

**Yolo Natural Heritage Program
Steering Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
August 9, 2010**

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

- Plan a November meeting/presentation on the YNHP agricultural forecasting model and the agricultural conservation strategy to the Yolo Farm Bureau.
- Post Five-Point Strategy on YNHP website.
- Update the SAC membership list on the YNHP website.
- The YNHP Biological Working Group to examine the appropriate use of the CWHR (California Wildlife Habitat Relationships) system in our plan.

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:20 p.m. by Yolo Natural Heritage Program Steering Advisory Committee Co-Chair, John Hopkins.

2. Presentation and Question & Answer session on the YNHP Agricultural Forecasting Model used in the YNHP agricultural conservation strategy

Dr. David Sunding, Berkeley Economic Consulting and UC Berkeley

Dr. Sunding explained the YNHP Agricultural Forecasting Model, which is a tool for valuing agricultural lands as habitat for species included in the YNHP plan. Information about the model is also available on the YNHP website under the “Agricultural Conservation Strategy” portal. Discussion following the presentation focused on whether the model was useful for future monitoring of how agricultural lands provide habitat for covered species and for planning interventions as needed once the plan is in effect. It is particularly useful for dealing with likely changes in cropping patterns and determining how these will affect available habitat for particular species covered in the plan.

Dr. Sunding’s ppt presentation is posted on the Agricultural Portal of the YNHP website.

[Recess: 4:30 – 5:00]

3. Reconvene Meeting

The meeting was reconvened at 5:05 pm by SAC Co-Chair, John Hopkins.

4. Introductions and Welcome

All those present introduced themselves.

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members

Steve Greco, UC Davis

Glen Holstein, CNPS/Tuleyome

John Hopkins, Institute for Ecological Health

Yvonne LeMaitre, Yolo County Farm Bureau

Stefan Lorenzato, Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District

Chad Roberts, Yolo Audubon Society

Jeannette Wrynski, Yolo RCD

Denise Sagara, Yolo Farm Bureau

JPA Member Agency Staff and Liaisons

Bruce Boyd, City of Davis

Rick Landon, Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner

Cindy Tuttle, Yolo County, Central Administrator's Office

Sandra White, City of West Sacramento

JPA Staff

Maria Wong, Executive Director

Kate Montieth, Assistant to the Director

Susan Garbini, Graduate Fellow

Pete Rawlings, SAIC

Dave Sunding, Berkeley Economic Consulting and UC Berkeley

Interested Parties

Michele Clark, Yolo Land Trust

Betsy Marchand, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

Gonzalo Rodriguez, Brookfield Land Co.

Charles Tyson, Yolo County landowner

5. Approval of agenda order

The order of the agenda was approved.

6. Meeting Summary and Action Items

The draft meeting summaries for the SAC meetings on June 28 and July 12 were approved with minor changes.

Action Items

- *Send out (and post) schedule of SAC meetings through December 2010*

The schedule has been sent out and posted.

- *Post the Ag Forecasting Presentation on the Agricultural Portal on the YNHP website (from the “Seventh Annual Habitat Conservation Planning from Tahoe to the Bay*

This presentation has been posted on the Agricultural Portal.

- *Explain why the agricultural habitat suitability rating system is not applicable to non-agricultural habitat.*
- *Provide justification for why we are basing strategies for agricultural lands on habitat unit values.*
- *Ask the Yolo County Farm Bureau to review the Agricultural Forecasting model.*
- These issues will be addressed in today’s presentations.

- *Upload information on Agricultural Forecasting Model onto Agricultural Portal on YNHP website home page.*

All information has been uploaded.

- *Create a “Suggested Reading List” with citation, information about where to find each article (e.g. Shields Library, UCD), and/or links to articles as possible.*

The list is in preparation.

- *Include in the YNHP plan ideas on research opportunities and how to stimulate research on agriculture, habitat, and conservation in the Central Valley.*

This item has been noted.

- *Send the “Five-Point Policy” to SAC members (and post on YNHP website).*

Policy has been prepared and will be posted.

7. Presentation and discussion regarding revised Chapter 5 outline, and draft Goals and Objectives. Pete Rawlings, SAIC

The draft biological goals and objectives are a section of Chapter 5, Conservation Strategy, of the Yolo NHP HCP/NCCP document. The conservation measures that describe the actions that will be implemented under the Plan to achieve each of the biological goals and objectives and the assembly principles that will guide acquisition of conservation lands will be presented in a separate Chapter sections.

