

**Yolo Natural Heritage Program  
Steering Advisory Committee  
Riparian Conservation Strategy Workshop  
Meeting Summary  
December 14, 2009**

**Note:** *“The policy in preparing meeting summaries is to produce a record of discussion by all participants. Statements do not necessarily reflect the views of the YNHP Steering Advisory Committee or the JPA Board of Directors.”*

### **Action Items**

- A working group will meet with our consultants to work on a definition of “riparian” for the next meeting. *Volunteers:* Chad Roberts, Glen Holstein, John Hopkins, Steve Greco

### **1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, Meeting Objectives, and Meeting Approach**

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Steering Advisory Chair, John Hopkins and Yolo NHP Executive Director, Maria Wong. The order of the agenda was approved. This is the second of several planned meetings to develop a shared understanding about riparian conservation in Yolo County as part of the habitat conservation plan and to institute a process for ensuring continued public participation throughout the remainder of the planning process. The conservation strategy for the Yolo NHP is in the early stages and there is still an opportunity for input by the public and stakeholders.

Attendees and staff introduced themselves and were welcomed. New YNHP employee, Kate Montieth was introduced. [See *List of Attendees* at end of summary.]

### **2. Approve Meeting Summary for First Workshop (10/26/09)**

The draft meeting summary for the first Riparian Conservation Strategy Workshop, held on 10/26/09, was discussed and approved with minor changes. It was agreed that a statement should be added to the meeting summaries that *“The policy in preparing meeting summaries is to produce a record of discussion by all participants. Statements do not necessarily reflect the views of the YNHP Steering Advisory Committee or the JPA Board of Directors.”*

### **3. Riparian Conservation Strategy Workshop (continued from October 26, 2009)**

#### **Meeting Objectives**

- Provide a synthesis of the discussion at the first meeting
- Answer questions raised at the first meeting
- Continue riparian conservation strategy discussion
- Discuss and reach agreement on a process to ensure continued riparian stakeholder input throughout the remainder of the HCP/NCCP planning process.

- Determine the next steps in the process.

The riparian conservation strategy is one component of the entire Conservation Plan for Yolo County. Riparian habitat, however, occurs throughout the county and connects Upland and agricultural lands. The riparian plan fits into a bigger picture; however, it is important that it is robust, since it is an important part of the overall plan. We should keep in mind that it won't meet all the needs required for the comprehensive plan over the next 40-50 years. We can only project future conditions with limited accuracy. Some of the HCP/NCCP language is purposely designed to be flexible to accommodate unanticipated changes and avoid excessive constraints on the future. We must be careful not to solve the wrong problem.

Our purpose is to progress toward a final plan. This will require a shared understanding, which will enable us to work through differences and reach agreement. To this end, we must allow all views to be expressed and acknowledge differences. Stakeholder input is important to our process and needs to be captured.

### **Facilitated Discussion [see ppt handout]**

#### ***National Academy of Sciences "Riparian" Definition***

"Riparian areas are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and are distinguished by gradients in biophysical conditions, ecological processes, and biota. They are areas through which surface and subsurface hydrology connect water bodies with their adjacent uplands. They include those portions of terrestrial ecosystems that significantly influence exchanges of energy and matter with aquatic ecosystems (i.e., a zone of influence). Riparian areas are adjacent to perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams, lakes, and estuarine-marine shorelines."

[National Research Council, 2002, *Riparian Areas – Functions and Strategies for Management*]

Older definitions are structural; the NAS and State Water Resources Control Board definitions are based on functions of riparian areas, particularly with regard to habitat, water quality, and sedimentation. *Riparian* refers to streams, rivers, lakes, and sometimes the ocean. All aquatic areas have a riparian zone.

QUESTION: What about areas with shallow groundwater? These might function in a similar way.

RESPONSE: These areas are not really riparian, although they may share important habitat characteristics with riparian areas.

QUESTION: Does the definition exclude channelized zones, drainage ditches?

RESPONSE: Regulation is not the same as scientific definition. A lot of previously riparian systems have been channelized. We need to be flexible and look at functionality. These do not have to be natural systems. We could add the idea that channels or canals could be part of our definition.

COMMENT: Our objective is to deliver to the Department of Fish & Game a document they can easily approve. Perhaps a working group could meet with our consultants to work on a definition for the next meeting. The group agreed and the following volunteers will work to develop a riparian definition for the plan: Chad Roberts, Glen Holstein, John Hopkins, Steve Greco.

## **Priorities for the Riparian Conservation Strategy**

The purpose of the riparian conservation strategy is twofold: to provide mitigation to offset impacts from covered activities and to accomplish conservation goals related to habitat and biological functions for targeted species.

Approaches to achieving these goals include (1) protecting existing habitat, (2) enhancing degraded habitat, and (3) restoring habitat at appropriate sites. Priorities among these approaches need to be determined. There are a number of options and questions involved in establishing priorities. For example, what criteria should be used for selecting key areas, e.g. large areas, most intact, those with key vegetation types, those closest to the original, or with a broader distribution? The focus of the plan will vary based on goals. Viewpoints vary about what are the most important parameters.

COMMENT: It is important to have riparian areas throughout the landscape, and they should be well distributed in all the places to be sustained by the aquatic environment. Some restoration ecologists think that “patches” can be more successful in achieving our goals than corridors.

