

# Handout #3

## Meeting #38 Summary

Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP)

Stakeholder Committee Meeting

August 3, 2011, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

BCAG Conference Room

### Stakeholder Committee Attendees

Colleen Cecil (Butte Co. Farm Bureau)	Anjanette Martin (WCWD)
Bill Connelly (Co. Supervisor)	Scott McNall (CSU Chico)
Virginia Getz (Ducks Unlimited)	Richard Price (Butte Co. Ag. Comm.)
Phil Johnson (Altacal Audobon)	Suellen Rowlison (CNPS)
Maureen Kirk (Co. Supervisor)	

### Resource Agencies Attendees

Nina Bicknese (USFWS)

### Steering Committee and Staff Attendees

Jon Clark (BCAG)	Juan Pablo Galván (SAIC)
Chris Devine (BCAG)	Pete Rawlings (SAIC)

### Interested Public Attendees

Rob Capriola (Westervelt Ecological)	Barbara Vlamis (Aqualliance)
Rodney Lacey (Eco-Analysts)	Jameson Watts (NorCal Regional Land Trust)

### Associated Documents/Handouts

Agenda packet including:

1. BRCP Schedule Update (Handout #1)
2. Comments Received on First Administrative Draft BRCP Document (Handout #2)
3. Meeting Notes from June 7, 2011 Stakeholder Meeting (Handout #3)
4. Independent Science Advisors Recommendations from July 2011 Review of the BRCP Conservation Strategy (Handout #4)

### Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions and Agenda Review
2. BRCP Schedule Update (Handout #1)
3. Overview Presentation on Independent Science Advisory Panel review of Chapter 5
4. Review and Discuss Comments Received on First Administrative Draft BRCP Document (Handout #2)
5. New and Updated Conservation Strategy Graphics

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6. Meeting Notes from June 7, 2011 Stakeholder Meeting (Handout #3)
7. USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion
8. Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda

## **Introductions and Agenda Review**

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

## **BRCP Schedule Update (Handout #1)**

An updated schedule for the development of the BRCP was introduced and explained. The focus of future meetings, chapter development, and dates of public workshops were explained. It was announced that a Public Draft of the BRCP should be completed by the spring of 2012. The resource agencies will not formally endorse the plan until after their review of the final draft version, but statements of support from groups such as the Stakeholder Committee and others could be made should they so desire.

BCAG staff will visit different jurisdictions and districts of the County before public workshops are held and will participate in the workshops. It was suggested that special districts such as the mosquito control district should be consulted as well.

## **Overview Presentation on Independent Science Advisory Panel Review of Chapter 5**

Handout #4 presented the disposition table for comments and recommendations made in the Independent Science Advisors (ISA) Report on their review of Chapter 5, Conservation Strategy. Dispositions will be developed and available for review by the Stakeholder Committee in September.

Wayne Spencer, the ISA facilitator, called into the meeting and gave an overview of ISA process, recommendations and comments. The ISA reviewed the Chapter independently, shared their comments electronically, and comments were discussed via teleconference and consolidated by Dr. Spencer into the report. All advisors approved of the final version of the report.

A general comment made in the report was that an emphasis on the importance of grazing and increased flexibility in cattle management should be included in the BRCP. It was explained that large connected landscapes are important for natural ecosystems and that ranching practices have an important role in maintaining those functions. The Stakeholder Committee agreed that the issue of grazing should be given more attention in the BRCP.

Another general comment was that some areas being proposed for protection are already developed or are at high risk of being developed, especially with respect to vernal pools. It was suggested that land status be revised and prioritized for protection. SAIC indicated that prioritization for protecting natural communities will be reflected in the BRCP implementation schedule being developed for Chapter 6, *Plan Implementation*. It was commented that land status could affect the BRCP effects analysis and conservation targets, and that enrollment (or

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lack thereof) of land under the Williamson Act may be an indicator of intent to develop. It was announced that the Butte County meadowfoam strategy would be reviewed by the Stakeholder Committee next month.

Another general comment was that while Chapter 5 was organized in a logical fashion, it was not clear what actions and objectives take priority over others. A question was raised if identifying keystone species could be a possible way to organize the document. Although the BRCP may be organized in many different ways, it was explained that the document cannot be reorganized at this point in the planning process without substantial disruption to the schedule. It was commented that planning species were adopted to help determine the size of parcels to be protected. It was also commented that everything stated in the BRCP must be accomplished, and that the timing of activities will be addressed in the BRCP implementation schedule that is under preparation and will be provided in Chapter 6.

