCCP (Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan). Our goal is to offer a smart, simple, and environmentally sensitive way for the Butte County region to grow and develop.



Agriculture is the number one industry in Butte County, with a total production of almost \$440 million in 2005. The top crops include rice, almonds, walnuts, prunes, peaches and kiwi fruit.

An HCP/NCCP is a planning process that brings federal, state and local governmental agencies and community stakeholders together to protect the natural resources of Butte County while providing for reasonable economic growth and development in the region.

An HCP/NCCP replaces the piecemeal, project-by-project process of addressing development impacts on our natural environment. The current approach is costly and typically results in smaller, disconnected habitat patches that provide ineffective species conservation. Our proposed Butte Regional HCP/NCCP will take a larger view and allow for more efficient project decisions, a local approach and better habitat protection over the long-term.

The cities and county have agreed that BCAG will administer this effort to integrate the development goals of each individual General Plan with a coordinated approach to achieve long-term economic, ecological and conservation goals.

Goals:

What will the Butte Regional Conservation Plan Achieve?

- Balance open space, habitat, agriculture and urban development
- Allow for appropriate and compatible growth and development in the Butte County region
- Protect the rights of property owners
- Preserve aquatic and terrestrial resources and provide habitat for threatened and endangered species through conservation partnerships with local agencies
- Provide Endangered Species Act permits
- Provide a less costly, more efficient, equitable, project review process
- Provide greater conservation values than a project-by-project, species-by-species review



Swainson's Hawk



White-tailed Kite



The Science Advisory Panel examines stream ecosystems



The traditional process of mitigating wildlife habitat loss with small, disconnected pieces of man-made habitat is unsatisfactory. Our hope is that this process will lead to the preservation of larger, more viable natural preserves that maintain or improve the rich biological diversity of Butte County." —Scott Huber, Altacal Audubon Society

What is BCAG?

The Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) includes the cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, the Town of Paradise and the County of Butte. BCAG is responsible for development of federal and state transportation plans and programs that secure transportation funding for the region's highways, transit, streets and roads, pedestrian and other transportation system improvements, and is the administrative and policymaking agency for the region's public transit service.



Butte County was one of the original California counties, founded on February 18, 1850. Its name is derived from the Marysville or Sutter Buttes, which were within the boundaries of the county when it was created.



Vernal Pool

Coordinating with General Plans

BCAG is working with city and county planning staff to coordinate HCP/NCCP development with the General Plan updates currently in progress. The City/Town/County Planning Directors Group coordinates both the General Plan updates and the HCP/NCCP developments on a monthly basis. The plans will be integrated using common ecological data, land use planning, regional growth projections, and regional guiding planning principles.



Butte County's Bidwell Park is one of the largest municipal recreation areas in the country.



Butte County's Gray Lodge, an 8,400 acre Wildlife Refuge directly in line with the migratory Pacific Flyway, attracts more than one million ducks, 100,000 geese and thousands of other birds including the Sandhill Crane, the Swainson's Hawk and 34 species of raptors, owls, eagles, falcons and vultures annually.



Golden Clover

COMMON ACRONYMS

BCAG – Butte County Association of Governments

DFG – California Department of Fish & Game

HCP – Habitat Conservation Plan (federal)

NCCP – Natural Community Conservation Plan (state)

NMFS – National Marine Fisheries Service

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

COMMON TERMS

Covered Species – The species for which development permits may be required to implement the activities covered by the Butte Regional HCP/NCP.

Endangered – Species at risk of becoming extinct.

Threatened – Species at risk of becoming endangered in the foreseeable future.

Take – Defined in the Federal or State Endangered Species Acts as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect a species.

Incidental Take Permit – Permits allowing the "take" of endangered/threatened species incidental to an otherwise lawful activity (such as constructing a development or building a road).

The HCP/NCCP Planning Area

The planning area is the geographic area that will be addressed in the Butte Regional Conservation Plan. The planning area covers approximately 560,000 acres of the lowland portion of Butte County up to and including the Foothill oak woodlands. Land and resources will be set aside within the planning area to implement conservation measures to preserve the covered species within the area. In exchange, certain “covered activities” such as planned development infrastructure and other proposed land uses over which the Local Agencies have land use authority will receive permits from local, state, and federal Fish and Wildlife regulators.

