

DRAFT

Yolo Habitat NCCP/HCP Steering Committee Meeting Summary June 25, 2007

Action Items

1. Scott Fleury will create a .pdf file of the Vegetation Map PowerPoint presentation. CCP will post it to the web and email it to Steering Committee members.
2. Scott Fleury will research the time of year the aerial mapping was done and report back to the Steering Committee.
3. Scott Fluery will research the difference between “Dryland and Grain Crops” and “Grain and Hay” as designated on the agriculture map and DWR maps – and report back to the Steering Committee.
4. Steering Committee members will contact Maria Wong if they have additional information to add to the Resource Management Status (RMA) database.
5. Scott Fleury will review the FWS Recovery Plan to make sure the areas are included on the vegetation map.
6. Maria Wong will develop a conduit for Chad Roberts to talk to the consultants to discuss his issues with the vegetation map.

Summary

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was convened at 6:10 p.m.

2. Introductions

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members

Keith Fichtner
Glen Holstein
John Hopkins
Chad Roberts
Mitch Sears

Planning Partner Agencies

Cori Mustin, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Kent Smith, Dept. of Fish and Game

JPA Executive Director

Maria Wong

Interested Parties

Janamarie Salocks

Bryan Landgraf

Technical Consultant

Scott Fleury, Technology Associates International Corporation (TAIC)

Facilitator

Jodie Monaghan, Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP)

3. Technical Consultant Report

Scott Fleury, TAIC, updated Steering Committee members on the work of the technical consultants. Mr. Fleury referred to a PowerPoint presentation to discuss vegetation mapping, protected lands / resource management status, and covered species selection process criteria.

The basic process of a conservation plan is to 1.) establish the biological baseline (including species locality information, vegetation mapping, and habitat distribution mapping), 2.) establish the conservation baseline (which lands are protected, and what is the resource management status), 3.) establish goals and objectives, and 4.) develop and implement the conservation plan.

The Independent Science Advisory Committee had reviewed the phase 1 mapping and recommended expansion of the mapping beyond the County line to include Putah Creek and the Sacramento River, an improved level of detail for riparian and wetlands, and improved mapping of smaller oak woodland patches. In response, the technical consultants prepared the phase 2 vegetation map, using newly available vegetation mapping sources. Mr. Fleury reported that the Science Advisors were satisfied with the results of the update. Mr. Fleury reviewed each of the maps with the Steering Committee.

Referencing the vegetation mapping, the following comments and response to questions were recorded:

- The minimum mapping unit in some cases was as small as 1/20th of an acre
- The limitations of computer printing make the Oak woodlands and chaparral vegetation categories appear to bleed together on the printed maps. The GIS layer records them as discreet areas in the data.
- The method used to develop the data layer for the Yolo County Land Cover Map is described in the handout from TAIC titled *Yolo Natural Heritage Program Vegetation Mapping Methods* dated 6-8-07.
- A map for a specific vegetation type can be created. It may be critical for addressing the needs of a specific species.
- Agriculture presents an interesting challenge. The issue is capturing the dynamic agriculture cycle that varies from month to month, and year to year as crops are rotated. A map captures a single moment in time. TAIC is currently using the DWR agriculture land map last updated in 1997. It will be important to define what year the map

represents since the crops impact species. An example is more tomatoes and less alfalfa impact raptors.

- A concern was expressed that there is no way to predict what crops will be grown in the future. Nor is there a database of past agricultural practices.
- Soil limitations will limit suite of crops that can be grown in a given area. Maria Wong is also talking to farmers about the history of agriculture in Yolo County. For example, there may be knowledge that a farmer tried a particular crop in a certain year, but didn't get the yield they expected.
- A suggestion was made to aggregate crop types for habitat planning. Irrigated row crops, hay and grain could likely be combined. Orchards and vineyards were thought to be more permanent.
- In response to the question: does the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) have a shelf life, it was noted that the Steering Committee can recommend that the HCP be updated every 5 years.
- One of the strategies to preserve critical habitat might be to identify key areas needed for critical habitat and either buy the property in fee or provide financial incentives to limit crops to just a few species-beneficial crops.
- The intent of the maps is to yield a preserve design. Once the preserve design is identified, the consultants can look at the agricultural practices in critical areas and recommend strategies to acquire easements.
- There will be 3 preserve designs: riparian/wetlands, uplands, agriculture lands.
- Agriculture could be a conservation zone along riparian corridors to support species.
- The mapping doesn't show all the riparian corridor east of Lake Berryessa, which is the western 1/3rd of the County. It is possible that there is another 1,000 acres of riparian not mapped. The issue is that if the area is only identified as oak woodlands, it doesn't fully capture the value for habitat if there is a riparian corridor running through the oak woodlands.
- It was noted that the USGS blueline streams are not shown on the map. There are no field surveys or adequate mapping of the western 1/3rd of the County; it is private land.
- Kent Smith, DFG, noted that the plan needs to identify important issues such as lack of access and be transparent about what the plan is – and what it isn't.

