

Benton County HCP Prairie Conservation Strategy Stakeholder Advisory Committee Work Session Minutes July 1, 2009



Stakeholder Workshop: Developing the Prairie Conservation Strategy

The following is a summary of the mapping exercise, comments and discussion relating to the work session.

Meeting Structure

The attendees divided into three groups to work on two tasks:

1. Mapping: Identify areas in Benton County to conduct management and restoration for habitats and at-risk species using aerial photos on maps.
2. Coordinating Restoration: Identify actions necessary for coordinating habitat restoration and at-risk species recovery.

Mapping work session

Group 1:

- Identified habitat corridors, both man-made (e.g., BPA transmission line corridor, highway corridors) and natural (e.g. riparian corridors, valleys), to connect areas already under habitat protection throughout county.
- These networks could be used by many species.
- Recommend expanding habitat protection around Wren and looking for connections to Greasy Creek down Highway 34 and to Butterfly Meadows through Cardwell Hill for Fender's blue butterfly (FBB).

Group 2:

- Looked for connections, focusing on stepping stones, between larger habitat patches for Fender's and Taylor's checkerspot. Stepping stones can be smaller if they are closer together, and must be larger when they are further apart.

Fender's Network 1

- Connect Butterfly Meadows (OSU land in McDonald Forest) south through Oak Creek, Audubon Hesthavn property, OSU lands, to Bald Hill. Suggested using alternate FBB host, sickle keeled lupine, as short term host in harvested areas where butterflies have to cross forested areas. As harvest patterns change, new lupine stepping stone patches could be established in open areas while letting other lupine populations blink out as trees grow in. This lupine appears to do well in these environments.

- Connect Bald Hill to Lupine Meadows, then back up to Wren through transmission line corridor, from Wren go back down Hwy 223, through Wren Preserve, Lone Star, then to Greasy Creek corridor.

Network 2:

- Soap Creek (OSU Beef Ranch)-Land Fill- EE Wilson- Rifle Range. Will have to introduce FBB, expand existing lupine patches, and create stepping stones because the current gaps are just above 2km (too far for likely dispersal between patches).

Network 3:

- Finley NWR. Spurred lupine already present, could enhance that species or add more Kincaid's (small amount introduced now). Pigeon Butte and Bald Top are key upland prairie areas.
- Wren area- all lands should be considered for easement acquisition as available and appropriate.
- Need to encourage and maintain connectivity between landowners via BPA corridor.
- Focus on riparian habitat along the Marys from Blodgett through Philomath.
- Connect from Wren through to Fitton Green via Cardwell Hill properties.
- Marys River Natural Area, Caldwell Open Space, through to Herbert Farm Natural Area- sites to introduce Willamette Daisy, Peacock Larkspur, and Nelson's checkermallow, and target work for western meadowlark, western kingbird and short-eared owl.
- At Corvallis airport, management for prairie could limit goose occupation because geese tend to prefer rapidly growing, fresh grass rather than established prairie. FAA regulations can be constraining.
- There is a new Mitigation Bank south of Finley: Owned/managed by Turnstone Environmental.
- There are several OSU CREP projects that could be utilized for rare species introductions.
- On all OSU Ag lands – focus on fencing off riparian from livestock, restoration work such as conifer removal in potential prairie.
- For Taylor's checkerspot, create a corridor between Fitton Green, over Cardwell Hill and out to Beazell.

Group 3:

- Important to encourage flora diversity in general which will benefit birds and habitat.
- At Lone Star Ranch there are lupine plantings but no butterflies yet. Connect FBB populations in Wren and Greasy Creek.
- BPA corridor connectivity issue. Survey for species on their right-of-ways and encourage specific management objectives.
- Cheryl Schultz suggested that work should target enhancing, expanding and securing existing Fender's blue butterfly populations before focusing on butterfly introductions in new areas. Finley NWR would likely be the starting point for introductions. Restoring many small patches could have positive effect for improving conditions adjacent to existing Fender's blue populations.
- Mapping of oak habitats may be useful to target outreach to landowners with oak habitats. Utilize 2006 NAIP imagery and NWHI oak mapping.

- Evaluate conservation rehab projects and funding to include the largest amount of flora and fauna outcomes over time vs. segregated riparian, wetland, CREP etc. projects.

Coordinating restoration work session – two groups only

Group 1:

- Learn from each others work, approaches, and ideas via conferences, web sites, working groups.
- Organize an ecosystems recovery planning team similar to Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team in Canada.
- Utilize one-on-one outreach to landowners similar to Partners Program. Use a more targeted approach by defining specific communities.
- Management tours and educational opportunities are valuable for learning about projects in community and most effective management actions.
- Build relationships over time. Greenbelt is using effective approach.
- Remove threats to private landowners from regulations and provide incentives, i.e. tax deferrals, stipends, easement agreements.

Group 2 (Notes provided by Adam Novick)

Question 1: "What communication strategies are needed?"