Shared Benefits of the Butte HCP/NCCP

Communities

- Strengthened regional economies
- Protection of scenic habitat and landscapes
- Proactive approach to conservation and development
- Public Involvement in planning

Local Governments

- Local control of development and land use
- Long term solutions to land use conflicts
- More effective protection of natural resources

Business Owners, Landowners & Developers

- Streamlined regulatory process
- “Economies of scale” allow more cost effective species protection
- Greater regulatory certainty, consistency and predictability

Agriculturalists

- New source of income from conservation actions
- Relieved of liability for endangered species
- Varied opportunities for participation

Environmental interests

- Large scale conservation instead of “piecemeal”
- Multi-species and habitat protection — better habitat
- Ability to adapt and respond to changes
- Increased opportunities for grant funding for habitat conservation



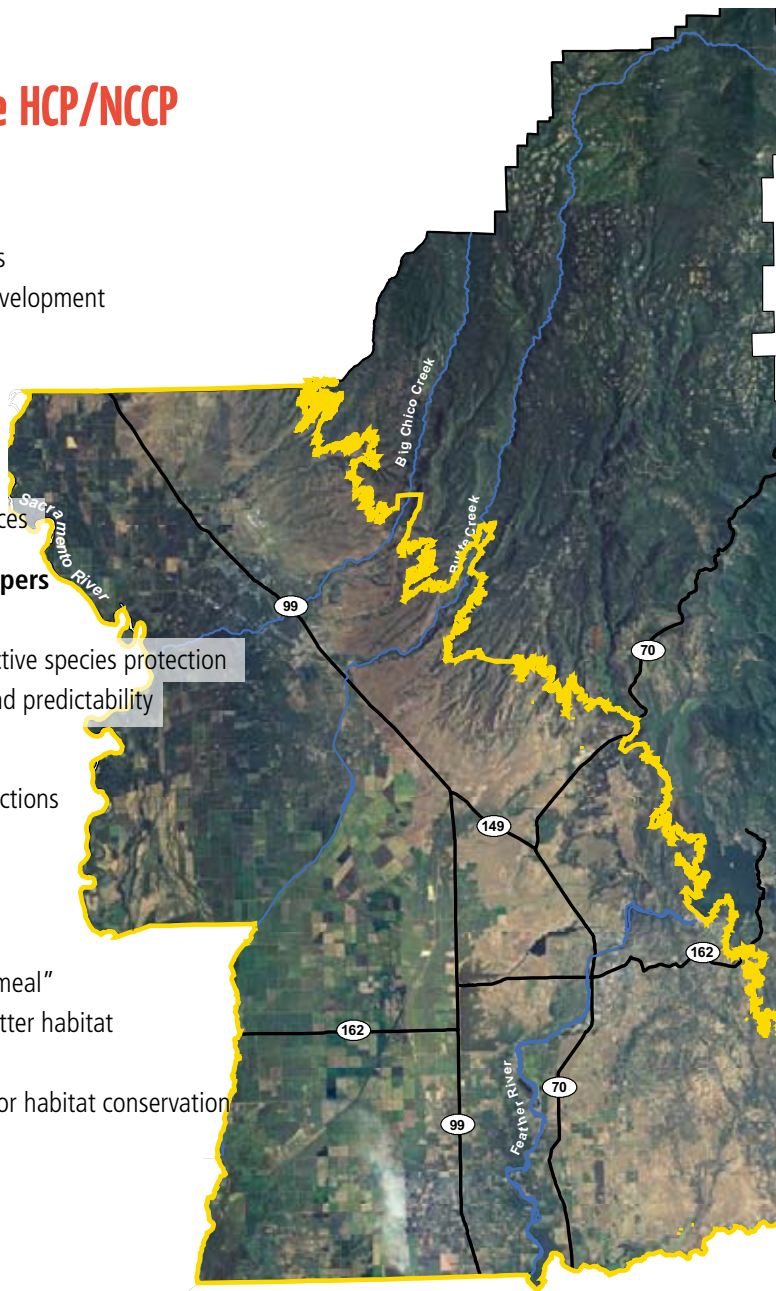
Butte County Checkerbloom



Swainson's Hawk



Skyway



Planning Area Boundary

“The historical (piece meal) development of our Butte County landscape was tragically lacking in scientific forethinking. The HCP/NCCP now allows for scientific reason to play a prominent role in our land use decision-making process.”

