

**Benton County
Habitat Conservation Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 9, 2007**



Attendees

Jean Nath, Benton County Parks Advisory Board
George McAdams, Benton County Natural Areas and Parks
Annabelle Jaramillo, Benton County Commissioner
Duncan Thomas, Beazell Memorial Forest, OSU
Steve Rogers, City of Corvallis Public Works
Julee Conway, City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation
Jerry Davis, Consultant
Karlene McCabe, Greenbelt Land Trust
Tom Kaye, Institute for Applied Ecology
Carolyn Menke, Institute for Applied Ecology
Lori Wisehart, Institute for Applied Ecology
Michelle Michaud, Institute for Applied Ecology
Karen Fleck Harding, Marys River Watershed Council
Matt Blakeley-Smith, Native Plant Society of Oregon
Mike Totey, Oregon Department of Forestry
Stella Coakley, OSU College of Agricultural Sciences
Dave Lysne, OSU College of Forestry
Brad Withrow-Robinson, OSU College of Forestry/Extension
Rich Szlemp, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Public

Adam Novick

Agenda

- Brief re-introduction to the HCP
- HCP Update
- Conservation Measures
- Process/Procedures of cooperating with HCP
- Conservation Easements (Greenbelt Land Trust)
- OSU College of Forestry Oak Strategy Project
- Stakeholder Questions
- Public Comment

Notes

Jerry Davis, a consultant for the HCP, introduced Benton County Commissioner Annabelle Jaramillo. Commissioner Jaramillo welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked County staff for their efforts, and briefly described the County's goals regarding the HCP. Commissioner Jaramillo also discussed the activities of the board regarding a cooperative agreement with the City of Corvallis. A Declaration of Cooperation was signed by the board and forwarded to Corvallis City Council; it will also be forwarded to other political jurisdictions and may be a good model for other parts of the state.

Carolyn Menke of IAE introduced herself and requested that all other participants introduce themselves.

Carolyn briefly described the goals of the HCP (to balance conservation of rare species with economic growth in the County) and provided some background information about what the HCP is: The HCP is a document that specifies: (1) Likely harm to endangered/threatened species resulting from County activities (and others), (2) Steps to avoid, minimize, and mitigate such harm – Conservation Measures, and (3) Funding available to implement the conservation measures. Benton County is pursuing the HCP to learn about rare species distributions & habitats, and use that information to benefit conservation in the County. With an approved HCP, the USFWS (US Fish and Wildlife Service) will issue Benton County an Incidental Take Permit protecting the County from legal liability if unavoidable or accidental harm to species occurs. Coverage can also be offered to other landowners in the County. Lastly, the HCP may make additional funding options available (i.e. aiding with habitat acquisition). The permit would cover different species for different entities. The County would be covered for Fender's blue butterfly, Taylor's checkerspot, Streaked Horned Lark and five plant species. Other public lands would be covered for Fender's blue and if they opt in to the HCP, for Taylor's, the Lark and the plants. Private lands would only be responsible for Fender's blue. The estimated timeline for the HCP is: completion of an in-house draft in 2007. In 2008, a public draft HCP document will be available (April or May) and a final season of field surveys will be conducted. TAC, SAC meetings, and Public meetings will also be convened. In 2009, a draft NEPA document will be prepared, the HCP will be finalized, final NEPA documentation will be presented and, potentially, the Incidental Take Permit will be issued by USFWS.

Commissioner Jaramillo urged the planning team to schedule 2008 meetings ASAP because her schedule is already tight.

Carolyn also described recent HCP planning activities including field surveys and hotspot mapping. Field surveys in 2007 targeted public lands, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) sites, and the Luckiamute Watershed. The HCP planning team cooperated with Greenbelt Land Trust and the Luckiamute Watershed to select landowners to contact for surveys.

- Botanical surveys were conducted in the Soap Creek, Kings Valley, Wren,

and Muddy Creek areas. Sites where habitat was deemed suitable for butterflies were also surveyed for Fender's blue butterfly (only new sites in Wren) and/or Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (16-17 sites for Taylor's, no new populations).

