MEETING NOTES

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy
Users Advisory Group Meeting
December 11, 2008

1) Recap of October 16th Group Site Tour
   a) Just over 20 people attended the site tour.
   b) Sites visited included: EBRPD's 2 mitigation sites at Brushy Peak; Springtown Preserve; and Tim Koopmann's Ranch.
   c) Proposed sites for Spring tour: Ohlone Mitigation Bank & EBRPD's Vasco Caves Mitigation site

2) Additional questions/comments on Phase 1 work products
   a) Phase 1 included
      i) Focal species selection criteria & list
      ii) Public open space classification criteria & map
      iii) Land use classification and map
      iv) Land cover mapping process & map
   b) How is EBRPD's land bank, which is not open to the public or managed for conservation, prioritized on the open space map?
      i) Still considered protected land
      ii) The open space classification is based upon the likelihood land would be sold off to a developer.

3) Discuss preliminary draft habitat models
   a) Habitat models
      i) Purposes
         (1) To provide information on where species *could* occur based on habitat characteristics
         (2) Creates a baseline
         (3) Highlights areas where mitigation could occur for a given species
         (4) Determines where species surveys are needed
         (5) Gives context to the regulatory agencies when they are reviewing a project
      ii) Information used to develop the models includes:
         (1) Species occurrence data
            (a) Based upon positive sitings
            (b) Does not tell us what type of habitat or quality of habitat that the species were found
            (c) Some data came from the surveys done as part of a project's environmental analysis process
         (2) Known life history about species habitats and dispersal to determine distribution patterns
            (a) Information includes: land cover types; soils; elevation or slope characteristics; known dispersal or movement distances for wildlife; specific habitat features (e.g. aquatic habitat); and any other life history requirements that can be replicated on GPS.
            (b) Species occurrence data are used to check potential distribution for accuracy.
            (c) Where appropriate, urban areas are taken out as potential habitat for certain species.
            (d) Critical habitat, which is a federal designated area for federally listed species, is also included.
         (3) Species experts are providing peer review of the models
   b) Species-specific comments/questions
      i) San Joaquin Kit Fox

(1) Consider narrowing buffer around I-580, specifically around Greenville Road. SJKF have been spotted denning in this area and using the corridor underneath the freeway. There is a concern about anticipated development in this area.
(2) There was a question regarding how a proper mitigation ratio for SJKF will be determined because the preliminary draft habitat models show that SJKF habitat is extensive in this area. Species experts and the wildlife regulatory agencies will be consulted.

ii) Alameda whipsnake
(1) Working with Karen Swaim on modeling this species
(2) Will bring in information from the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan to determine if the isolated patch of habitat is connected to or crosses over into Contra Costa County.

iii) Inclusion of foothill yellow-legged frog?
(1) Is a focal species in the Santa Clara Valley HCP and SFPUC's HCP
(2) High conservation potential for species

c) All the common names for the species will be listed; note that www.calflora.org has the all the common names for plant species

d) With regards to differential ratios for breeding and upland habitat, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers require ratios. The USFWS really looks at the quality of the land and that it provides both breeding and upland habitats.

e) There was a concern over the usefulness of these models.
i) It appears that when the models are overlaid over each other, the potential habitat covers most of East Alameda County, except for the urban areas.
ii) Will look at where there is potential habitat overlap amongst different species. The more species an area can provide as habitat, that area will likely have a high priority rating.
iii) However, isolated areas that are unique and provide suitable habitat for one species will not be discounted.
iv) One of the goals is to look at the most efficient way to use conservation dollars such that it benefits the most focal species.

f) When developing upland habitat goals for EACCS, already developed goals from ongoing efforts, like the Bay Area Open Space Upland Goals Project, will be used as a basis. Note that the Bay Area Open Space Upland Goals Project operates at a larger scale than EACCS.

g) There was a request that cultivated and potential irrigated agriculture needs to be identified on the maps in order to delineate the uses for certain areas.

h) UAG requested that the Steering Committee provide a list of the anticipated projects that need mitigation
i) This will give the UAG context as to what the mitigation needs are for the next 10-20 years.
ii) The strategy will have section that will discuss future infrastructure projects.
iii) This information would also help us figure out what tools are needed.

4) Comments on draft document outline
a) The EACCS will address preservation vs. creation and that preservation is the preferred option over creation.
b) Goals at natural communities levels will be tied to species (i.e. each species will have their own goals and objectives)
c) Mitigation ratios will depend upon priority conservation areas and what the regulatory agencies need to meet their goals.
d) EACCS will be coordinating with the Metropolitan Transportation Committee as well as other conservation planning efforts. EACCS will build upon existing conservation goals.

e) Stressed the concept of using a "bulls-eye" method to determine mitigation ratios. This means that the further away mitigation happens away from the impact site, the greater the mitigation ratio will be.
f) Mitigation Management Plan is a tool to manage the land to benefit the species in perpetuity.
g) A glossary of terms will be included.

5) Partnership for Land Conservation and Stewardship (PLCS) Presentation on mitigation/conservation processes
   a) Alameda County set up and funds the PLCS.
   b) Currently the Alameda County Resource Conservation District is administrating the PLCS.
   c) PLCS markets land on behalf of landowners interested in providing conservation easements on their land
      i) Actively helping eight landowners to get matched up with project proponents with mitigation needs
      ii) Currently have 17 landowners signed up with PLCS
   d) PLCS can also take in-lieu fees for use toward livestock friendly programs
   e) PLCS can also write Resource Management Plans
   f) There are landowners out there that want to know what kind of species and/or habitat is on their lands. Landowners see these as assets and are committed to conservation.
      i) However, at the same time, there are just as many landowners that do not want to get involved in conservation.
      ii) There are hopes that as landowners get in the business to sell conservation easements as well as though the EACCS, more landowners will see the benefit and would want to get involved.
   g) How hard does PLCS stress the importance of monitoring?
      i) PLCS has provided workshops on easements to landowners.
      ii) Another UAG member stated that there are other monitoring techniques available to landowners that provide for early detection of invasive species. As a result, can save the habitat for the focal species.
   h) See PLCS brochure for more information.

6) Next Meeting Date: January 15, 2008 @ 2 p.m. at the Dublin Regional Meeting Room
   a) Future meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month.

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy Mission:
The East Alameda County Conservation Strategy (EACCS) will provide a blueprint for conservation of biological species in East Alameda County.

The EACCS will streamline the environmental permitting process for development and infrastructure projects by:

- Documenting important biological resources in east Alameda County
- Setting priorities for mitigation and conservation of biological resources
- Providing clear standards as to where and how to focus mitigation efforts
- Setting mitigation ratios for focal species
- Facilitate ongoing conservation programs through a coordinated approach