

Meeting #23 Summary

Butte Regional HCP/NCCP

Stakeholder Committee Meeting

October 7, 2009, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

BCAG Conference Room

Stakeholder Committee Attendees

Scott McNall (CSU Chico)	Pat Kelly (Sierra Club)
Richard Price (Butte Co. Ag. Comm.)	Carolyn Brown (Caltrans)
Suellen Rowilson (CNPS)	Virginia Getz (Ducks Unlimited)
Mary Watters (Sierra Club)	Robin Huffman (Butte Environmental Council)
Colleen Cecil (Butte County Farm Bureau)	Ted Trimble (WCWD)
Phil Johnson (Altacal Audubon Society)	

Resource Agencies Attendees

Nina Bicknese (USFWS)

Jennifer Marr (DFG)

Eric Tattersall (USFWS)

Steering Committee and Staff Attendees

Jane Dolan (BCAG/ Supervisor)

Pete Rawlings (SAIC)

Jon Clark (BCAG)

Monica Hood (SAIC)

Chris Devine (BCAG)

Interested Public Attendees

Greg McKenzie (Dove Ridge)

Rich Reiner (TNC)

Riley Swift (Restoration Resources)

Associated Documents/Handouts

Agenda packet including:

1. Impact Assessment for Natural Communities (Handout #2a and #2b)
2. Meeting Notes from August 2009 (revised) and September 2009 (Handout #5a and #5b)

Additional handouts including:

1. Revised Draft Chapter 2 Covered Activities (provided 9/18/09)
2. Impact Assessment for Activities Outside UPAs (Handout #3)
3. Species Habitat Preservation Objectives (Handout #4)

Handout #2

Meeting Agenda:

1. Introductions and Agenda Review
2. Revised Draft Chapter 2 Covered Activities (Handout #1)
3. Impact Assessment for Natural Communities (Handout #2a and #2b)
4. Impact Assessment for Activities Outside UPAs (Handout #3)
5. Species Habitat Preservation Objectives (Handout #4)
6. Newsletter for Fall 2009
7. Meeting Notes from August (revised) and September 2009 Stakeholder Meetings (Handout #5a and #5b)
8. USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion
9. Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda

Introductions and Agenda Review

An overview of the agenda was provided. An update regarding Western Canal Water District (WCWD) was provided - WCWD is not officially an applicant at this time. A meeting will be held on Friday with WCWD.

Revised Draft Chapter 2 Covered Activities (Handout #1)

Revised Chapter 2, Covered Activities was discussed. Meetings and coordination with City and County staff took place to get updated information on covered activities. New covered activities include approximately 90 new bridge replacement projects (all bridge replacements may not occur but are included to be sure they are all covered in the event they do occur). The bridges are mainly those that cross streams/channels. The figure in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.3) has been updated to show the bridge projects and sewer line projects (Chico and Gridley).

The possibility of adding more detail on the pipeline alignments was discussed. It was asked if there will there be maps in the document that break down where the impacts are and where the conservation areas are located. It was suggested to have a different figure for projects in each CAZ. It was also suggested to depict a more detailed view of hypothetical UPA development footprints used to conduct the impact assessment, but indicate that the applicants will not be tied to the areas shown for development but rather to the take limit.

Agricultural activities were discussed. Agricultural activities in and of themselves are not a covered activity – only the conservation activities that may be implemented on agricultural lands by the Implementing Entity (IE) would be covered, which may include modified agricultural practices. Covered activities are only those that the IE has control over. It was suggested to clarify this in the chapter to reflect what is and what is not a covered activity.

WCWD was discussed and it was agreed to include a section for their impact analysis if they are an applicant.

Caltrans covered activities were discussed including the need to include borrow and fill sites, staging area information, etc., and include assumptions for these in the covered activities chapter. It was also requested to clarify the discussion of Caltrans rehabilitation and maintenance activities. Caltrans has some additional minor edits that will be provided.

Handout #2

The structure of the text was discussed. It was requested to break-up long sentences in the text and provide more explanation of the activities. It was also requested to remove redundancy in the text. Going forward it was requested to identify the location of deleted text if moved elsewhere in the chapter. It was noted that a correction is needed -- need to correct the second section 2.3 to read 2.4.

Impact Assessment for Natural Communities (Handout #2a and #2b)

Handout #2a was discussed. This is specific to covered natural communities. The text describes the communities and the effects of covered activities (to covered and non-covered species) such as increased noise, etc., and discusses increased risk for wildfire, etc.

Handout #2b was discussed. This handout shows removal of habitat but the group was reminded that this is a GIS exercise and does not apply avoidance and minimization measures (see note at the top of the table). The development of this impact analysis for inside the UPAs is being prepared as well. This will ultimately be updated with new activities as well such as WCWD activities.

It was suggested to express percentage of habitat remaining in the Planning Area following implementation of the covered activities to a precision of at least a 10th of a percent (last column) or add a footnote to the column in the table to clarify.

A concern was raised regarding the possibility of a land owner managing lands preserved under the Plan land in a way that diminishes habitat values for covered species. This event would not be allowed to occur because whenever the IE brings any working agricultural lands under easement there will be specified management practices to maintain the values on the land and not have adverse effects on adjacent land owners.

