

MEETING NOTES
East Alameda County Conservation Strategy
Steering Committee Meeting
July 7, 2009

Attendees

Liz McElligott – Alameda County
Karen Sweet & Jim Robins – Alameda County Conservation Partnership
Brian Mathews – Alameda County Waste Management Authority
Eric Brown – City of Livermore
Janice Stern & Alison Ryan – City of Pleasanton
Marcia Grefsrud – DFG
Brad Olson – EBRPD
Troy Rahmig – ICF Jones & Stokes
Brian Wines - RWQCB
Kim Squires – USFWS
Jill Duerig & Mary Lim - Zone 7

Project Update/Technical Issues

- 1) Comments on open space map
 - a) UAG recommended changing the color from different shades of green to a different color.
 - b) Consider renaming the open space classifications from Types 1, 2, 3, and 4 to something more descriptive.
 - c) Consider eliminating Type 4 all together as an Open Space Classification. Some lands in type 4 could be lumped into Type 3. Lands that do not fall within the EACCS definition of open space (i.e. those that have some sort of protection) will still be classified in the land use map.

- 2) Conservation Strategy
 - a) The Steering Committee discussed what the Conservation Strategy goals and objectives should consist of.
 - i) The goals/objectives should be written in a way that it can be used to support both mitigation projects and conservation projects that are independent of project mitigation.
 - ii) There will be some instances where having measurable goals/objectives make sense in order to gauge success of the Conservation Strategy.
 - iii) We need to be careful with the nomenclature used so that we minimize misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the intent of the strategy.
 - b) The Steering Committee agreed to have a tiered set of goals and objectives as follows:
 - i) Overarching goals/objectives for the Conservation Strategy: Framework for Biological Conservation of the Focal Species
 - (1) Geographical connectivity with the East Contra Costa County HCP/NCCP and the San Joaquin County HCP would be discussed here
 - (2) Want to support what is already preserved
 - ii) Natural Communities goals/objectives
 - (1) Geographical specificity would be discussed here for each natural community.
 - iii) Focal species goals/objectives
 - (1) This will need to focus on what the focal species need in order to get to a point where the species can be delisted (i.e. recovery).

- (2) Want to ensure that Recovery Plan goals/objectives are incorporated
 - (3) Want to emphasize that the order of species protection from project impacts are: avoidance, first and foremost; minimization; and then mitigation.
 - iv) ICF Jones & Stokes will develop goals and objectives that will reflect the agreed upon tiered goals/objectives for the Conservation Strategy. The revised goals and objectives will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting.
 - c) Mitigation ratios will be discussed in a separate section in the document that discusses mitigation guidance.
 - i) The Steering Committee agreed that the Conservation Strategy needs to emphasize that projects should be geared toward avoidance and minimization measures first and foremost. It is only when avoidance and/or minimization are not feasible, that a project proponent look at the mitigation ratios to mitigate for impacts to focal species.
 - ii) In addition, the Conservation Strategy should note that mitigation should occur as close to the impact site as possible. The further away mitigation is, the higher the ratios will be.
 - d) The Steering Committee agreed that the Conservation Strategy will be more of a descriptive plan than a map-based plan.
- 3) CEQA for the Conservation Strategy
- a) In general, the local agencies will be bringing the final Conservation Strategy to their respective Boards/City Councils either as an information item or for formal acceptance/adoption.
 - b) The Conservation Strategy would be incorporated into future project CEQA documents. However, whether CEQA is required when the Conservation Strategy is accepted/adopted will be determined at that time.
 - c) The local agencies will check with their respective management/attorneys about whether CEQA would be required.
 - d) The Steering Committee will discuss this issue further at a future meeting.
- 4) Land Use Map (Figure 2-1) Revision
- a) There was a concern about lumping agriculture and rangeland as one land use type on the land use map, Figure 2-1.
 - b) Figure 2-1 is a simplified map that consolidated the existing land use designations in the county and the three cities.
 - c) Because this map reflects land use designations, the Steering Committee agreed that we need to keep the land use designations consistent with how the county and the cities designate land.
 - d) The Steering Committee agreed to delete "Rangeland" designation and keep it designated as "Agriculture" or "Large Parcel Agriculture."
- 5) Budget & schedule
- a) As of June 30th, there is \$98K left in the budget.
 - b) RCD noted that given the status of the State budget, we should no longer count on the CalFed grant to be reinstated anytime soon, if at all.
 - c) We are currently behind schedule. We anticipated the development of the Conservation Strategy to take up to 18 months and we are already past that 18-month mark.