Discussion

Question: What about an emphasis on conserving ecological functions and processes (as contrasted with habitat areas)?

Response: Species-level goals are very specific, since the regulatory agencies are looking at particular covered species. However, the NCCP aspect of the plan does refer to conserving the “community”, which encompasses these functions and processes.

Question: Where do we include “unprotected annual grassland” or “alkaline prairie”?

Comment: On p. 1, line 20, “diverse vegetation communities” should be replaced with “landscape cover types”.

Question: What is the process for determining numbers for habitat values on the non-agricultural lands?

Response: The agricultural habitat targets developed from the Agricultural Forecasting Model will inform the non-agricultural habitat targets.

Question: How do the plan goals play outside protected areas?

Comment: We should have a proviso for including lands outside protected areas that meet the goals of the plan. There should be incentives built into the plan to encourage landowners or agencies to enhance habitat (even if not in perpetuity), e.g. planting a beneficial crop.

Question: Could we assign habitat value to non-agricultural land? How about contracts that are limited in time (e.g. 10 years)?

Response: Two different perspectives are involved: the state NCCP and the federal HCP. Various approaches can be designed to maximize habitat protection or mitigation in either case.

Question: The definition of “agricultural” vs. the definition of “riparian” (e.g. sloughs) will make a difference to homeowners and influence whether they voluntarily join in. It is also important how we define “covered activities”.

Response: We have scheduled meetings to define practices of agencies and landowners that fall into the category of “covered activities”.

Comment: One approach is to keep riparian areas in an early successional state, which would allow for operation and management activities

8. Habitat Suitability Valuation of Natural Lands – response to SAC questions

Comment: Natural communities are also dynamic (as are agricultural lands) – and some are changing rapidly. Where this concept may be useful is in the case where a species is a specialist. Perhaps we don't have the mapping and data to support this approach. However, if we don't recognize the potential for dynamic change in our plan, we have no ability to parse habitat suitability (e.g. the difference between early and late riparian habitat).

Comment: The California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) system has many models that could be useful to our plan. Why are we not using them? We need to use the CWHR system as part of the implementation phase of our plan and incorporate that approach into our adaptive management strategy.

Response: This will be a topic for the Biological Working Group to address.

9. Working Group Reports

- *Biological Working Group:* The Biological Working Group will schedule meetings to complete a list of tasks. They will continue to examine the concepts of “matrix” and “corridors” for the plan. A wetland and riparian strategy, is under review and they will continue to monitor other the actions of other agencies in this area that affect the plan. They will also examine whether the incorporation of the CWHR system is useful for the implementation phase of the YNHP plan.
- *Agriculture Habitat Interface Working Group:* The Ag Working Group is on hiatus until winter.
- *Urban Interface Working Group:* A brown bag lunch will be convened in September to prepare the basis for discussions by the Urban Interface WG on governance and implementation issues for the plan, along with covered activities.

10. Public Comment

- The membership list for the SAC needs to be updated on the YNHP website.
- The YNHP participated in the Yolo County Exhibit at the California State Fair. The emphasis for Yolo County was on agricultural and farming. Kate Montieth did an excellent job in organizing our component of this exhibit.

11. Announcements and Updates

- The YNHP will have an exhibit booth at the Yolo County Fair, including free seeds, magnets, bumper stickers, and posters. Volunteers are needed to staff the booth and SAC members are encouraged to stop by.
- The California Climate Action Plan is in preparation. Agriculture is already below 1990 levels (required in the plan). We are on the distribution list.

- Input on the Flood Protection Plan, which proposes removal of vegetation from levees, is encouraged. It is important to provide information on how flood planning will affect habitat in Yolo County.
- The Delta Stewardship Council has released the second draft of their interim plan. The Five Counties Group (including Yolo County) sent a letter of comment. Our plan will be subject to review and consistency with the final Delta Stewardship Plan. It is important to have our plan in place sooner rather than later to avoid another layer of review.

12. Summary and Next Steps

The next meeting will focus on the presentation and review of the draft monitoring and research plan.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm. The next meeting will be held on Monday, August 23, at 5:00 pm.