Mr. Fleury then discussed the establishment of the Conservation Baseline. Resource Management Status (RMS) data is compiled from such sources as county parcel maps, County protected lands data, Department of Fish and Game (DFG), City of Davis, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). TAIC will be updated the Resource Management Status over the next several months. The information will be added to the data base. A challenge is that it is a dynamic system as new easements are negotiated and old easements expire. It is expected that NRCS will have the most comprehensive layer of conservation.

The covered species selection criteria was briefly discussed. There is currently a comprehensive list of 176 species known to exist in Yolo County. Covered species refer to "those species, both listed and non-listed, conserved and managed under an approved natural community conservation plan and that may be authorized for take" (NCCO Act).

The following comments were recorded refereeing species:

- It would be advisable to use local invertebrate experts and mention who was consulted (and who was not.)
- Lynn Kinsey, Bowheart Museum, UC Davis, was mentioned as a local expert.

- The list of experts that the consultants are talking to include: Peter Moyle, M. Truin, Steve G., Jim Quinn, ICE, and Mark Schwartz.
- A recommendation was made to permit stream mollusks
- It will be important not to drop any species that might be covered under CEQA.
- It was noted that once a species is covered under a NCCP, listed and non-listed species are treated alike – as if all were listed.
- Concerned that while species are important, habitat communities are more important to support species. The Plan has to be a conservation plan – not a species plan.
- Maria Wong responded that the species level discussions are driven by permitting and the need for take authorization. The Plan can be something more if the stakeholders and funders agree on what that might be. The issue is a limited budget.
- The purpose of the Plan is to make sure species don't go extinct.
- The Plan is also supposed to provide for species recovery.
- Maria Wong commented that the NCCP standard is a higher one than the HCP standard.
- There are ways to resolve needs and limitations. Solano County developed a conservation strategy that stated: this is what we can do – and if we had more money, this is what else we could do.

The next steps for the consultants is to begin development of the biological and conservation planning goals and objectives, selection and development of the biological metrics for each species, and conduct a gap analysis to determine the current level of protection for each species.

4. Working Group Assignments

Steering Committee members were asked to volunteer for Working Group assignments. Three working groups, the initial tasks, and the members were initially identified:

Working Group	Membership
Biological Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review list of covered species • Review the veg map <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is it adequate? ○ Are the categories accurate and appropriate? 	Keith Fichtner Glen Holstein John Hopkins
Urban Interface Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities are anticipated? • What permitted activities should be covered? • 	Keith Fitchner Mitch Sears Paul Robbins
Ag Interface Working Group	

The working groups will allow more focused discussion on specific topics. The working group will present a summary of their discussions, including majority and minority opinions, at Steering Committee meetings. The Steering Committee will formulate recommendations to the JPA Board.

4. Update on JPA Activities

Maria Wong announced that the JPA had received a \$359,000 grant. She is currently applying for a Section 6 grant. Ms. Wong also reported that the JPA Board authorized bringing on board a raptor specialist and an agricultural economist. The economist will assist in looking at historical agricultural practices to help predict future agricultural trends. Also, Epstep Environmental Consulting has been brought under contract to look at Swainsons Hawk and other species – and update species studies.

6. Approval of Meeting Summary

Approval of the 4/23 meeting summary was tabled until the next meeting.

7. Public Comments

Kent Smith, DFG, commented on the issue of agriculture lands raised earlier. He suggested that a creative ways to address the question will have to be found. Also, LAO staffers will be visiting the Yolo Wildlife area in July. Mr. Smith and Ms. Wong will be making a presentation to the group. They plan to discuss the unique opportunity that can become a model for other rural communities. Mr. Smith then asked if any HCP was considered the best by the Steering Committee. East Contra Costa County was mentioned for the way it prioritized areas for acquisition. Riverside County was noted for its use of an ecosystem basis approach.

8. Adjournment of the Steering Committee to July 23, 2007

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Handouts:

Agenda

Vegetation maps

Yolo County Land Cover Map: Methods for development of the Data Layer

Yolo Natural Heritage Program Covered Species: Draft Covered Species Selection Criteria

Staff Report: JPA and Steering Committee meeting schedules

Steering Committee Meeting Dates

4-23-07 Meeting Summary