— Phil Johnson, Altacal Audubon Society

Covered Species

Selected by the Stakeholder Committee



Bald Eagle



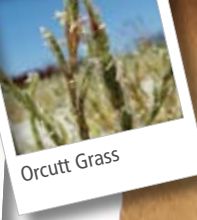
Giant Garter Snake



Ahart's Dwarf Rush



Grassland Natural Community



Orcutt Grass

“ I see the Butte Regional HCP/NCCP as an opportunity to better engage the university in the life of the community and to participate in connected conversations about how to build a stronger community.”
 —Scott McNall, California State University, Chico

Amphibians

- California Red-legged Frog
- California Tiger Salamander
- Foothill Yellow-legged Frog
- Western Spadefoot Toad

Reptiles

- California Horned Lizard
- Giant Garter Snake
- Northwest Pond Turtle

Birds

- American Peregrine Falcon
- Bald Eagle
- Bank Swallow
- California Black Rail
- Greater Sandhill Crane
- Swainson's Hawk
- Tri-colored Blackbird
- Western Burrowing Owl
- Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- White-Tailed Kite
- Yellow-breasted Chat

Fish

- Central Valley Steelhead
- Chinook Salmon Spring Run
- Chinook Salmon Winter Run
- Chinook Salmon Fall Run
- Green Sturgeon
- River Lamprey
- Sacramento Splittail

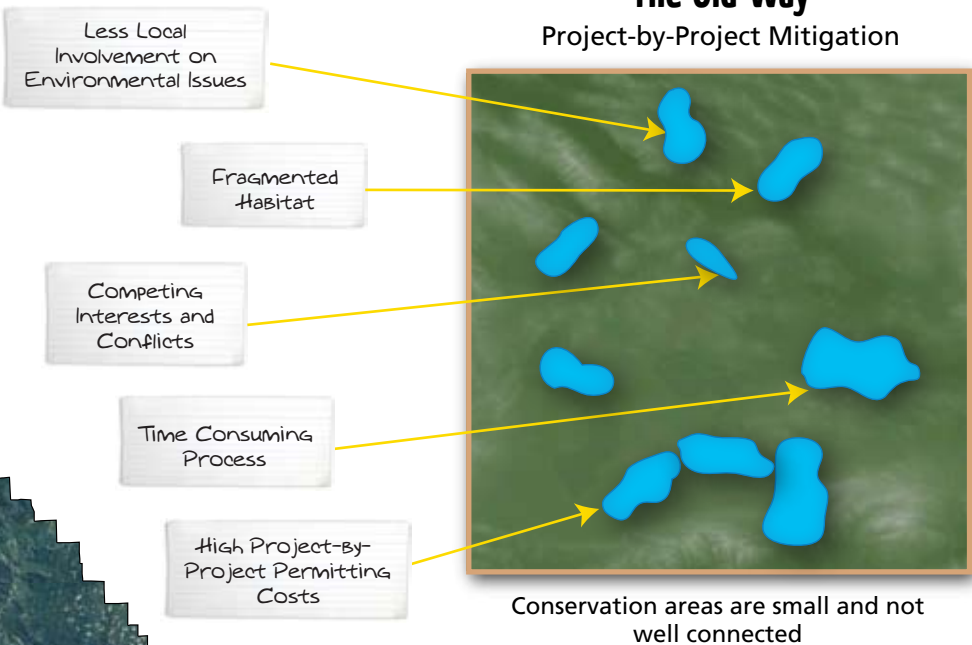
Invertebrates

- Conservancy Fairy Shrimp
- Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle
- Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp
- Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp

