

**MINUTES of the
PLANT AND WILDLIFE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(PAWTAC)
January 12, 2010**

Members in Attendance:

Sue Britting
Jim Brunello
Dan Corcoran
Elena DeLacy
Bill Frost
Todd Gardner
James Gibson
Ray Griffiths
Jeremiah Karuzas
Valerie Zentner

Others in Attendance:

Jordan Postlewait, SEA
Ethan Koenigs, SEA
Kris Kiehne, SEA
Rick Lind, SEA
Robert Smart, SEA
Peter Maurer, EDC
Beverly Savage, EDC

Members Absent:

Jim Davies
Craig Thomas
Dan Hinrichs

The January 12, 2010 meeting was called to order by staff Peter Maurer at 9:15 a.m.

A. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the joint ISAC/PAWTAC meeting of December 17, 2009, and the Minutes of the June 9, 2009, ISAC meeting were approved.

B. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

A suggestion raised by Sue Britting at the December meeting was discussed. Ms. Britting had suggested that Committee Chair and Vice Chair positions rotate alphabetically through the Committee roster. Valerie Zentner asked for confirmation that County staff would continue to prepare the Agenda and Minutes. Mr. Maurer responded in the affirmative. A motion was made and passed that Committee Chair and Vice Chair positions rotate alphabetically. Ms. Britting assumed Chair of the meeting.

C. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

D. INRMP

1. Updated Timeline for work product review

Jordan Postlewait, SEA, referred to a handout, "Focus Points for Upcoming ISAC/PAWTAC Meetings" which included updates to the project schedule. Mr. Postlewait explained that each

topic requiring direction/participation from the Committees will be addressed in three phases: introduction at the first meeting, detailed workshop/discussion at the second meeting, finalization at the third meeting.

2. Information item on mapping for the INRMP

Ethan Koenigs, SEA, presented the item on behalf of the team. According to General Plan Policy 7.4.2.8 (A), this initial phase of the INRMP includes updating the inventory maps created as part of the 2004 General Plan. The updated maps will focus on areas of the county below 4,000-feet in elevation. The following five habitats will be inventoried and mapped: 1) Habitats that support special-status species; 2) Aquatic environments including streams, rivers and lakes; 3) Wetland and riparian habitats; 4) Important habitats for migratory deer herds; and 5) Large expanses of native vegetation. "Large Expanses" and "Native Vegetation" must be defined before identification and mapping can proceed.

In preparing updates, SEA will modify the maps to display the data in the most effective way to convey the extent of habitats in the study area. For example, the current maps use point data from the California Natural Diverse Database (CNDDDB) to display the location of special-status species. However, the CNDDDB data also includes polygon data, which SEA believes better approximates location of special-status species occurrences. SEA will also use the most current data available from a variety of available sources. Mr. Koenigs referred the Committee to a handout, "El Dorado County INRMP Initial Inventory Mapping Data Sources, Listed by Data Type." The Committee was asked to review the listing and suggest additional data sources prior to the meeting via e-mail to Mr. Maurer who will forward the suggestions to SEA. Individual Committee member suggestions will be shared with the Committee via updates to the data sources distributed at the February meeting.

3. Discussion of definitions of key terms to be used in the INRMP

Kris Kiehne presented on behalf of the SEA team. Ms. Kiehne referred to a handout, "INRMP Phase 1, Key Term Definitions." Definitions distributed at the December joint PAWTAC/ISAC meeting are included in the handout. Additional discussion points and reference data are also included. The goal for today's discussion, Ms. Kiehne explained, is to gather input on the definitions. Input gathered from this meeting and from last week's ISAC meeting will be consolidated. Revised draft definitions will be distributed at the February meetings. The goal for February will be to approve definitions for the INRMP Phase I Key Terms of: Native Vegetation, Indicator Species, Connectivity, Important Habitat, and Large Expanses. Ms. Kiehne asked the Committee members to provide input on the draft definition of the first term, "Native Vegetation."

