

Meeting #32 Summary

Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP)

Stakeholder Committee Meeting

October 6, 2010, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

BCAG Conference Room

Stakeholder Committee Attendees

Colleen Cecil (Butte Co. Farm Bureau)	Woody Elliott (CNPS)
Robin Huffman (Butte Environmental Council)	Scott McNall (CSU Chico)
Richard Price (Butte Co. Ag. Comm.)	Suellen Rowlinson (CNPS)
Pia Sevelius (Butte Co. Resource Cons. Dist.)	

Resource Agencies Attendees

Nina Bicknese (USFWS)	Jenny Marr (DFG)
Eric Tatterstall (USFWS)	

Steering Committee and Staff Attendees

Jon Clark (BCAG)	Jim Estep (Estep Environmental Consulting)
Chris Devine (BCAG)	Juan Pablo Galván (SAIC)
Jane Dolan (BCAG/ Supervisor)	Pete Rawlings (SAIC)

Interested Public Attendees

Ryan Brown (Foothill Associates)	Desiree Hatton (Butte Environmental Council)
Eric Miller (MPM Engineering)	Lucas Ross Merz (Sac. River Preservation Trust)

Associated Documents/Handouts

Agenda packet including:

1. Admin. Draft Chapter 5 - (Handout #1)
2. Meeting Summary of September 2010 Stakeholder Meeting (Handout #2)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions and Agenda Review
2. Admin. Draft Chapter 5 – Conservation Strategy (Handout #1)

3. Meeting Summary of September 2010 Stakeholder Meeting (Handout #2)
4. USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion
5. Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda

Introductions and Agenda Review

The agenda was distributed and the names of attendees were introduced.

It was mentioned that it may be a good idea to move the Status of Chapters table posted on the BRCP website from the documents section to the homepage to make it more easily accessible.

Admin. Draft Chapter 5 – Conservation Strategy (Handout #1)

It was explained that the various sections of this chapter have been seen by the Stakeholder Committee before but this is the first time that all sections have been combined. It was also explained that the vernal pool conservation strategy component of the chapter is not yet complete. Previous sections reviewed by the Stakeholder Committee have been refined to create this draft.

A powerpoint was presented introducing the BRCP Draft Conservation Strategy. The four elements of the conservation strategy (biological goals and objectives, conservation measures, monitoring program, adaptive management program) is complete for most species and details for vernal pool and fish species anticipated to be completed later this month. The purpose of each section of the chapter was explained.

A question was raised about the development of a decision pyramid focused on account funds available to implement the BRCP. It was explained that funding sources will have to be identified and deemed acceptable before the plan is implemented and a plan that cannot be funded cannot be put in place. The Draft Conservation Strategy details what would be paid for in the plan.

It was explained that goals and objectives are assembled at three nested ecological scales: landscape, natural community, and species levels. These have been refined from previous drafts to eliminate redundancies. Conservation measures, which are the activities implemented to achieve goals and objectives, are also nested at those same three scales.

A question was raised if water quality conservation measures had previously been reviewed before and it was explained that it had been in a different form.

It was explained that Section 5.5 would describe how full BRCP implementation conserves each of the covered species. This section is not yet complete and would be included in a subsequent draft of the chapter. Section 5.6 will describe how full BRCP implementation will benefit each of the 21 local concern species, which are not covered species. Section 5.6 will be included in subsequent drafts of the chapter.

Section 5.7 describes the purpose of the monitoring plan and presents guidance for the Implementing Entity (IE) to develop specific monitoring actions. It also describes the relationship of the monitoring plan to the adaptive management process.

A question was raised if Section 5.7 would focus on biological monitoring versus compliance monitoring. It was explained that the decision on what monitoring actions would be required for compliance monitoring has not yet been identified. Compliance monitoring reporting requirements will also be described in the Plan Implementation chapter instead. It was explained that compliance monitoring involves tracking the actual implementation, costs, and general administration and implementation of the plan.

It was explained that system-wide monitoring is a way of testing how a species is doing outside of plan reserves by monitoring a species throughout the Plan Area. Monitoring the landscape of the Plan Area, not just the conservation lands, is an important element of the plan. System-wide monitoring could include the periodic delineation of natural communities over time to track the change in extent or quality of habitat in the area. Appropriate monitoring conducted by other groups could be used for system-wide monitoring of species. System-wide monitoring is not a system-wide census, nor is it necessarily different surveys for each species.

It was commented that the text at the bottom of pg. 86 needs to be developed further to make it clear what system-wide monitoring will consist of. It was also commented that appropriate scaling of data that strikes a good balance between effort and accuracy that allows for long-term monitoring is necessary.

