

**Yolo Natural Heritage Program
Steering Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
September 14, 2009**

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by John Hopkins

2. Introductions and Welcome

All those present introduced themselves.

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members

Dan Efseaff, Yolo RCD
Keith Fichtner, Development
Vinton Hawkins, Sierra Holdings
Glen Holstein, California Native Plant Society
John Hopkins, Institute for Ecological Health
Kent Lang, Yolo County Farmer
Yvonne LeMaitre, Yolo County Farm Bureau
Chad Roberts, Yolo Audubon Society

JPA Member Agency Staff and Liaisons

Dave Shpak, City of West Sacramento
Warren Westrup, Yolo County Parks and Resources

JPA Staff

Maria Wong, Executive Director
Susan Garbini, Student Intern
Dan Airola, Airola Environmental Consulting
Paul Cylinder, SAIC
Jim Estep, SAIC

Interested Parties

Kent Brittain, UCD Cooperative Extension

3. Approval of agenda order

The order of the agenda was approved.

4. Meeting Summaries and Action Items

The meeting summary for August 24 will be available at the next meeting.

Action Items

Some comments on Chapter 2 have been sent in, but there is still time to submit comments.

5. Presentation and initial discussion of draft Chapter 3: “Covered Activities”

Dan Airola, SAIC [see ppt handout]

Discussion

Q: How do we define “complete” descriptions? What level of detail is appropriate? Other plans have a lot more specificity.

Reply: We need to get better guidelines from the federal and state agencies. Specificity has more to do with the level of impacts and how we assess impacts. The plan is “outcome based” for species and natural communities and, therefore, it is less important to describe specific activities.

Ch. 3 describes activities

Ch. 4 describes effects of activities

The strategy is to write general enough to allow for flexibility over 40-50 years. With too much detail, we risk that any activity not on the list will not be covered.

The Fish & Wildlife Service has been testing our limits with respect to description of covered activities. The strategy is to start with less and add more as required.

The level of detail is also related to the scope of the plan. Our approach is to develop a broad, balanced conservation plan that can be extended in the future. Thus, there is less focus on details.

Q: But too broad may leave too much leeway. What about the role of Cal Trans or other agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers and DWR?

Reply: We will see partnerships with agencies. We have chosen to stay away from fish issues in the Delta area. Other agencies can use the HCP for compliance with terrestrial issues. For example, SACOG is conducting a six-county assessment for their permitting and are encouraging a collaborative process for regional permitting. We could bootstrap that effort on this plan.

Q: What is the process for including other permittees (e.g. Cal Trans, flood control districts)?

Reply: There is a certificate of inclusion for “third parties,” which certifies their participation. Many agencies are waiting to see how the plan is proceeding.

Q: There appears to be some confusion about whether to include or incorporate existing projects and about what is covered by the plans. Often agencies don’t seem to work together well. Would the other agencies be willing to operate through our plan?

Reply: We can discuss these issues in more depth in a special working session.

Q: What about information for Section 3.1: Residential, Industrial, and Commercial Development

Reply: We need to know what the growth requirements are so that we can ensure that future flexibility is covered.

Q: Are we going to cover solar power generation facilities?

Reply: Yes, alternative energy is a centerpiece of the General Plan. If you don't cover it, you might encounter it in the future as a 800-lb gorilla! We need to develop impact analysis, but it is difficult to do impacts without knowing how many acres are involved. There are many options for permitting – both under the plan and outside the plan.

Q: Is it a voluntary agreement?

Reply: Developers will have to work with the HCP. It is a double tracking permit process. You can get take permits under the plan or you can go to agencies with separate proposals. But the agency may advise them to go under the HCP. If a development footprint conflicts with the HCP, then it must agree with the plan.

Q: What about “permanent” vs. “temporary” activities?

Reply: In some areas we can assume that activities are temporary, in others it is ongoing. It depends on the area, the habitat, and the species. In some cases, monitoring needs to be ongoing. In other cases, a one time permit request for avoidance or mitigation, etc. may be appropriate.

Indirect effects of development on wildlife movements lead to fragmentation of the landscape. Models that show indirect effects for species' movement – both from existing development and from new development – will be built into the impact areas. The plan itself can have impacts and result in “take”, including management activities.

Q: Some lands have no management costs, e.g. fuel management, fire breaks. Who will be responsible for management costs? Where is the funding for management and operations?

Reply: This needs to be worked out. After we describe the strategy, we need to estimate management and maintenance costs. Then we have to identify a source of funds. There is potential for local funding (from applications) and federal and state funding (from government). We will be figuring out sharing of costs over time.

Q: Are impacts related to species or are they general? Doesn't money have to track with the species that is being mitigated?

Reply: It can be by area, type of landscape, or a per acre fee. It will vary. It's not accounted for on an acre by acre basis, yet it does have to track the amount of loss. In terms of a detailed credit-debit accounting system, it has more flexibility. This is the benefit of a regional plan.

Q: How much “legalese” is in the definitions? Do we need to explicitly cover everything?

Reply: We will probably leave in some ambiguity in order to provide flexibility for the future. We will provide a list of acronyms and a definitions section.

6. Continued discussion of draft Chapter 2: “Existing Conditions”

Dan Airola, SAIC [see ppt handout]

Comment: Chapter 2 is badly written and has a lot of incorrect information. We are asked to “rubber stamp” whatever is written, but this is not a good system.

Reply: We’re sending out the chapters in advance for review and feedback -- we want your input. We will also send out a draft later for public review. It is not the intention to “rubber stamp” the drafts. This is an open, transparent process.

7. Progress report on development of draft Riparian Conservation Strategy

Maria Wong]

Riparian habitat is a crucial element for conservation in Yolo County. A meeting will be held for development and review of the draft riparian conservation strategy in the next few weeks, followed by a process for public discussion and comment.

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8. Working Group Updates

- *Biological Working Group*

The Biological Working Group is planning to meet to discuss some definitions and terms that are used in the report. We need to be sensitive to the use of specific terminology, e.g. “prairies” becoming an alternative term for “native grasslands”. These terms relate to a changing conservation vision.

- *Agricultural-Habitat Interface Working Group*

The Agricultural Working Group is finishing up lists of agricultural activities and practices based on seasonal timing. These will be transmitted to Maria for use in the plan. When this group resumes meeting, we will need to have some expertise about food safety issues, concerns about chemical pollution, etc.

- *Urban Habitat Interface Working Group*

We are gathering information about impact analysis from covered activities. The group will discuss governance issues when they resume meeting. Anyone who wants to participate in this group is welcome to volunteer.

9. Public Comment

Bart Cocke of Woodland was named the statewide flood plain manager of the year.

10. Announcements and Updates

The JPA Board will meet on September 21 at 5:30 pm. There are some BDCP workshops coming up – announcements are available on their website. They have just issued an update on their conservation plan.

We will make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors tomorrow on the YNHP's traveling exhibit.

Please communicate to the group you represent and bring back their concerns for discuss at our meetings.

We will be scheduling a field trip to the Chickahominy Creek Ranch to view their restoration projects in the next few weeks. This is an important project for restoration on the riparian corridor.

11. Summary and Next Steps

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, September 28 , at 6:00 p.m. in the Atrium Training Room, at the Yolo County Administration Building, located at 625 Court Street, Woodland.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.