

SANTA CLARA VALLEY
HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN/NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN
Stakeholder Group Meeting | January 15, 2008 | Morgan Hill Community & Cultural Center

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stakeholder Group Members:

Keith Anderson (General Public)
Jack Bohan (representing General Public)
Kevin Bryant (California Native Plant Society)
David Collier (Sierra Club)
Craig Edgerton (Silicon Valley Land Conservancy)
Justin Fields (Santa Clara County Cattlemen's Association)
Sequoia Hall (Santa Clara County Open Space Authority)
Jan Hintermeister (Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission)
Virginia Holtz (League of Women Voters)
Rick Hopkins (Home Builders Association of Northern California)
Jack Sutcliffe (Santa Clara County Farm Bureau)
Carolyn Tognetti (Save Open Space Gilroy)
Lloyd Wagstaff (The Nature Conservancy)

I. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & OBJECTIVES

Joan wished the group a happy new year and introduced visitors. She also noted that after January, the schedule for meetings will return to normal. Joan also noted that Keith Anderson's affiliation had changed, and he will now be representing the general public. Keith shared that his organization, South Valley Streams for Tomorrow, had disbanded after a decade of successful work.

II. DISCUSSION OF PROJECT SCHEDULE AND FEBRUARY MEETING DATE

Ken Schreiber proposed moving the February meeting date in order to give the stakeholder group an additional opportunity to review material before it goes to the Liaison Group. He suggested February 12th as a potential date for this. Carolyn asked whether this meeting would reshape the agenda that would otherwise have been for the 26th. The meeting on the 12th would be an opportunity to review and make comments on one-page summaries of the six items going to the Liaison Group.

III. DISCUSSION OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING PROGRAM

Brenda Johnson of the California Department of Fish and Game and Paola Bernazzani of Jones and Stokes presented on long-term and large-scale monitoring programs for regional conservation plans.

Craig asked what would happen if there is no longer state funding available for state monitoring. The state is primarily functioning as a support and structure to the plan monitoring—the plan is the primary source of funding. The implementing agency is ultimately responsible for this.

David Collier asked whether the plan needed to have an added responsibility for a species built in if that species was in trouble in another area of the state outside of the study area, in a situation in which the state was doing landscape-level monitoring and management.

Bob Power asked how anticipation of natural disaster had changed in the wake of the Coe fire earlier this year. This is a big concern—for instance, in San Diego the plan has continually been reassessed in the wake of

new fires. The San Diego plan management and monitoring plans are developed with an understanding that the reserves will burn at various points, although the frequency and the extent of the fires were surprising. Contingencies should be built into the plan to account for fire and other natural disaster risks, since they may change the conservation value of reserve lands.

Darryl Wolf of CalFire shared his experience working with MidPeninsula, the Coe fire, and other reserve land fires to identify some ways in which a partnership between the implementing agency and CalFire could benefit the project.

Paola noted that fire is considered a changed circumstance, so this triggers specific remedial efforts that can be funded by a separate pool of funding.

Brenda noted that in many cases, biologists are now opting to wait and see what happens rather than taking action in response to burned areas.

David asked if there were any recommendations being made with respect to success criteria. At this point, the recommendation is simply around what a success criterion should look like—no specific criteria are being developed.

Ken Schreiber shared observations from a presentation by Coe park staff on how much they appreciated the CalFire relationship with the park staff in fighting fires.

IV. DISCUSSION OF COST MODEL AND CHAPTER 9 COMMENTS

Keith asked if comments would be distributed to the stakeholders. Possibly, if the compilation could be prepared by Ranu.

Sequoia noted that he feels that the cost estimates for per acre purchase are quite low based on a survey of the area. These costs should include transaction costs and other associated costs, which increases per acre cost.

Keith observed that there was an absence of a cost estimate for re-operation of Pacheco Reservoir as a conservation measure. This will be included if there is direction from the partner agencies to include this as a line item.

David Zippin noted that the land cost may be tied to an index such as the federal home price index, which is one of the few somewhat reliable indicators. Craige asked if the home index was really an appropriate measure—wouldn't actual sales be a better indication? Comparable sales will also be used as data points.

Brenda agreed with David that whatever the Habitat Plan identifies will be the contingency—each plan is different, and handles potential problems and changes differently. Early plans had no contingencies for unforeseen circumstances, so this is a good start. Darryl Wolf from CalFire also noted that in some cases, unforeseen circumstances like fires may come with additional funding from state or federal resources, as well.

V. DISCUSSION OF PERMIT TERM

Ken and David introduced the permit term conversation and noted that it was on the January Liaison Group discussion agenda. Initially, the Management Team presumed that the permit term would be fifty years, but it became clear that not all stakeholders were comfortable with a term of that length.

A fifty-year permit term with five-year major evaluations and annual assessments was proposed. All land acquisition would be completed by year 45. The term would also include the annual reporting requirements for the adaptive management and monitoring program. While some uncertainty remains with a longer permit

term, some of this can be addressed through policies of adaptive management. The wildlife agencies are the final check, since they can pull permits at any point if they feel the plan is not effective.

Lloyd felt that it would be important to think along the lines of the acquisition timeline—how many years are required to acquire the reserves? He doesn't want to see this move on a cash basis alone.

Virginia wondered if there was any further development on splitting the years for different areas. Is there any need for this? Probably not, though it is possible to do. Unless we have to do this, there's no reason to add this level of complexity.

Craig asked what might happen if the permit term were reduced to 30 years, given that this is a beginning plan. Would another plan be written in 31 years to extend this work? Possibly. The reference was primarily intended to highlight that this is the first comprehensive program for conservation throughout the study area—it's a beginning in that it's the first step in that direction, not necessarily the first in a series of HCP plans.

The acquisition strategy is also very dependent on willing sellers—there may be lapses in acquisitions that are due to lack of willing sellers, not lack of funds.

David Collier asked what would happen if species start to die out—what is the plan able to do about this? The material he has seen thus far seems to be dealing with small-scale correction to meet targets. However, there does not seem to be any contingency for an extreme failure—a looming extinction, for instance. He would like to know that under reasonable circumstances, there will still be flexibility in year 40 to respond to severe threats.

David C. wonders if it is possible to build in an evaluation at a higher level—a threshold, so to speak, based on advice from expert scientists, that would trigger a moratorium on permits until a study could be completed.

Carolyn echoed David's concerns and added that she is concerned about the plan's base for projections, such as ABAG's projections, which only go 22 years forward.

Joan suggested that based on no significant opposition to the 50 year term proposal with the caveats Ken described. (land acquisition by year 45, 5 year major evaluations with scientific and public review and annual reports on monitoring activities), be presented to the Liaison Group. The term recommendation would come from the Management Team and it would not be characterized as proposal that was endorsed or voted upon by the stakeholders. Ken would describe it as a proposal that was reasonably well-received, but raised specific concerns that it appeared they would be able to address. There was no specific opposition to the 50 year term length expressed in the meeting. Ken will share the feedback he receives from the Liaison Group at the next meeting.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NEXT STEPS

The next meeting will be held two week earlier at 4 pm to 6:30 pm, on February 12, 2008. The meeting room will be announced when the meeting materials are sent out.