- New Kincaid's lupine populations were found in Kings Valley, a WRP site south of Corvallis, and OSU College of Ag property in Soap Creek.
- New observations of Fender's blue butterfly were only recorded in the Wren area.
- New Bradshaw's lomatium populations on WRP sites south of Corvallis.
- New Nelson's checkermallow recorded on OSU College of Ag property and one private property.
- Streaked Horned Lark surveys showed larks using open habitats near the airport. Roadsides in the area are the only County habitat larks would use, surveys found no larks nesting on County rights of way. Surveys on easements and one city road showed some nesting pairs but the core populations are at Finley and the Corvallis airport.

Carolyn also discussed current mapping of likely Fender's blue presence or "hotspots". The maps are generated using existing distributions and known dispersal distances. The basis for the maps is that Fender's (FBB) are likely to disperse 2km from established populations, and feed intensively within 0.5 km. The USFWS guidelines seek protection of any Kincaid's lupine in 2km radius of FBB and any nectar species within 0.5 km radius of FBB. The process of outlining these areas and earlier draft maps were reviewed by the HCP Technical Advisory Committee and USFWS. The hotspot layer may change depending on future surveys. The areas may increase if new Fender's populations are found or decrease if more surveys are able to rule out habitat areas. Also, current research describing dispersal distance estimates in hilly/wooded areas may change the distance of the dispersal buffer from 2km. Prior to completing the HCP, the HCP Planning Team recommended County staff review the draft maps and once accepted, refer any County permit applicants in hotspots to USFWS, which will likely require that the landowner have their property surveyed, if they have not had a recent survey for the HCP or another purpose. Also, it is recommended the County draft and add language to County permits indicating permits are not valid without USFWS signoff. Once the HCP is completed, the County will change the process and County permit applicants will have the option of going to the County, rather than USFWS to determine impacts to Fender's blue butterfly.

Karen Fleck Harding asked about activities in hotspot areas that don't require County permits. The committee agreed that the County would not have a role, and that FWS is unable to "patrol" areas for these kinds of activities.

Steve Rogers asked whether the hotspot areas overlapped with city property. Carolyn clarified that in the interim (before the HCP is accepted by the USFWS), where the hotspots overlapped with property within the City limits, the permit applicants would go to the city not the County. However, once the HCP is

approved, the city can refer such permit applicants to the County to obtain authorization to impact Fender's blue butterfly habitat.

George asked about modifying the idea of "salmon safe" wineries and businesses to "prairie safe" wineries, etc.

Carolyn indicated future surveys will focus on hotspot areas and adjacent sites, gaps (unsurveyed areas South of Finley and East of 99).

Karlene suggested surveying the Bell property and potentially contacting other owners in the Muddy Creek corridor. Annabelle suggested looking closer at Adair Village (Drew Foster is the new contact there).

Michelle discussed examples of possible conservation measures; activities taken to proactively avoid, minimize, or mitigate (offset) impacts to species. Examples of these measures include: public education, management plans, on-site mitigation, payment of mitigation fee, candidate conservation agreement, conservation easement in-lieu, timing restrictions/special management areas, construction best management practices, habitat acquisition, conservation banking, plant material collection, and a County permitting program. Species/Habitat brochures have already been developed and are available for general distribution by Benton County, HCP staff and others.

Michelle also discussed the role of species-specific management plans. TAC is assisting with developing guidelines for managing rare plants & Fender's blue in roadsides as well as managing species in natural areas. A consultant (Dana Ross) will be assisting with Taylor's checkerspot management Plans for County owned or managed property with Taylor's. The TAC for STHL will also be assisting with development of management strategies for STHL habitat.

Karlene asked about plant material collection programs. Tom did not know of any formal plant salvage programs.

Rich asked whether there has been any consideration given to re-supply or restocking of plants. Tom explained more work is going on now for endangered species than nectar plants. It's a difficult process and there isn't an existing plan but some resources are available.

Jerry expressed concern over the impact:restoration ratios presented as possible potential conservation measures, and suggested they may not be practical and will require more thought and testing before being implemented.

Duncan asked about distributions of unoccupied lupine. Michelle explained unoccupied lupine is only a concern within in 2 km of known Fender's blue populations.