It was explained that system-wide monitoring seems to be linked to Goal SPEC1, and would help to maintain and enhance the abundance and distribution of covered species in the Plan Area. It also provides information to the IE that is useful to determine if what they are doing should be deemed a success. For example, if Swainson's hawk is declining across its range, and you see a decline within the Plan Area, you can conclude that your specific management within the Plan Area is not necessarily failing, but that some cause or causes also operating outside the Plan Area may be responsible. System-wide monitoring provides context to help evaluate the success of management actions. It complements information collected through other types of monitoring.

There was discussion about the language on pg. 81 and 86 and whether or not system-wide monitoring required Plan Area-wide censuses every five years. It was commented that this would be logistically and financially costly and does not seem to clearly link to how this would contribute towards achieving goals and objectives. It was explained that Plan Area-wide censuses is not what is being called for in system-wide monitoring and that this could be made clear by changing the language in the section. System-wide monitoring is simply meant to give provide a regional context for informing adaptive management decisions. It was agreed that the language describing system-wide monitoring will be revised to more clearly explain the purpose of and describe system-wide monitoring. Language clearly linking this monitoring with the overall plan and effectiveness monitoring would also be beneficial. It was commented that

system-wide monitoring could be thought of as a way to develop information that informs the adaptive management process over time, not as a compliance or regulatory requirement.

It was explained that the costs of the monitoring plan would be described in Chapter 8 along with other implementation costs.

A question was raised about when monitoring plans would be developed. It was explained that monitoring plans would be developed before the implementation of applicable conservation measures. It was commented that language stating an actual date that specifically details when monitoring plans would need to be developed would be helpful to the IE. It was explained that the Natomas HCP developed a document detailing a specific timeline for when monitoring plans would be developed and what monitoring activities would have to be conducted due to several lawsuits and that such a document/section could be useful for the BRCP. It was explained that a specific “hard date” was not included in this Draft BRCP Conservation Strategy because certain types of monitoring are impossible to develop without knowing which properties will be acquired as reserves. Therefore, relative language that ensures plans and activities must be done “before or after” certain actions, such as land acquisition, were used. It was commented that hard dates are also useful because it is easier to develop cost estimates and know how much and what is necessary to achieve goals and objectives.

It was commented that the federal Five Point Policy does not provide guidance on when monitoring should take place, but it does explain what the monitoring is. It was commented that more detail on when monitoring will occur and specifically what it will be would be helpful in reviewing the document. It was commented that a list of what is not captured in this document from the agency regulatory perspective would be helpful to further develop and refine this chapter. It was also commented that language referring to other chapters, such as Chapter 8 for cost information, could be included in this chapter to show where other specific information is located in the document. It was commented that the tables should be reviewed to provide the details of what monitoring consists of. It was commented that after permits had been issued, the Natomas IE made a calendar out of a list of tasks developed after review of their entire document.

The draft chapter was reviewed page by page. It was commented that the chart on pg. 9 might be inconsistent with the information presented on pg. 22. It was commented that the way existing protected lands were divided into different categories was good.

It was suggested that presenting the biological background on why a certain goal or objective was formed would be beneficial. A statement as to why a goal or objective is included in the document would get at this.

A question was raised on the ecological corridors described in certain goals and objectives. It was explained that the size of corridors was chosen based on recommendations in the California DOT and DFG corridors report. It was explained that the location of the corridors was

determined by various scientific and data sources and an analysis of what species would benefit from them.

It was explained that information on the sources used to locate and size corridors exists in the chapter, just not in the objective, but if that information is insufficient, clarifying language could be added to the goals and objectives. Information related to the habitat available beyond the Plan Area could be relevant to the placement of corridors. It was explained that the purpose of these corridors was to ensure that development does not cut these areas in two or fragment them. These corridors are significantly related to biological movement pathways, not specific natural communities. The Western Governors Corridors Association has prepared a document that could be useful in identifying relevant corridors. It was explained that a study produced by both Caltrans and DFG was used to identify the corridors shown in the chapter. It was commented it would be beneficial for the BRCP corridors to be compatible as much as possible with important corridors identified in other studies.

It was commented that several vernal pool plant species are not covered by the vernal pool species recovery plan cited as a background source for the goals and objectives of other vernal pool species. A question was raised as to how targets for these species had been set without the recovery plan. It was explained that this format was used to mirror language used for other species and actual targets were set by analyzing available data on occurrence, threat, and the importance of populations within the Plan Area to the whole species. It was commented that pg. 113 explains the criteria used to establish targets for vernal pool species not included in the recovery plan. It was decided to add rationale statements for each of the goals to help clarify why the goal is included in the BRCP. It was also commented that activities described under Applied Research could help the species, but that these were not Conservation Measures. It was also commented that firm number of occurrences numbers to be protected were not given because for many species the total number of occurrences is unknown.