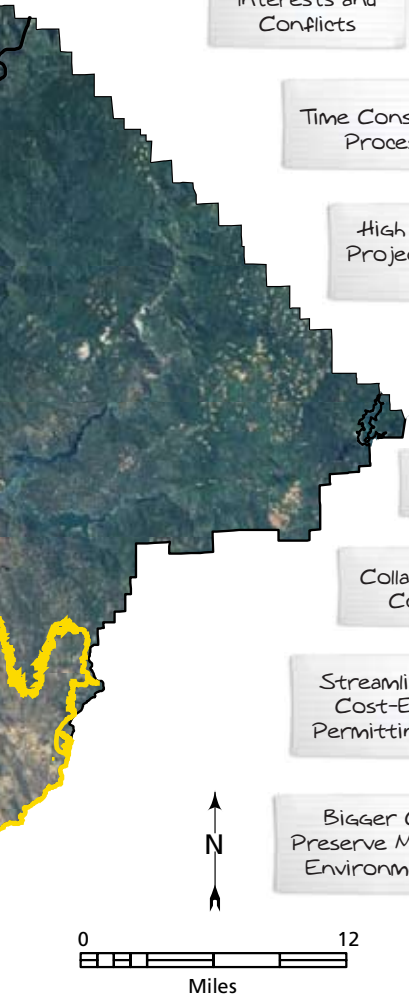
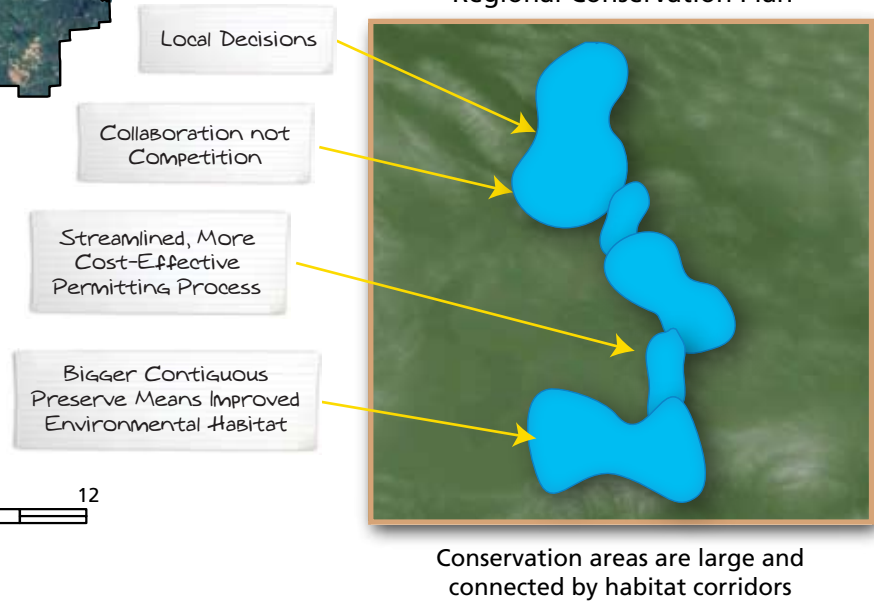
Plants

- Ahart's Dwarf Rush
- Butte County Checkerbloom
- Butte County Golden Clover
- Butte County Meadowfoam
- Ferris' Milkvetch
- Greene's Tuctoria
- Hairy Orcutt Grass
- Hoover's Spurge
- Lesser Saltscale
- Veiny Monardella

The Old Way Project-by-Project Mitigation



The New Way Regional Conservation Plan





The Science Advisory Panel on a field tour of the planning area.



Growth in Butte County

“ I am confident that the Butte Regional HCP/NCCP will offer our open landscape, our wildlife and our agricultural way of life the enhancements needed to survive. Inevitable future growth pressures can be aligned but only if we as a diverse community are successful in the Plans’ complex implementation and support.”

—Pia Sevelius, Butte County Resource Conservation District

Conservation

The Butte Regional HCP/NCCP focuses on conservation of ecosystems, natural communities and ecological processes in the Planning Area.

Conservation objectives for the HCP/NCCP include:

- Protect and preserve the species covered by the HCP/NCCP and their associated natural communities and ecosystems
- Preserve the diversity of fish, wildlife, plant and animal communities and contribute to the recovery of covered species
- Minimize and mitigate the take or loss of proposed covered species
- Identify and designate biologically sensitive habitat areas
- Set forth covered species specific goals and objectives & specific habitat-based goals and objectives
- Implement an adaptive management and monitoring program to respond to changing ecological conditions

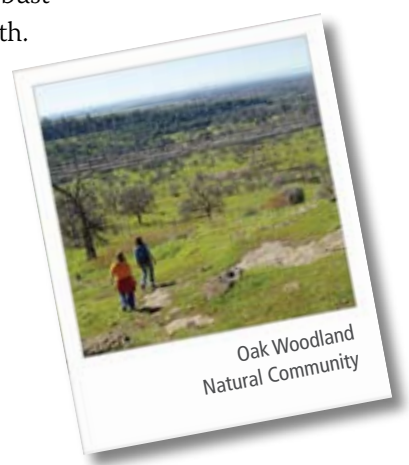


Burrowing Owl

The Butte Regional HCP/NCCP meets the needs of communities by providing robust preservation measures while promoting sustainable economic and business growth.