Karen wanted to clarify that “occupied” refers to lupine patches known to be used by Fender’s blue butterfly.

Karlene suggested that “in lieu” wording (conservation easement in-lieu) is confusing and has other implications.

Tom then discussed the process of cooperating with the HCP: Some entities will need incidental take permit coverage because they have take, they will need to “opt in” on a project by project basis through a cooperative agreement/permit and certificate of inclusion. Others will just want to cooperate in conservation efforts; they can participate in the Prairie Conservation Strategy, an additional conservation measure that would be non regulatory and non-binding. The strategy would serve as a medium to cooperate on conservation efforts in the County and would be a local implementation tool of the USFWS prairie recovery plan that would guide planning and restoration work. Lastly, some individuals would need coverage for take and want to cooperate with conservation; they could do both (opt-in for permit coverage and participate in Prairie Conservation Strategy).

Karen wanted to know if this would allow you to go through County instead of requiring USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife agreements in cases where landowners wanted to do restoration work on their property. Tom said that individuals could go through County or through USFWS directly.

Rich explained that a Willamette Valley Safe Harbor program may be an option. This program may be available in the next year and would be a good tool for the prairie conservation strategy.

Karlene wanted to know what role the Xerces society is participating? Carolyn mentioned they are on the stakeholder committee and the TAC.

Jerry- Landowner neighboring Fitton Green has MOU for another 5 years for County Cooperation in removing false brome etc. for conservation of Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly.

Annabelle-Planning team should contact Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Association. This organization addresses transportation issues.

Karlene then spoke about the Greenbelt Land Trust. They will be releasing a new strategic plan in 6 months in which they may specify they have expanded their regional scope to 5 counties: Benton, Polk, Linn, Marion, Yamhill. They have easements on 12 properties in Benton County and they own 2 properties (Owens Farm and Lupine Meadows). There is active restoration on both sites. Easements can be donated, the proposals take into account endangered species and other factors like scenic or recreational value.

Easements can also be purchased. Money can come from OWEB, USFWS Section 6 money, and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), but that likely won’t be

available for a few years. Some easements are sold at a value less than they're worth (Bargain Sale).

Challenges for Greenbelt include cost of easement acquisition, which have been tracked at \$20,000 - \$50,000 per easement for development and execution. Costs are recovered on a project by project basis. OWEB will not cover costs not directly related to the purchase price. The determination of what easements to purchase also takes into account management costs associated with maintaining easements. The Greenbelt needs to raise stewardship funds, which may come from landowners, foundations, and/or possibly the HCP. Purchases are more complex when endangered species are involved. Active management is required to keep the species and habitat healthy. Management costs are greater and they need increased familiarity with funding management of endangered species. Upland prairie is a high priority for acquisition, but can take 6 months to 3 years to negotiate easements. The HCP will be a good model for the state. Lastly, land valuation is a new problem.

Brad spoke about the OSU College of Forestry Conservation and Restoration Strategy for Native Prairie and Oak habitats. Their approach was to optimize future benefits by conducting a forest-wide assessment. They spent 1.5 years putting strategy together which includes an adaptive management approach and it integrates learning with restoration. Two task forces, the Legacy Oak and Prairie task forces (initially) were developed to survey, plan, oversee, and integrate restoration and education activities (Rob Pabst and Matt Blakely-Smith task force contacts). The steps involved retaining and conserving legacy components and also improving habitat where possible. One objective of the legacy task force was to develop an inventory, which was conducted in 2007. Trees within the forest were mapped (individuals and clusters), and all remnant prairies were surveyed. They developed prioritization criteria for management/treatment.

Tom mentioned the Prairie Conservation Strategy would coordinate all of these efforts (Conservation and Restoration Strategy, Greenbelt Land Trust, etc.). Tom thanked everyone for their comments and opened the meeting up for public comment.

Adam Novick expressed concern that mitigation fees would be required from people owning habitats. He wants to encourage the SAC to think broadly and question whether it will help species to require mitigation fees.

Rich encouraged the public to send suggestions and additional comments to the planning team.