

**Benton County Prairie Species HCP
Plant TAC Subcommittee Meeting
January 24, 2007**

Attendees:

Ann Kreager – ODFW
Deborah Clark & Andy Gray – OSU
Ed Alverson – TNC
Rebecca Currin – ODA
Nick Testa – ODOT
Laurie Starha – Benton County
Donna Schmitz - Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District
Tom Kaye, Carolyn Menke & Michelle Michaud – IAE
Duncan Thomas – OSU, Beazell Memorial Forest Ecologist

Public: Rana Foster –Corvallis Audubon Society

Data Gaps

Carolyn requested information on what other sources of information may be out there in addition to what IAE has collected through Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center (ONHIC), field survey work, USFWS data, etc. Nick Testa will provide the ODOT Special Management Area data, and areas surveyed by ODOT, e.g., Hwy 99, Hwy 20. Carolyn said it would be helpful to have information on the location surveyed, and what species were present and absent (re: rare species) at each location. IAE will talk to botanists in the area to obtain info from previous surveys that ONHIC may not have. Suggestions include:

- Contacting OSU to obtain any information they may have on Butterfly Meadows. OSU anticipates surveying their property in 2007.
- Obtaining the Oregon Department of Agriculture survey information from Butterfly Meadows
- Contacting BLM and looking at aerial photos and BLM landownership. BLM is not always aware of what they have.

According to Tom Kaye, surveys have been done on BLM property in Benton County, and although none of the HCP species were found, good habitat is present. BLM is considering reintroduction of rare species on their properties in Benton County.

Surveying New vs. Known Sites

Tom Kaye asked the Subcommittee how much energy should be put into surveying existing sites versus new sites for the 2007 field season. There was much discussion on this issue. The Subcommittee agreed that priority should be given to surveying new sites, rather than going back to existing sites for survey and monitoring. Discussion centered on whether IAE had sufficient staff to conduct surveys. The following suggestions were made:

- Enlist volunteers for the survey effort, e.g., Native Plant Society of Oregon?
- Using OSU botany students (both graduate and undergraduate)
- Advertising the need for information on species located on private property.
- Conduct a workshop on how to survey for HCP species.

- Work with TNC’s invasive species coordinator who will be conducting a workshop.

Surveying Road Rights-of-Way (ROW)

Tom Kaye indicated that surveying County property is a priority. Information to be collected during the surveys will include population size, management, habitat condition, species, connectivity, and whether the species is isolated or part of a larger population. A recommendation was made to collect genetic data, however, Benton County does not have sufficient resources to collect genetic data at this time. Tom asked whether IAE should be surveying road ROWs. These populations could be important stepping stones or part of a population that extends onto private property, rather than an isolated population. These populations can be vulnerable to impacts (e.g., through road maintenance activities) and difficult to manage. A suggestion was made to have these sites surveyed after the HCP is completed. Benton County does not have the resources to conduct surveys, it relies on its road crews to determine whether a species present within the ROW may be one of the target species – not the best way to do surveys. When inventorying roadside populations, the populations should be evaluated as to whether they might serve as a seed source. At least one person disagreed with surveying roadside populations. If resources are limited, IAE should spend their time looking at intact populations. Volunteers could focus on road ROWs. ODOT has done a number of surveys on ODOT ROW property and they have good information on roadside populations.

Roadside surveys are difficult to conduct. Even through the habitat may be poor the species may still be present. Plus some species are difficult to see, e.g., Bradshaw’s lomatium and Willamette daisy. If species are present along roadsides, they are easy to detect; it is more difficult to confirm that a species is not present. A suggestion was made to determine the level of effort to conduct roadside surveys; may want to focus on private properties in the vicinity of roadside populations. Ann Kreager indicated that ODFW staff may be available to conduct roadside surveys, and that ODFW has a good volunteer program. Many County roads have not been surveyed for the species. Benton County would like to focus on the roadside areas where known populations exist on adjacent lands. May want to train litter groups (e.g., Adopt-a-Highway Mile) and County staff what to look for when they are out – for those areas that can’t be surveyed. A suggestion was made to survey those areas that are maintained regularly and high maintenance areas – areas that receive most maintenance. Outstanding questions:

- How much value do these roadside populations really have?
- Should the populations be protected (because part of a population on adjacent property) or translocated (because an isolated population).