The occurrence of a catastrophic event was discussed. Changed circumstances and where this discussion would occur in the document was discussed – could be in the Assurances chapter or in the discussion of Adaptive Management.

Monitoring and its relationship to adaptive management decision making was discussed, including the scope of possible adaptive management actions over the Plan term.

Climate change was discussed and whether or not a chapter addressing this needs to be included in the document.

For some of the UPAs no habitat loss is shown (Handout #2b). In some cases it may be a reflection of the fact that growth is not expected in those areas. It was requested to provide more information about why there was no impact in certain areas/UPAs (e.g., there is no covered species habitat present in an UPA).

Impact Assessment for Activities Outside UPAs (Handout #3)

Table 4-8 – Direct Permanent Impacts of Capital Improvement Projects Outside of UPAs on Covered Species was discussed. Covered activities may straddle a boundary and the table includes only impacts outside of the UPAs. A similar table will be provided for the natural

Handout #2

communities. It was pointed out that the impacts in the CAZs are relatively minor compared to those in the UPAs.. Fish impacts indicate zero impact because there is not a permanent removal of stream corridors.

It was suggested that for the last column of the table (Percent Remaining) to carry out the decimal point to avoid reflecting 100% remaining if this is not the case, or to remove the column entirely.

The lack of habitat models for some species was discussed, e.g., California Black Rail. It was identified that some new information is available and an effort will be made to identify if a habitat model can be created. The author of a relevant paper may be able to be contacted and Jim Estep will be contacted to discuss this.

It was asked how the issue of insufficient occurrence information on some plant species will be dealt with. The approach will be to look at how the species may be associated with certain areas and identify a maximum level of take that will be applied as well as avoidance and minimization measures.

It was explained that the Rice CAZ was renamed to Basin CAZ.

The status of the assessment of Butte County Meadowfoam was requested. It was explained that the analysis is pending as Chico's impacts need to be ironed out.

Species Habitat Preservation Objective (Handout #4)

This table was discussed and it was indicated that the table will be in Chapter 5 of the document. The table has been shared with the group in the past and shows how much preservation should be provided for under the Plan for each species. The factors used to establish habitat preservation objectives, expressed as percent of habitat in the Planning Area to be preserved, were discussed. The need to be sure the objectives can be achieved was discussed. It was requested to add more information/clarification to the objective rationale and identify the logic path for the objective. Concern with the defensibility of the percent figure was raised and that it could be perceived as being arbitrary and capricious unless it is published in the literature (need to substantiate how it was derived). It was pointed out that other factors are included that may make a certain percentage defensible. The timing of involvement by the Independent Science Panel was discussed and how the overall process will work. It was indicated that the intent is to finalize a complete draft of the conservation strategy chapter and then provide it to the panel (8 members on the panel) as it is difficult to provide piecemeal.

It was requested to check the table to be sure all covered species have been included (there are 41 covered species – all on the website).

It was indicated that for the NCCP a table will be needed for covered species and habitat types showing how many acres will be lost or converted and how many acres will be conserved as part of the Plan.

There was a discussion of how all chapters/sections of the document will feed into other sections/chapters.

Funding for the Plan was discussed and the need to show there would be adequate funding for the Plan. An economics subcontractor to SAIC will be engaged after the conservation strategy is completed to assist in that effort.

Handout #2

There was additional discussion of the factors used including the Importance of Planning Area to Statewide Habitat factor in the table. It was asked why the assessment is based on statewide habitat and this was discussed. It was agreed to change the word “importance” to “percentage” (4th column of handout). It was asked if additional factors could be used as well and some input has been provided regarding additional factors to consider such as existing threats to species. Discussed threats to species and where information can be found. It was suggested to possibly collapse some columns of the table and also and clarify with notes to reviewers. In addition, the order of the columns was discussed.

The rationale behind the ordering of the species in the chapter was discussed and alternate ways of ordering them which can be addressed going forward.

Newsletter for Fall 2009

The Fall newsletter (the 5th newsletter) was discussed and the group was asked to provide any ideas they may have for articles, etc. to Chris Devine including any pictures that they may want to include of the Planning Area. There were suggestions such as including the timeline, information about the website, and how the Plan relates to City and County General Plan updates (it was indicated that this relationship will be discussed). The newsletter should be out in late October.

Meeting Notes from August (revised) and September 2, 2009 (Handout #5a and #5b)

Meeting notes from August (revised) and September 2, 2009 were approved.

USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion

Detailed comments on Chapter 2 will be provided by USFWS. USFWS pointed out that it can often be difficult to determine if an activity is a covered activity or not. In an effort to avoid that situation, more detail on the covered activities is needed.

Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda

- The next Stakeholder meeting will be held on October 7, 2009 from 11:00 to 3:00 pm, at BCAG.

It is anticipated that for next month the draft impacts analysis should be completed as well as draft avoidance and minimization measures. The draft of the conservation measure approach for giant garter snake, etc. were discussed and the potential for providing to the group.

Additional Discussion

There was additional discussion regarding assumptions related to Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 such as staging area assumptions, assumptions on how species will respond to impact mechanisms, etc., and which chapter these assumptions should be included in.