MEETING NOTES

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy
Users Advisory Group Meeting
January 15, 2009

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

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1) **EACCS & the project development/implementation process**
   a) Difference between Habitat Conservation Plans ("HCPs") and the Conservation Strategy ("Strategy")
      i) HCPs have specific details of projects covered under the HCP and have very specific conservation actions tied to those covered projects.
      ii) On the other hand, the strategy puts context to project impacts on a specific species in the study area as well as within the watershed. EACCS is focused on the species and the habitat independent from any projects that may occur.
         (1) Will help justify funding/grant requests for planned conservation actions; EACCS is an independent study that can be used as support
         (2) The strategy helps point out unique resources not previously known.
      iii) The strategy will be designed to withstand anything that happens in the future. This strategy could be used for any type of project.
   b) Assessing the "Mitigation Need"
      i) The strategy is not tied to or based on a particular project or suite of projects.
      ii) No impact analysis will be conducted as part of the EACCS.
      iii) Proposed future projects are listed in the local agencies' respective general/specific plans and/or capital improvement plans.
      iv) EACCS will generally provide a summary of anticipated future projects in the strategy document.
   c) Comments from UAG on maintenance of conservation easements
      i) Weak link with project funded conservation plans is the lack of an economic entity
         (1) There is a concern that there will not be enough money to pay for maintaining conservation areas
         (2) Privately maintained conservation easements are a better way to ensure land is properly maintained.

2) Project Update
  a) Funding Update
    i) RCD's grant through CalFed has been temporarily suspended due to the State budget issues. The grant money was partially funding the development of the strategy as well as some implementation related tasks.
    ii) There is enough cash, through the contribution of the local agencies on the Steering Committee, to finish the development of the strategy document.
    iii) Tasks currently on hold as a result of the grant suspension include:
      (1) Developing templates (easement and management plan) to facilitate mitigation efforts on private lands.
      (2) RCD's Watershed Adventures Program, which was a required outreach/education component of the CalFed grant
  b) Preview of New Website
    i) A screenshot of the new website was shown to the UAG.
    ii) The new website will be standalone. The current EACCS website is being maintained by USFWS.
    iii) All documents and all up-to-date information will be found on the new website.
    iv) The website will be launched within the next couple of weeks.
  c) Conservation Gap Analysis
    i) Natural Community Figures
      (1) The big land cover map was used to develop the natural community figures.
      (2) The major land cover communities were plotted against open space areas[1].
        (a) For example, chaparral & coast scrub was plotted against open space.
      (3) These maps help to show where the specific land cover type is currently protected. In addition, these maps will show us where there are current gaps in protection (e.g. areas adjacent to protected areas) and have potential for conservation easements.
      (4) These figures do not tell us anything about the habitat value of the area. Therefore, groundtruthing will still need to be conducted at the project level.
      (5) There was a suggestion to obtain the latest burn control data and have it as an overlay for the grasslands map.
    ii) Pond Analysis
      (1) There are over 600 ponds in the study area. These ponds support several focal species.
      (2) Wet and dry ponds were digitized using aerial maps. Pond density was calculated using ponds per square mile.
        (a) Dates of aerials used: 2005, 2007, and 2008
      (3) Ponds that are closer together have a higher potential to protect more species.
      (4) There was a comment that some dry ponds are okay for certain species.
      (5) Question: Will the strategy look at where ponds could be created?
        (a) This is a potential options for conservation action but would need to go through the appropriate channels to get approval to create ponds.
      (6) Golf courses were digitized. Will look at whether ponds on golf courses were mapped as part of the pond analysis exercise.

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[1] Open space is defined as all publicly owned parklands or private lands with easements or deed restrictions. Refer to the open space classification criteria and associated map.

(7) There was a comment that spatial proximity of ponds is less predictable. What is important is the quality of the pond.
   d) Glossary
      i) A draft glossary was distributed to the UAG.
      ii) This glossary will be revised as the EACCS document is developed.

3) 2009 Project Schedule
   a) Public Meetings
      i) Two public meetings are scheduled.
      ii) The first will be held in April or May. At the first meeting, we will introduce the EACCS to the public.
         (1) The UAG meeting will likely be combined with the public meeting. If this is the case, the UAG would only be one hour and would be followed up by the public meeting.
            (a) The meeting may be run as a workshop.
            (b) UAG members may also be called to be presenters at the public meetings.
         (2) The second public meeting will be held after the draft document is complete and out for public review.
      iii) There are no legal requirements for public review or public meetings on the strategy. Note that HCPs and Natural Communities Conservation Plans (State equivalent to the HCP) have specific requirements regarding public process, independent scientist reviews, etc.
   b) No CEQA document will be prepared for the EACCS. CEQA will be prepared at the project level.
   c) How will Steering Committee approve the EACCS?
      i) The Boards/Councils of each individual local agency on the Steering Committee will approve the EACCS.
      ii) The local agencies and wildlife agencies will look into having a binding agreement to use the EACCS when implementing projects.

4) Comment process for strategy document
   a) EACCS chapters will be distributed to the UAG in Word. Grammatical comments can be made either directly on the file (using tracked changes) or by hand.
   b) For any substantive comments, an Excel spreadsheet will be provided.
   c) Comments will be collated into one spreadsheet and will be available upon request.
   d) Comment due date will be set for each work product. Comments will be addressed in the subsequent version of the document.
   e) Chapter 1 will be available right before the next UAG meeting.

5) Next Meeting Date: March 19, 2009 @ 2 p.m. at the Dublin Regional Meeting Room

ATTENDEES

Bob Baltzer, Friends of Livermore
Allison Batteate, Landowner
Delores Bengtson, Agriculture
Patti Cole, Friends of Springtown Preserve
Jessie Coty, LLNL
Deci Dugan, Landowner
Rich Fletcher, Landowner
Bob Harris, Landowner
Michelle Jesperson, Coastal Conservancy
Ralph Kanz, Alameda Creek Alliance
Tim Koopmann, Landowner & SFPUC
Matt Morrison, Sierra Club
Lech Naumovich, CNPS

Marcia Grefsrud, DFG
Steve Stewart, City of Livermore
Liz McElligott, Alameda County
Janice Stern, City of Pleasanton
Dick Ryon, Friends of Vineyards
Laura Mercier, Tri-Valley Conservancy
David Bigham, CNPS
Tim Belcher

Mary Lim, Zone 7 & EACCS Coordinator
Troy Rahmig, ICF Jones & Stokes