Chair Britting expressed concern that the draft definition did not encompass grasslands as they are not native. However, grasslands provide important habitats for many species. Chair Britting continued that the draft definition excluded many other habitats. Elena DeLacy agreed that the definition excluded many habitats. Mr. Koenigs commented that the same concern was raised at the ISAC meeting. Mr. Maurer commented that the ISAC conversation raised the question of the intent in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report in preserving Native Vegetation. Mr.

Maurer committed at the ISAC meeting to searching the General Plan EIR and providing the Committee members with references to the terms Native Vegetation, Large Expanses, Indicator Species, Connectivity, and Important Habitat. This information will provide the Committees with a better understanding of the General Plan context for the definitions.

Jim Brunello expressed his opinion that the goal of the General Plan EIR is to conserve large contiguous blocks of vegetation, regardless of whether they are comprised of native or annual grasslands. Todd Gardner added that it is very difficult to identify assemblages of native plants existing without some invasion by non-native species. Val Zentner agreed that blending has occurred throughout El Dorado County. Jeremiah Karuzas interjected that the Committee should consider the General Plan EIR's intent, as suggested by Mr. Maurer, and continued that areas appropriately under focus are those which have never been converted or have since naturalized. Mr. Maurer suggested that the word "natural" could be substituted for "native" in the definition.

Dan Corcoran suggested an area should be deemed natural if it appears native or natural when viewed from an aircraft at approximately 30,000 feet. Mr. Maurer raised the example of daffodils growing in the forest. At one point, a cabin or other structure must have existed at the location. At present, only the daffodils remain and the site can be considered natural. Ray Griffiths asked the SEA team how a former orchard, no longer cultivated but still resembling an orchard, should be classified when it has become an important habitat to many species. Ms. Kiehne replied that SEA is gathering notes during Committee discussions. Based on this information, other definitions may be developed or the concepts may reappear in other definitions. Ms. Kiehne concluded the discussion of "Native Vegetation" by asking Committee members to submit additional comments and suggestions to Mr. Maurer via e-mail by the end of the week. Mr. Maurer will forward e-mails to the SEA team.

Ms. Kiehne brought the draft definition of Indicator Species forward for discussion. Mr. Corcoran expressed concern that one species may not accurately represent other species in other habitats. Mr. Gardner added that overlapping habitats may exist. Ms. DeLacy asked if the definition would follow the canary-in-the-coal-mine model or should the definition be broader? Mr. Griffiths expressed some confusion between the terms Indicator Species and Focal Species and asked which would more appropriately be used. Mr. Gardner interjected that in order to answer Mr. Griffiths' question, the issue of context in the General Plan EIR needed to be addressed. Mr. Maurer suggested that more appropriate term might be Focal Species. An agenda item might be submitted to the Board of Supervisors requesting the term be changed from Indicator Species to Focal Species.

[The following submission by Jeremiah Karuzas is inserted into the Minutes by Motion carried at the February 4, 2010 meeting.]

"The discussion on Focal and Indicator Species does not appear to attempt to incorporate what the majority of the discussion we had at the last meeting was. We had discussed that the standard definition for indicator species should remain, and instead we provide both definitions to the board for clarification on what they were actually seeking, as indicator species have a monitoring and management component. I also do not agree with what appears to be bypassing the issue by stating that focal species can include

indicator species. While this may be true, my understanding was that each term would be clearly defined so as to bring to light the difference between the two terms and determine the true intent of the BOS, while the write-up on these terms confuses the issue."

Ms. Zentner stated her opinion that the BOS' intent was to monitor the affects of development on the habitat not its affect on species. Mr. Brunello disagreed interjecting that the BOS intended to monitor the affects of development on large mammals.

The Committee focused their discussion on the bulleted definitions in the handout. Ms. DeLacy favors the last two bullets. Mr. Karuzas prefers the second bullet. Ms. Britting declined to select a preferred definition, suggesting that the Committee needs first to gain a better understanding of the purpose for the definition. Bill Frost stated that the focus should be on habitats rather than on species, continuing that the County does not have the financial resources at this time to monitor a particular species. It is much less costly to monitor a habit, he concluded. Mr. Gardner agreed, adding that if an Indicator Species was identified, a baseline inventory would be needed at the outset and update inventories would conducted. Mr. Gardner continued that the process is very costly. Chair Britting added it should be communicated to the BOS that the intent of Indicator Species needs to be articulated.