Butte County was rated one of the top five places to retire by Kiplinger’s Personal Finance Magazine, the #1 rated bike friendly community by Cycling Magazine and the top bass fishing spot in the state by Bassmaster Magazine.



Oak Woodland Natural Community

Implementation Funding

Funding to implement the HCP/NCCP may come from several different public and private sources including grant funds, state and federal funds, public funds, and fees collected from approved projects. The HCP/NCCP will not increase local taxes and will allow local agencies to receive state and federal funding from which the region would otherwise not qualify.

The California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service will assist BCAG in identifying and securing federal and state funds earmarked for natural community conservation planning and habitat conservation planning purposes. Other non-fee public funding will be secured from local, state and federal agencies that invest in conservation.

Phase 1
Baseline Data Collection, Establishment of Stakeholder Committee

Phase 2a
Assemble Science Panel, Prepare Planning Agreement and Public Participation Plan, Describe Covered Activities.

Phase 2b
Develop Impact Analysis and Alternatives for the Conservation Strategy.

Phase 2c
Develop Selected Conservation Strategy and Determine Implementation Costs.

Phase 3
Determination of Funding Sources of Public Draft Butte Regional Implementing Agreement.

2007

2008

Who Are the Stakeholders

The Butte Regional Conservation Plan is guided by BCAG, the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Public input and involvement for the HCP/NCCP is highly valued. A Stakeholder Committee of local citizens is providing regular input into development of the plan. Stakeholder Committee meetings are open to the public and are currently attended by individuals representing the building industry, irrigation districts, educational institutions, special districts, hunting organizations, and federal and state agencies.



How the Process is Organized

The Steering Committee and a Stakeholder Committee form the core of the public involvement process. These committees convene on a regular basis to share pertinent information and ensure a balanced and thorough review of the Plan at every stage.

The Steering Committee functions in an administrative capacity and is comprised of local elected officials, BCAG staff and representatives from agencies that will receive permits.



All groups coordinate together to develop the Plan.

The Stakeholder Committee serves as the representative body of the region's interests. All meetings of the Steering Committee and the Stakeholder Committee are open to the public.

An independent Science Advisory Panel provides information, advice and guidance on a variety of key scientific issues during preparation of the Plan.

The Planning Directors Group provides coordination between the ongoing development of the County and Cities' General Plans and the HCP/NCCP planning process.

The Wildlife Agencies (DFG, FWS, NMFS) attend all Steering and Stakeholder Committee meetings and provide expert advice and guidance regarding species biology and regulatory requirements.

BCAG staff and their lead consultant (SAIC) are conducting resource evaluations and preparing the plan documents with input from all interested participants.

Public Involvement Opportunities

For more information, go to www.buttehcp.com or call Chris Devine, BCAG Planning Manager, at 530-879-2468 to find out how to become involved with the HCP/NCCP process. You can submit comments and sign up for email newsletters on the website. Also, consider attending Stakeholder Committee Meetings on the first Wednesday of each month from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM in the BCAG Conference Room at 2580 Sierra Sunrise Terrace, Suite 100 in Chico.

The HCP/NCCP Planning Process

BCAG actively solicits the participation of all stakeholders for involvement in the planning process including landowners, agriculturalists, homebuilders, environmental groups, and business interests. The goal: find a collaborative, effective and efficient approach to conserving natural resources by replacing the current project-by-project permitting and fragmented mitigation with a broader, regional approach to conservation and development.

Stakeholder Committee Representatives

- Butte County Resource Conservation District
- California Native Plant Society
- Building Industry Association
- Butte County Farm Bureau
- Western Canal Water District
- Altacal Audubon Society
- Ducks Unlimited
- Butte County Agricultural Commission
- California State University, Chico
- Butte Glenn Community College
- Sierra Club
- Caltrans District 3
- California Department of Water Resources
- Farm Credit Northern California

Resources. Development
al HCP/NCCP &

Phase 4
Draft EIR/EIS, and Draft Section 404 Permit Application. Continued Public Outreach.

Phase 5
Adoption and Permitting of HCP/NCCP & Final EIR/EIS.

2009

2010



Informational Brochure



Butte County Association of Governments

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