Another general comment was that citations of scientific literature, some provided in the Panel Report, should be updated and more frequently used to support certain assumptions and conclusions in Chapter 5. The ISA also noted the importance of habitat along the riparian corridors of the Sacramento River should be emphasized, and therefore perhaps another north-south riparian corridor along the river should be established. SAIC will evaluate the possibility of providing such a corridor, but noted that the Sacramento River was not included in the Plan Area and thus may preclude the ability for establishing the proposed corridor. A few of the more specific comments from the Panel were quickly announced. It was commented that different categories of species and terms, such as “planning species” and “open space”, should be better defined and described in the BRCP.

It was recommended that language prohibiting restoration of vernal pools on existing vernal pool complex should be added to avoid adverse effects on natural hydrology. It was commented that simply choosing locations for vernal pool restoration that do not degrade existing vernal pool habitat addressed the ISA’s comment. Specific questions submitted to the ISA were reviewed and discussed. In general the ISA found that the components of Chapter 5, such as proposed corridor locations, enhancement and management actions, conservation land assembly principles, and measures and objectives that address covered species stressors were defensible and adequately addressed conservation concerns in the Plan Area.

Many of the specific comments and concerns reflected the general comments previously made, such as grazing, patch size and planning species, and expanding protection of riparian areas along the Sacramento River. The ISA recommended that the Conservation Strategy could be strengthened by adopting minimum habitat patch size criteria for plants, including measures to address effects of road mortality on covered species, and providing greater justification on how protection targets were established for covered species. It was explained that more detail could be added to emphasize the importance of connectivity of protected lands, the critical role of flexibility and adaptive management with respect to grazing and road mortality, and how specific management actions will be determined for specific protected habitat areas. The ISA also noted that the targets established for oak woodland appeared low and should be reevaluated.

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The ISA confirmed that the habitat model used in the BRCP seems reasonable, but that comparison with other models and perhaps a few slight modifications may be beneficial. The management and natural conditions are critical to the future of Butte County meadowfoam and that it was difficult to say what level of conservation would ensure species survival, but that overall, the BRCP seems likely to promote the long term survival of the species. Balancing the removal of populations with increasing populations elsewhere, management, and surveys will be extremely important. It was commented that survey guidelines for Butte County meadowfoam and similar species could be developed for the Plan and that it is difficult to confirm the absence of this species through surveys. It was explained that the Butte County meadowfoam information being referenced by the ISA had not been made available to the Stakeholder Committee but that this information would be reviewed during the September meeting.

## **Review and Discuss Comments Received on First Administrative Draft BRCP Document (Handout #2)**

Handout #2 was introduced and discussed. A question was raised on screened and unscreened diversions and it was explained that the data set used was the most recent available and that descriptions would be corrected based on comments received. Changes would carry forward to the effects analysis and any other relevant sections of the BRCP. It was confirmed that all water districts signed on as parties to the BRCP.

## **New and Updated Conservation Strategy Graphics**

New figures for Chapter 5 were described and introduced. It was explained that on figures displaying GIS footprints of BRCP covered activities, avoidance and minimization measures decrease the amount of modeled habitat that would be affected by covered activities. While limits on the extent of impacts are described elsewhere the BRCP, this information is not generally conveyed in the figures. It was commented that some colors on some figures were difficult to see and that using different colors and coordinating them between figures may help. It was explained that many models had more than one color, making universal color coordination problematic. It was also commented that it is important to convey that all modeled habitat will not be protected. Adding a row to the tables on the graphic stating acreage remaining (not protected or impacted) after BRCP implementation would help clarify this point. It was explained that the figures display the maximum development allowable under the BRCP, and that while locations may change, no greater acreage than indicated in figures and elsewhere in the BRCP for each of the CAZs and UPAs can be removed.

A question was made on how species targets were set. It was explained that this information is provided in Sections 5.2 and 5.6 of Chapter 5, *Conservation Strategy*, and that the rationale for the targets will be expanded in the next BRCP draft.

It was commented that it is important to ensure that acreage values accurately reflect what is currently present in the Plan Area. It was explained that data from 2007 is used in the BRCP. It was commented that given the slow construction market and large area of land available for conservation, this is a good time to initiate a HCP/NCCP. It was commented that ultimately permitting agencies have discretion to reject future permit applications for activities that are not

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covered under BRCP if they conflict with implementation of the BRCP. There was discussion on how to best ensure that the land necessary to meet biological objectives and targets is available.

## **Meeting Notes from June 2011 Stakeholder Committee Meeting (Handout #3)**

The meeting notes from June 7, 2011 were approved.

## **USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion**

None.

## **Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda**

The date of the next Stakeholder Committee meeting is September 7, 2011.