Ms. Kiehne directed the Committee's discussion towards the draft definition for Focal Species. Mr. Gardner suggested replacing "umbrella species" with "other species" in the definition. Mr. Corcoran asked what "natural processes" were referred to in the definition. He suggested inserting specific examples. Mr. Gardner noted that fish are not mentioned in the definition. Only plants and wildlife are listed. To remedy this, Mr. Koenigs suggested removing the word "plant" from the definition. Ms. Kiehne suggested replacing the word "plant" with "biological."

The draft definition of Connectivity was reviewed. Mr. Griffiths asked if the Committee 's purview could include efforts to improve connectivity. Mr. Postlewait replied that SEA's scope of work included preparing the RFP for the INRMP. The RFP might be an appropriate place to state the objective of improving and expanding connectivity. Ms. Zentner added that improving habitats should be one of the goals of the INRMP. Mr. Brunello suggested that Committee members read Section 5.12-89 of the General Plan EIR for an excellent discussion of Connectivity. Mr. Corcoran agreed that the quality of Connectivity in the County needs to be addressed.

Mr. Gardner feels the definition should include a biological component. Chair Britting agreed, stating that Connectivity addresses species movement, the inverse of fragmentation. Habitat also needs to be discussed, she added. Connectivity addresses wind and plant dispersal through birds. Connectivity is more complicated than movement. It also addresses species procreating and the next generation needing to move because there is neither room nor habitat for all to exist on the same square, Chair Britting continued. Ms. Zentner added that Connectivity should address these processes in addition to living organisms.

The definition of Large Expanses was discussed. Mr. Corcoran feels the definition should vary depending on the habitat discussed, i.e. grasslands would be defined as larger than riparian habitats. Chair Britting suggested the word "animals" in the draft definition be replaced with

"species." Chair Britting noted that Policy 7.4.2.8 of the General Plan discusses Native Vegetation in the context of Large Expanses. Ms. Zentner cautioned that in its definition, the Committee should consider that Large Expanses will be mapped. The team needs to ensure that the mapping task is achievable, that five-acre parcels are not created by the definition.

There was general discussion by the Committee regarding the mapping process, definition of "large," and the smallest metric to be mapped. Rick Lind stated that the mapping process will be iterative throughout. SEA will seek input and consensus from the Committees throughout the process.

The final key term draft definition discussed by the Committee was Important Habitat. Mr. Brunello directed the Committee to Policy 7.4.1.6 of the General Plan for discussion of the term. Ms. Zentner noted that "important" is also used in the General Plan when referring to historical grazing lands, riparian lands and conservation lands. Mr. Maurer agreed that "important" has been used in a variety of ways in the General Plan, suggesting that the word "important" could be deleted for mapping purposes with the word "habitat" standing alone. This approach would not make any judgments on the habitat types. The judgment could be made at the end, after everything is defined. Chair Britting commented that at the end of Phase One it was a requirement that Important Habitat be identified. Mr. Maurer agreed and added that when a parcel is identified as an Important Habitat, a stigma is assigned. Chair Britting suggested that the definition state that Important Habitat does not relate to General Plan Policy 7.4.1.6. Mr. Corcoran noted it appears that Important Habitat encompasses the other key terms, such as Native Vegetation and Connectivity, as it relates to General Plan Policy 7.4.2.8 and not to Policy 7.4.1.6.

D. Next meeting

The next meeting will be February 4 at 9:00 a.m. in Conference Room A.

Members were asked to send mapping data sources to Mr. Maurer via e-mail. Mr. Maurer will send an e-mail to Committee members with the Chair and Vice Chair rotation schedule. He will also send e-mails to members who have not attended meetings on a regular basis asking if they are still interested in participating on the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.