Administrative Issues

- 1) Meeting Debriefs
 - a) June 11th Community Meeting
 - i) Approximately 40 people attended this meeting.
 - ii) Summary of the public comments have been posted on the website.
 - iii) There was a request from the community meeting to post the Steering Committee meeting minutes.
 - (1) In the interest of increasing transparency, the following things will be done:
 - (a) Posting Steering Committee meeting notes on the EACCS website.
 - (b) A new link on the website was added that will allow anyone to submit questions and comments at anytime. These questions/comments will be sent directly to Mary.
 - (c) Adding a standing item on the UAG agenda to debrief the UAG on the recent Steering Committee meetings and any responses to UAG inquiries.
 - (d) Posting the general comment log that includes response to comments on the website.
 - (2) The Steering Committee clarified that its meetings are staff meetings and there are no official binding decisions made at the Steering Committee level. Because the Steering Committee meetings are staff level meetings, the Steering Committee agreed that it should not be open to the public. As agreed upon previously, the UAG was created to serve as the forum for ongoing public review and comment of draft work products generated by the Steering Committee.
 - b) June 18th UAG Meeting
 - i) There was a recap of the Community Meeting from one week prior. Public comment notes were distributed to the UAG and general discussion.
 - ii) The majority of the meeting was spent on walking through Chapter 2 section by section.
 - iii) A review period was set with the UAG and all comments should be received prior to the next UAG meeting.
 - iv) Future UAG meetings will focus on biological goals and objectives, other components of the conservation strategy, and an update on the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy.
 - v) The Steering Committee decided to cancel the July UAG meeting due to lack of a substantial agenda and to help with budget constraints.
- 2) Steering Committee Response Letter to CNPS's February 23rd Letter
 - a) USFWS & DFG had a meeting with CNPS to discuss their concerns about the EACCS. USFWS & DFG provided them with a history of why the Conservation Strategy is being developed, it's link to other regional conservation plans, and encouraged CNPS to continue monitoring and providing their input throughout the process.
 - b) Comments on the draft response letter are due to Mary by Tuesday, July 14th.
 - c) Final letter to CNPS will be sent by July 16th at the latest.
 - d) In the future, formal comment letters addressed to the Steering Committee will receive a timely response letter from the Steering Committee.
 - e) Other comments (i.e. via email or addressed to individual agencies) and Steering Committee/consultant responses will be incorporated into the general comment log.
- 3) Implementation of the Conservation Strategy
 - a) Better engagement of the agriculture community

- i) This topic is in response to Jeff Wiedemann's email about his concerns over the potential impacts of the Conservation Strategy can have on agriculture.
 - (1) He is concerned over the viability of agriculture as some have already been impacted by the East Contra Costa County HCP/NCCP.
 - ii) The Conservation Strategy should recognize and build upon existing stewardship. Need to create a link between land management and conservation.
 - i) Want to incentivize landowners to do voluntary conservation, monitor for the conserved species, and report it. RCD has found that some landowners now want to report their species sitings; however, because of Freedom of Information Act, landowners who do voluntary conservation are not required to report their monitoring data.
 - (1) Want to foster best management practices and provide a roadmap for landowners to get more information about habitat conservation
 - (1) How to increase voluntary conservation will be a discussion item for an implementation subcommittee.
 - iii) The Conservation Strategy, particularly the implementation component, should be vetted through the Alameda County Agricultural Advisory Committee
 - b) Implementation Subcommittee has been formed
 - i) Subcommittee Chair: Karen Sweet/Jim Robins
 - ii) Subcommittee Members (to date): Steve Stewart, Brian Mathews
 - iii) The subcommittee will need to determine the scope of the implementation chapter (i.e. what questions need to be answered). Based on the scope, the subcommittee will need to solicit the appropriate people on the Steering Committee, UAG, and potentially other individuals to be a part of this subcommittee.
- 4) Upcoming Meetings
- a) Steering Committee: Tuesday, August 4th
 - b) UAG Meeting: Thursday, August 20th @ 2 pm
 - i) Agenda
 - (1) Debrief of July & August Steering Committee Meetings
 - (2) Receive & summarize comments to Chapter 2
 - (3) Discuss Biological Goals and Objectives
 - (4) Update on Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy Implementation (tentative)