

Handout #2

Meeting #39 Summary

Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP)

Stakeholder Committee Meeting

September 7, 2011, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

BCAG Conference Room

Stakeholder Committee Attendees

Colleen Cecil (Butte Co. Farm Bureau)	Scott McNall (CSU Chico)
Bill Connelly (Co. Supervisor)	Richard Price (Butte Co. Ag. Comm.)
Woody Elliott (CNPS)	Suellen Rowlison (CNPS)
Maureen Kirk (Co. Supervisor)	Anjanette Shadley Martin (WCWD)

Resource Agencies Attendees

Jenny Marr (DFG)

Steering Committee and Staff Attendees

Jon Clark (BCAG)	Paul Cylinder (SAIC)
Chris Devine (BCAG)	Juan Pablo Galván (SAIC)

Interested Public Attendees

Jody Gallaway (Gallaway Enterprises)	Riley Swift (Restoration Resources)
Patrick Kelly	Barbara Vlamis (Aqualliance)
Rob Schlising	Jameson Watts (NERLT)

Associated Documents/Handouts

Agenda packet including:

1. Disposition Form Regarding Science Advisory Panel Review of Chapter 5 (Handout #1)
2. BRCP Implementation Schedule – Habitat Protection and Restoration for the Purpose of Conservation (Handout #2)
3. Meeting Notes from August 3,2011 Stakeholder Committee Meeting (Handout #3)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions and Agenda Review
2. Butte County Meadowfoam Conservation Approach – PowerPoint Presentation
3. Review of Disposition Form Regarding Science Advisory Panel Review of Chapter 5 (Handout #1)
4. BRCP Implementation Schedule – Habitat Protection and Restoration for the Purpose of Conservation (Handout #2)
5. Meeting Notes from August 3,2011 Stakeholder Committee Meeting (Handout #3)

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6. USFWS/DFG/NMFS Items for Discussion
7. Action Items and Next Meeting Agenda

Introductions and Agenda Review

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

Butte County Meadowfoam Conservation Approach – PowerPoint Presentation

A presentation describing the strategy for conserving Butte County meadowfoam was presented. It was explained that the strategy (acreage targets, preserve boundaries, etc.) was not final and may be modified. Butte County meadowfoam is the primary species driving the BRCP because its entire population lies within the Plan Area. Information on the ecology of Butte County meadowfoam, the development of the habitat model for the species, the conservation strategy for the species, input from the Independent Science Advisors on the conservation strategy, and next steps for finalizing the Butte County meadowfoam conservation strategy was presented.

The natural communities and soil complexes that support Butte County meadowfoam were reviewed. It was explained that Primary Habitat supports nearly all occurrences of Butte County meadowfoam and that Secondary Habitat supports only a few scattered occurrences. This confirms that the habitat model captures the actual distribution of Butte County meadowfoam. The difference between Primary and Secondary Habitat types are the types of soil conditions included and frequency of occurrences, but the method used to define them is the same in terms of the use of vegetation/natural communities and soil types. It was explained that Secondary Habitat may be important because large areas of the Plan Area have not been surveyed for Butte County meadowfoam and the wildlife agencies wanted to be sure that a sufficient amount of habitat to capture all occurrences of Butte County meadowfoam was modeled.

The conservation strategy includes USFWS recovery goal criteria, BRCP goals, objectives, and conservation measures, and the BRCP monitoring and adaptive management program. Each of these were reviewed and discussed during the presentation. It was explained that achieving the BRCP goals and objectives will achieve the USFWS Recovery Plan recovery goal for the species. A question was raised on the recommendation from the Science Advisors that the BRCP consider including a translocation program for Butte County meadowfoam and if this could be used as a tool for mitigation (to allow development of one area and re-seeding another area with seed from the removed population). It was explained that while translocation has been successful, the BRCP would not allow translocation as a mitigation tool and that the BRCP would protect the best and largest Butte County meadowfoam populations. It was explained that the Chico Butte County Meadowfoam Preserve (CBCMP) would protect nearly all currently unprotected occurrences and connect populations that are already under protection. It was explained that while this preserve specifically targets Butte County meadowfoam, it also helps achieve conservation goals and objectives for natural communities and other BRCP covered species. The preserve protects not only occupied habitat, but habitat that buffers and supports occupied habitat. It was explained that preserve design rules ensure that the highest quality areas for Butte County meadowfoam are protected, not just any area to meet an acreage target.