It was explained that Table 5-3 can in some cases explain both conservation objectives and conservation targets. It was decided that language to describe the purpose of these criteria and how they were used will be added to the text.

It was commented that the species-level goals and objectives section only included one goal. Typically one goal is listed for each species. It was explained that when Section 5.5 is included in the document, each goal and objective that contributes to the conservation of each species would be included in the chapter. This should eliminate confusion related to trying to identify which goals and objectives contribute to the conservation of each species without the table and the section.

A question was raised about why certain species are mentioned under species level goals and objectives and others are not. It was explained that for the species that have species-specific issues that do not nest well under natural community or landscape goals and objectives require species-specific objectives. Information on the rationale for the conservation targets of each species is given on pg. 103 and the table to be included in Section 5.5 will illustrate the various

goals and objectives that work towards the conservation of each species. In general, the different components of how goals and objectives contribute to species conservation is already included in the chapter, but Section 5.5 will tie these components together. This section will be included in a later version of the chapter that brings together all the information on a species-by-species basis.

It was explained that Table 5.7 explains how much habitat for a species will be conserved after full BRCP implementation. It was also explained that species models included in the covered species accounts describe how the amount of habitat available and conserved under the plan is determined.

A general comment was made that water should be included into this document somehow since ground water is important for sustaining some of the natural communities.

It was commented that more specificity on native plant species requirements for protecting and restoring habitats to avoid implementing actions that encourage the establishment and spread of non-native species. It was explained that standard best management practices (BMPs) are included in the chapter and that construction monitoring will be conducted to ensure that avoidance and minimization measures are appropriately implemented. It was explained that BMPs can refer to other documents that describe the practices with more specificity. Appendices to these BMPs may be to go online and download the full BMPs. It was explained that CalTrans would be a permit holder and would need to adhere to the conditions of the permit, and compliance monitoring would capture when these BMPs are implemented and what activities are conducted under the plan, so this would be another form of ensuring that things are done in the proper way.

It was mentioned that activities to educate the public on native plants and ways to avoid helping introduced species establish would be beneficial. A good place for this could be pg. 65.

A question was raised of how the habitat value of rice and wetlands to certain wildlife species was determined. It was explained that experts were consulted and scientific literature was reviewed to determine these values. For example, the BRCP proposes that one acre of wetland specifically managed for giant garter snake is equivalent to ten acres of rice for the species. It was commented that protecting the amount of rice written in the document for giant garter snake is unrealistic, and it was explained that this is why different areas of both rice and wetland could be protected. It would require much less wetland to conserve giant garter snake than rice. This provides flexibility to the IE in going about the conservation of the species. There was a comment made that it is important the strategy not included targets that cannot be met. It was commented that the wetland:rice ratio cited in the text should be specifically reviewed by the BRCP Science Advisory Panel and that this value should be referenced in the text so that the source the information came from can be known. It was decided the basis for recommending that value will be clarified. It was commented that on pg. 105 giant garter snake movement habitat and breeding/movement habitat are parsed out because they have different properties and it is important to note that movement habitat is written in miles and not in acres. The amount of movement habitat necessary is based on the species habitat model for giant garter snake.

It was commented that on pg. 66 the language dealing with “passive translocation” should be clarified. Is this relocation or translocation? It was explained that passive exclusion or passive relocation would be a more accurate way to describe what would occur. Line 1 on pg. 67 should also be changed to reflect this.

It was decided that review of this chapter would continue during the Stakeholder Meeting in November.

A question was raised on the other water districts that want to join the plan. It was explained that Western Canal Water District has already joined and the others are in the process of joining. A question was raised about the General Plan and how projects were coming in and it was explained that projects were being proposed and rejected on a project-by-project basis. The zoning of an area of agriculture has not changed. A petition to change the zoning of an area of agriculture to allow development was rejected.

The agencies thanked SAIC for their work on the Draft conservation Strategy chapter.

Meeting Notes from September 2010 Stakeholder Meeting (Handout #2)

The meeting notes from September 2010 were approved.

USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion

None.

Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda

The next Stakeholder meeting will be held on November 3, 2010 from 11:00 to 3:00 pm at BCAG.

The primary November agenda item will be a further review of the Draft Conservation Strategy, including sections that are not yet included in this draft.