

MEETING NOTES

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy Users Advisory Group Meeting April 3, 2008

1. New members to the UAG
 - a. James Paxson – Hacienda Business Park
 - b. Marty Inderbitzen for Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce
2. Draft EACCS Ground Rules was distributed to the UAG for review and comment
 - a. This document summarizes the roles of the Steering Committee, Users Advisory Group and Ad Hoc Technical Working Group.
 - b. In addition, this document summarizes the communication strategies between the various groups.
3. Land Cover Mapping & Classification Discussion
 - a. Land cover map
 - i. Aerial photos were initially used and digitized to develop land cover classification and maps
 1. Next step will be to systematically ground-truth the data; this will be limited by access
 - ii. Biological data & sightings will be utilized as a cross check
 - iii. Documented occurrence will be incorporated into a modeling effort
 - b. Question: Will the EACCS be used to develop a HCP? No, the Steering Committee considered it initially. Due to limited development left in the area, a HCP would not be feasible. However, as appropriate, the EACCS can be converted into an HCP in the future.
 - c. Question: Will the EACCS differentiate between on-site and off-site mitigation? For example, development in Camp Parks will likely displace burrowing owls that nest in the area.
 - i. The EACCS will not be directing projects. Rather the EACCS is a blueprint for mitigation approaches. Certain areas, like Camp Parks, will be considered in the regional context. Further, the EACCS may proscribe a systematic mitigation approach for certain land cover types.
 - ii. The overall goal is to keep mitigation in East Alameda County.
 - iii. The EACCS will have guidelines to keep mitigation on-site.
 - d. Question: How will the EACCS speak to the quality of the habitat? For instance, what if Camp Parks is the highest quality for burrowing owls?
 - i. The development of the EACCS will not involve extensive studies on qualifying the habitat. The EACCS will provide a strategic process to help future decisions.
 - e. Note: Because the EACCS is not a HCP, individual projects will still be evaluated by the resource agencies when reviewing permit applications.
 - i. For example, with the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, a programmatic biological opinion has been issued. Individuals that use the guidelines in the strategies can tier off the biological opinion.

- f. Question: What about those species or natural communities that can't be adequately mitigated for?
 - i. The EACCS will have avoidance of certain land cover types. In addition, the EACCS may recommend higher mitigation ratios in these situations.
 - g. After receiving and incorporating comments from the Users Advisory Group, the Steering Committee will finalize the draft.
4. Focal Species discussion
- a. "Focal Species" is different from what is seen in a HCP/NCCP¹. The EACCS is interested in conserving habitat.
 - b. Table 1A & 1B lists all plant and wildlife species, respectively, considered as potential focal species. These species were evaluated under the following criteria:
 - i. Selection Criteria
 - 1. Range – is the species in the study area; factors mobility of the species
 - 2. Status – is the species sufficiently rare
 - 3. Threats – what are they and can they be mitigated
 - 4. Data Available – is the species well understood
 - ii. Other Criteria
 - 1. Are there conservation opportunities
 - 2. Are there accepted mitigation practices for the species
 - 3. Is the species included in other conservation plans in the region
 - c. Based on the above criteria, Table 2 provides a recommended draft focal species list for the EACCS.
 - d. Ground rules for discussion viability of species and incorporating history
 - i. Take known & existing information
 - ii. Can make distinction between historic occurrence & current occurrence
 - 1. Varies by species
 - 2. Dealing at a landscape level
 - iii. For example: San Joaquin kit fox & Berkeley kangaroo rat
 - 1. One participant stated that these species haven't been seen in the last 20 years. Others have documented at least five reliable sightings of SJKF in recent years and are very present in East Alameda County.
 - 2. There are issues with siting credibility. How do you validate sightings.
 - e. How will impact to non-focal species be addressed?
 - i. Depends upon the regulations.
 - ii. Non-focal species will still have to be addressed through the CEQA process.
 - iii. From a mitigation standpoint, the EACCS will not be developing a strategy for non-focal species.
 - iv. Strategy focuses & will provide for certainty for focal species. Need to limit list to a manageable size and limit to species that we have enough information about.
 - 1. Note that, in some cases, protection of focal species may be sufficient to cover mitigation for non-focal species.
 - 2. A matrix of species v. land cover will be developed. This will assist in identifying gaps.

¹ A Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Program (HCP/NCCP) lists covered species, in which a permit is attached to them.

- f. Will the EACCS be flexible enough to include new species in the future? Yes – the EACCS is meant to be a living document.
 - g. Procedure to add/change list: If a species becomes sufficiently rare, it will be analyzed at the project level through the CEQA process.
 - h. Focal species list is a planning tool and not meant to give weight to any one species.
 - i. Comments on species & wildlife list
 - i. Serpentine areas were areas of low weight. This will be reevaluated again
 - ii. Callippe silverspot butterfly was not listed as a focal species. Need more information about the Callippee.
 - iii. Recommend including:
 - 1. Foothill yellow legged frog
 - a. Occupies different habitat
 - b. In fast moving streams
 - c. Affected by road crossings, water diversions, and creek crossings
 - d. Covers riparian area
 - 2. Prairie falcon
 - a. Limited in East Alameda County
 - b. Few nesting areas
 - c. Are grassland dependent
 - d. Chance of listing? Yes - based on East Bay Regional Park District's monitoring, population is declining.
 - 3. Steelhead
 - a. Steelhead is currently not included as a focal species. Outstanding questions include: when and in what capacity will steelhead be occupying streams in the area.
 - b. Including steelhead as a focal species will bring in water, riparian, etc.
 - c. Steelhead was not included but the EACCS can be amended at later time.
 - j. There was a concern that the focal list has already been finalized. The Steering Committee has seen the list but is waiting for input by the Users Advisory Group before finalizing the list.
 - i. Any comments or recommendations from the UAG shall be forwarded to Mary Lim by Friday, April 18th.
5. Action items & next steps
- a. Questions, comments, and recommendation on the land cover classification and focal species lists - forward to Mary Lim by Friday, April 18th
 - i. Comments will be forwarded to the Steering Committee for their consideration at their May meeting
6. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, May 15th from 2 – 4 pm @ City of Dublin's Regional Meeting Room
- a. Meeting schedule: Starting in June, the EACCS UAG will meet every 2nd Thursday of every month.