

MEETING NOTES

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy Users Advisory Group Meeting August 20, 2009

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy Mission:

The East Alameda County Conservation Strategy (EACCS) will provide a blueprint for conservation of biological species in East Alameda County.

The EACCS will streamline the environmental permitting process for development and infrastructure projects by:

- Documenting important biological resources in east Alameda County
- Setting priorities for mitigation and conservation of biological resources
- Providing clear standards as to where and how to focus mitigation efforts
- Setting mitigation ratios for focal species
- Facilitate ongoing conservation programs through a coordinated approach

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1) **Steering Committee Report**

- a) The July & August meetings focused on the structure of the Conservation Goals and Objectives and forming an Implementation Subcommittee. See discussion below for more details.
- b) The Steering Committee briefly touched on the potential CEQA needs for the Conservation Strategy. In a future meeting, the Steering Committee will need to determine the following:
 - i) If CEQA is necessary.
 - ii) If it is, would a joint CEQA document be developed or would each agency prepare their own.
 - iii) USFWS noted that CEQA is not required for them to prepare a programmatic biological opinion (BO). Instead, future projects that would be appended to the programmatic BO would go through their own CEQA process.
- c) The meeting notes from the Steering Committee meetings are posted on the project website.

2) **Summary of July 21st Landowner Workshop**

- a) This was a first in a series to provide landowners with tools for conservation on private lands. Although EACCS was a topic in this workshop, it was not the primary focus.
- b) There were many new faces at this workshop.
- c) With regards to EACCS, landowners want to ensure that longtime land stewards have a say in developing management plans that also meet the USFWS and DFG's expectations.
- d) Many landowners were proud and eager to show how they have been conserving their land for the benefit of species. In addition, they have been encouraging others to do the same.
- e) Landowners want permitting to be less intimidating and more streamlined. In addition, they are looking for partnerships.
- f) Jim Robins, from Alameda County Conservation Partnership, will distribute the agenda and notes from this meeting.

3) **EACCS Implementation Committee**

- a) Committee Purpose: Ensure the EACCS is implementable through mitigation projects and other conservation efforts by landowners and conservation groups.
- b) Because of the time constraints, this subcommittee plans to have 5 meetings over the next three months.

- i) Items for each meeting will be identified in advance in order to keep the meetings very focused.
- c) The goal is to have the draft chapter complete by the end of the year.
- d) There was a concern about discussing implementation before there is a conservation strategy in place.
 - i) The Conservation Strategy will be written in parallel with the Implementation chapter. Discussing implementation now will provide practical limits to what strategies are implementable.
- e) The Implementation Chapter will consider options on keeping the Conservation Strategy alive and up-to-date.
 - i) To be effective, the EACCS must be a living document that must be revised to reflect current information.
 - ii) An oversight committee will likely need to be formed. It is not envisioned that the Steering Committee, as it exists now, will provide ongoing oversight of the EACCS after it is complete. Instead this oversight committee will likely be a cross-section of interested local agencies, environmental and conservation groups, and landowners.
- f) There was a request to have flowcharts depicting the various options/scenarios of how EACCS is incorporated in to the project planning and implementation process and the various avenues a project can take depending up the implementation tool. It was pointed out that Figure 1-2 in Chapter 1 gives an overview of the process.

4) Chapter 2 – Environmental Setting

- a) Summary of comments received to date
 - i) Definition of terms
 - ii) Spend more time linking land use to conservation value
 - iii) More detail about limits of habitat models and land cover digitizing effort
 - iv) More detail about land cover categories and justification for land cover descriptions
 - v) Emphasize importance of wildlife linkages
 - vi) More emphasis on importance of grasslands and other common habitats in the county
- b) Notable Changes
 - i) Change riverine land cover from acreage number to linear miles.
 - ii) Changed color gradient on open space figure.
 - iii) Changed Alameda whipsnake habitat distribution to a recovery based unit approach.
- c) Revised Chapters 1 and 2 will be posted on the website along with the comment matrix that shows the comments received and how they were addressed. An email will be sent out when these items have been posted.

5) Structure of the Conservation Goals and Objectives

- a) The conservation goals and objectives are the backbone of the conservation strategy.
 - i) Conservation goals are long-range, qualitative, and are truly visionary.
 - ii) Conservation objectives provide conservation targets that will collectively achieve the goals.
 - (1) Objectives should seem attainable.
 - (2) When feasible, there will be measurable objectives.
 - (3) Objectives are focused and succinct.
 - iii) Conservation actions support/achieve objectives and are more tangible.
 - (1) A single conservation action could help achieve goals and objectives at every level of the hierarchy.
- b) Goals and objectives are organized into a hierarchy
 - i) Landscape (e.g. ecosystem processes, wildlife movement, watershed function)
 - ii) Natural community (e.g. stream/riparian, grassland, wetland/pond)
 - iii) Focal species (e.g. single species or groups)

- c) Most importantly, the conservation goals and objectives will be achieved through mitigation for projects as well as other types of conservation.
- d) Comments received
 - i) Would like to know how much is really available for conservation after taking into account the planned development contained in the general plan.
 - ii) Would like to see where black oak woodland fits in. There are existing stands of this species that could not be seen by the aerial. Although they are located in places that will likely not be impacted by development (i.e. Pleasanton Ridge and Morgan Territory), want to be sure they are captured in the document.
 - iii) Follow up with East Bay Regional Park District regarding the level of protection of their land bank properties.

6) Update on Project Schedule

- a) Conservation Goals and Objectives will be complete and available for UAG review and comment in September. The October 15th UAG meeting will be focused on these goals and objectives and Chapter 3 – Conservation Strategy.
- b) The goal is to have the entire draft Conservation Strategy document complete by the end of the year.
- c) Upcoming UAG Meetings
 - i) October 15, 2009
 - ii) November 19, 2009
 - iii) January 21, 2009 (tentative)
- d) Second Community Meeting: end of January/early February (tentative)
- e) 60-day public review and comment period: February – March (tentative)

7) Next UAG Meeting Date: October 15 @ 2 p.m., Location: TBD

- a) Agenda
 - i) Conservation Goals and Objectives
 - ii) Comments on Chapter 3
 - iii) Update on Implementation