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A question was raised on why areas to the north of the airport were not included in the planned preserve and it was explained that this area of Primary Habitat does not support any occurrences based on currently available survey data, is not expected to be developed, and is isolated from other habitat and occurrences. It was explained that as part of the implementation of the BRCP, this area could be protected to accomplish conservation requirements for natural communities or other covered species.

It was explained that the vast majority of the Butte County meadowfoam population occurs east of Chico and that it is necessary to protect specific sites there. North and south of Chico, the approach used for other BRCP covered species would be used to protect additional Butte County meadowfoam habitat.

A question was raised about how climate change would be addressed in the Butte County meadowfoam preserve design and it was explained that the best way to address it is to establish a preserve system that is large enough and connected enough to allow for shifts in species distributions, as the BRCP envisions. It was explained that the BRCP strategy for meadowfoam aims to conserve both the genetic and geographic range of Butte County meadowfoam.

It was explained that almost all the BRCP population would be protected under the BRCP and that only three isolated, small occurrences are expected to be removed under the BRCP, all of which are not considered critical to the recovery of the species. The removal of a Butte County meadowfoam occurrence bisected by Highway 99 and completely surrounded by agriculture and other development was discussed. The strategy requires that any removal of newly discovered occurrences would occur in coordination with the wildlife agencies and follow the criteria for protection/removal of newly discovered occurrences included in the BRCP.

It was explained that the responses received from the Science Advisory Panel on the Butte County meadowfoam Conservation Strategy were positive, with appropriate scientific caveats and concerns which are being reviewed and addressed in the strategy .

Review of Disposition Form Regarding Science Advisory Panel Review of Chapter 5 (Handout #1)

The disposition table for the Independent Science Advisory Review of Chapter 5, Conservation Strategy, was reviewed and discussed. It was explained that the Science Advisors reviewed an older version of the chapter but that the Conservation Strategy was still basically the same. It was commented that it may be good to send this to the Science Advisors since one of their comments was that it was uncertain how previous suggestions were being incorporated into the BRCP. Suggestions on the timing of surveys before and after lands are protected under the BRCP were discussed (e.g., recommending surveys be conducted as soon as possible and no later than one year after acquisition). It was explained that under the Natomas plan, technical advisory committees were used to identify sites to be acquired and while the language of the plan said that surveys should be conducted within two years, oftentimes surveys were conducted within eight months of acquisition.

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BRCP Implementation Schedule – Habitat Protection and Restoration for the Purpose of Conservation (Handout #2)

The BRCP Implementation Schedule was introduced and described as a way to present information on when the BRCP protection and restoration objectives for conservation would be met. A schedule for mitigation was not presented because this is determined by the timing of covered activity impacts on habitat and therefore not amenable to a set schedule. Since the Implementing Entity would need time to develop, acquire funding, and form relationships with landowners, less habitat is protected and restored during the first 10 years of the BRCP than later in the Plan. Most land is protected and restored during the second and third decades of implementation, and less in the last decade to ensure conservation objectives are achieved before expiration of BRCP permits. High priority natural communities and species habitat, such as Butte County meadowfoam, however, will be protected early in Plan implementation.

A question was raised as to whether or not existing protected lands are credited as contributing towards achieving BRCP land protection targets. It was explained that BRCP land protection targets are in addition to lands that are already protected. Protection and restoration targets for rice and wetland and how these targets may affect agriculture in the Plan Area were discussed. It was commented that removing rice to restore wetland habitat for giant garter snake, as well as placing rice lands under conservation easement that may limit the crops grown on agricultural land may be points of concern for the agricultural community. It was commented that counting existing rice land under protected easements as part of the BRCP target might be beneficial and alleviate some concerns from the agricultural community. It was explained that discussions would have to take place with the wildlife agencies and that existing easements would have to contain language that ensures lands are appropriately managed for giant garter snake. The affects of conservation on neighboring agricultural lands, the willing sellers method of acquiring protected land, mitigation requirements, and potential consequences should the BRCP fall short of meeting its land protection objectives were discussed. It was commented that excellent points were being raised and focused discussions with representatives of the agricultural community would take place in the near future. Other HCP/NCCPs that have achieved their targets and have gained great support from agricultural as well as development sectors were discussed.

Meeting Notes from August 2011 Stakeholder Committee Meeting (Handout #3)

The meeting notes from August 3, 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 October 5, 2011.