- Stream-based (i.e., organized by watershed or subwatershed), to build community while building habitat.
- It's essential to build community while building habitat.
- Involve community in building knowledge (to build both community and knowledge).
- Seek to bring people together, rather than talking one on one.
- "For example, I didn't know my neighbors had Fender's blue butterfly, nor whether they felt comfortable about it".
- People need to see the bigger picture and how they fit in.
- How do you contact people?
- Watershed council: We contact every landowner, after collecting their names from various sources, and knocking on doors where necessary. Typically, we seek permission for stream habitat surveys; we offer a copy of the report, which tells the "story of their stream from the perspective of the fish in it"; we talk to everyone individually; we then have a meeting for everyone, usually at someone's house; and we typically find a good response; people "jump on", as a community, reinforced by mutual support.
- Communication might better further species recovery actions if it flowed from bottom up, rather than from top down. Landowners have best knowledge of site conditions and conservation opportunities. It's impractical to drive these actions top down, especially if landowners perceive government seeks to claim their property.
- For any communication strategy to further species recovery actions, the content of the message must be conducive to undertaking such actions. If the message implies adverse regulatory consequences for maintaining these species (e.g., liability for mitigation requirements), communication can inadvertently discourage landowners from recovery actions. We should consider making policies more favorable to maintaining these

species, so that it is at least not self-defeating for landowners to maintain them. Such a strategy might also help information flow from bottom up.

- Need to recognize the cost of outreach, in part to improve its efficiency.
- Watershed council: Typically, a landowner approaches us for site-specific guidance ("Where do I go? What do I do?"), and each time this happens, we gather relevant experts to help them. This is inefficient; we need a more efficient "triage" system for such outreach (e.g., a small team just large enough to provide the necessary range of expertise).
- Go for the low hanging fruit, and then build from there.
- Focus on habitat, not so much on listed species.

Question 2: "What information would assist you or your organization in implementing actions?"

- Need to explain why; people need to understand the ecological and social values.
- Need technical expertise and sources of information.
- Need to know how landowners feel; need to learn this about each landowner.

Question 3: "Would a working group be feasible for coordinating recovery locally?"

- Maybe; might help identify common challenges and opportunities.
- Need landowner-led working group, for that reason.
- Maybe provide technical advisors for such groups.
- For larger areas, might need subgroups, to maintain social cohesion.
- Each group and subgroup needs a leader.

Question 4: "What issues or regulations prevent actions from occurring on lands you manage?"

- For public lands, citizens often have conflicting interests (e.g., soccer fields vs. habitat conservation).
- Regulatory disincentives from ESA can discourage needed management.
- The ongoing cost of prairie maintenance is high.

Question 5: "How can we engage private landowners in conservation?"

- For restoration actions on public lands, going door to door to contact neighbors has helped gain their acceptance; early restoration results have been helpful here (e.g., new growth after burning).
- Need to give landowners an easy-to-access toolbox.
- "Communities" might differ in kind, depending on context (e.g., user groups).
- Consider adapting regulatory policies so that it's easy or at least not self-defeating for landowners to maintain these species. E.g., to participate in a Safe Harbor Agreement, a landowner presently has to negotiate with USFWS over management agreements or other potentially substantial requirements.
- Need to clarify whether Safe Harbor Agreements are meant to improve the survival of species by reducing regulatory disincentives for maintaining these species or by seeking maintenance agreements or other concessions from landowners under threat of regulation.
- Could help some even just to clarify or standardize the requirements to participate in a Safe Harbor Agreement, so landowners know what they face to avoid incurring regulatory consequences from maintaining these species.

- Maybe accomplish all this with a "Landscape Safe Harbor Agreement" which is not site-specific and which does not require landowners to sign anything to participate (unlike present programmatic Safe Harbor Agreements).

- I.e., consider developing a "Safer Harbor Agreement" program, under ESA section 10(a)(1)(A).

Q: Won't such policy change take a long time?

A: We have from now to eternity. This problem is not going away.

Q: Wouldn't such policy be challenged in court?

A: Such litigation might help resolve these issues and improve the range of tools that USFWS has to help these species.

Other comments:

- These species don't need active management. Exotic species are a problem only because of destructive land uses. Native Americans didn't really manage the landscape here.

Ideas reported by the other subgroup, on same questions:

- Need greater flexibility in regulation, to get rid of the hammer.
- Need to understand the rules and their outcomes.
- In general, need to remove negatives and add incentives, so people who want can be involved.

General discussion:

- Need to identify gaps in involvement. E.g., some contexts lack federal involvement, or BLM not represented.

Table 1. Workshop attendees.

Amy	Schoener	Benton County Landowner
George	McAdams	Benton Co. Natural Areas and Parks
Jeff	Baker	Greenbelt Land Trust
Jim	Young	ODFW
Karen	Fleck Harding	Marys River Watershed Council
Al	Kitzman	Benton Co. Natural Areas and Parks
Bill	Pearcy	Benton County Landowner
Adam	Novick	Public
Will	Wright	Audubon
Irene	Pilgrim	OSU Animal Sciences
Jerry	Chiappisi	Public
Cheryl	Schultz	Washington State University-Vancouver
Rich	Szlemp	USFWS
Steve	Northway	Public
Dave	Philips	Corvallis Parks
Iris	Benson	Corvallis Parks
Joan	Hagar	Public
John	Sundquist	Public
Adam	Novick	Public
Rachel	Schwindt	Institute for Applied Ecology
Carolyn	Menke	Institute for Applied Ecology
Tom	Kaye	Institute for Applied Ecology