RESPONSE: We have to think in terms of ecosystem function in setting priorities. It is necessary to define hydraulic conditions essential to the species of concern. Hydrology is a driver for riparian sustainability.

QUESTION: Is flooding frequency available?

RESPONSE: We have a way to get at this information, but don't have it at the level of detail of interest. The DWR FloodSAFE program is gathering that information for Capay Dam, Willow Slough, and for portions of Putah and Cache Creeks. It will be available in the future as we develop the plan.

COMMENT: We need to set realistic and achievable goals and objectives for the implementing entity, not specific locales. We could set a goal for how much water is needed to support riparian habitat restoration. Some of the potential restoration land is currently used for agriculture, and will be subject to policy constraints. We must balance the overall goals of riparian habitat, other habitat, and other land uses.

COMMENT: Principles need to be established to give the highest priority to zones like nodes, encouraging the expansion of currently existing “shreds” and “shards” of remnant riparian habitat. We can build off those restored zones to make them more functional.

COMMENT: The approach needs to be incentive-based rather than “taking” land for habitat. For example, tailwater ponds have benefits for landowners and habitat.

RESPONSE: The concept of “willing” owners cooperating is the foundation of the plan. A lot of effort is underway to place values on ecosystem services as the basis for encouraging incentive-based cooperation.

COMMENT: We can't rely on the protection of covered species to protect riparian areas. We will need to think more broadly about conservation needs.

COMMENT: Parcel size is important to the process. We should think about subdividing large parcels to make key habitat areas more affordable for purchase.

RESPONSE: Generally, easements are a better way to go than purchase of land. Most landowners will be unwilling to sell land because of riparian water rights. Also, costs for splitting parcels are high. The landscape is large enough for habitat protection, species protection, and agriculture. However, we have limited resources and need to set priorities.

COMMENT: The cost and efficacy of management and maintenance of properties is another important characteristic that needs to be factored into land selection.

COMMENT: The top priority should be to preserve what already exists and use that as a base for enhancing and preserving functions. Biological functions and diversity will come from protecting existing riparian areas, but funding is needed to expand into new, adjacent areas.

RESPONSE: The countywide focus is consistent with our goals. We need to articulate approaches that will make habitat conservation and agriculture more compatible. It is best to try to emphasize multiple, mutually beneficial functions: (1) habitat, (2) water quality, (3) flood management.

QUESTION: Should the working group task encompass these aspects?

RESPONSE: Our overall approach has been to incorporate multiple goals and objectives.

COMMENT: This plan needs to focus on habitat issues as the top priority. Other goals are not the priority of this plan. Can we do it all? How much do we do?

COMMENT: We have said we want more riparian habitat. That implies we need to have a many-faceted strategy. Prioritization will entail looking at the system as it links to other activities that affect the desired outcomes.

COMMENT: We should concentrate on the connectivity between delta areas and streams.

COMMENT: Concerns about vegetation must also be crucial.

COMMENT: None of this will happen without a willing landowner; therefore, it must be interesting to landowners. Retired and affluent landowners are currently more likely to participate. Degradation has occurred in the systems in the hills, especially affecting vegetation in the foothills and above the foothills. In these areas, substantial modification of riparian systems has occurred.

COMMENT: Easement or acquisition will be required for long-term protection. We need baseline information to know what has happened to the land.

#### **4. Discussion of Stakeholder Input Process**

Deferred to next workshop.

## **5. Summary and next steps**

At the next workshop [date TBD], we will discuss and agree on a process for stakeholder input.

The question was asked whether the group is comfortable with the staff producing a preliminary “straw” proposal for consideration at the next meeting? It is difficult to make progress in a general discussion and is often helpful to have something on the table to consider. There was unanimous consent.

## **7. Announcements and Updates**

None

## **8. Adjourn**

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

### **LIST OF ATTENDEES**

Ben Adamo  
Granite Construction Co.

Jim Baxter\*  
CSUS/Davis resident

Bruce Boyd  
City of Davis

Miles Daprato  
Audubon California

Jim Etters  
Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

Steve Greco  
UC Davis

Vinton Hawkins\*  
Sierra Holdings

Glen Holstein\*  
California Native Plant Society/Tuleyome

John Hopkins\*  
Northern California Conservation Planning Partners

Matt Keasling  
Taylor & Wiley  
Chris Lee  
Yolo County Board of Supervisors, Dist. 2

Yvonne LeMaitre\*  
Yolo County Farm Bureau

Stefan Lorenzato\*  
Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District

Lynnel Pollock  
Cache Creek Conservancy

Kent Reeves  
Yolo County Parks & Resources

Chad Roberts\*  
Yolo Audubon/Tuleyome

Michelle Smira  
MMS Strategy

Charles Tyson  
Reynier Fund

Kathryn Tyson  
Reynier Fund

Warren Westrup  
Yolo County Parks & Resources

Jeanette Wrynski  
Yolo County Resource Conservation District

John Young  
Yolo County Agriculture Department

**YNHP Staff and Consultants**

Maria Wong  
Susan Garbini  
Dan Airola  
Paul Cylinder  
Jim Estep  
Kate Montieth