Survey Methodology – Should it be modified?

Carolyn outlined the field methodology IAE used last year and asked whether it should be modified. She acknowledged that IAE won’t be able to find “all” populations because there is just too much land to cover. A question was raised as to why site data was collected if no listed species were found. IAE needs to be clear what its goal is and make sure the survey work addresses that goal, because time is spent collecting and analyzing the data. IAE is documenting habitat quality because as part of the HCP the County may want do reintroductions – seek areas for linkages where species are not present. Vegetation plot sampling is done, in part, to gather information on what a high quality habitat looks like – what is the species composition, richness; what is the relative abundance of native vs. non-native; what soil types are present – identify

reference conditions. Time spent gathering data depends on parcel size, condition, and number of different species present. IAE has not assessed species attributes, e.g., number of racemes, etc. - only abundance. IAE may want to know about hybridization and reproductive vigor. Ed Alverson mentioned he uses a checklist when inventorying plant communities; it provides better negative evidence.

Monitoring vs. Surveying/Inventory

The subcommittee discussed whether IAE should be monitoring known populations, as this information will be important baseline information for monitoring required by the HCP. What monitoring criteria are required for the HCP? What do you actually need to know for the plan? This is information we should be collecting. General data collection cannot be used for monitoring, and the sooner you establish your baseline, the more information you have when you do begin monitoring under the plan. So much more information is obtained when you do robust monitoring, with established plots, etc.

Tom Kaye indicated that it was a little premature to be doing monitoring since we don't know which populations will be monitored under the HCP. The County won't know what monitoring will be required until the conservation measures, and in particular, the reserve areas, are identified. Survey work will determine abundance, not serve as a baseline for monitoring. The survey work is a planning tool; at this point the County does not need detailed monitoring, it merely needs to know what is present. Duncan Thomas indicated that the HCP will eventually require several years of monitoring, at least for butterflies and probably for some vegetation attributes as well, so pilot monitoring projects should be put in place early in the program. If abundance is to be determined within permanent plots, then it is the baseline for monitoring, and Duncan Thomas suggest placing permanent plot corner markers if the landowner agrees. Any future monitoring plan will be based upon the biological goals and objectives. A suggestion was made to show on the maps those areas already surveyed. Duncan Thomas will summarize what he is planning to do at Beazell.

2007 and 2008 Surveys

Tom Kaye asked the subcommittee members what areas IAE should concentrate its survey efforts for the spring/summer 2007 and 2008 season. The following sites were suggested:

- Property adjacent to roadside populations (all species)
- King's Valley (lupine)
- Logsdan Ridge
- Southern and northern areas of the County (not well surveyed)
- Muddy Creek corridor (Bradshaw's lomatium, Willamette daisy)
- Woods Creek (north of Philomath)
- Henkle/Rock Creek
- Soap Creek (Donna is surveying area, would appreciate assistance)
- Harrison and 53rd
- Beaver Creek
- Bunker Hill

Several sites were suggested, but then retracted:

- Cherry Creek - not optimal habitat.

- Herbert Parcel – work being done by others for the City.

IAE is look at aerial photos and sending letters to request surveys. Deborah Clark said she will ask around OSU of possible places to survey. The use of Google Earth was suggested because it is easier to use than looking at a flat map. IAE will check with DSL to see if they capture listed species information on properties with wetland removal/fill permits. Ed Alverson suggested using GIS modeling looking at vegetation and soil types to identify private lands to survey - look at historic vegetation, soil types not suitable for agriculture. This has already been done to some extent. The results, at least for Kincaid's lupine, indicates that most of the eastern half of the County is suitable habitat for this species. Ed also mentioned that he is looking at the top portfolio sites for the Willamette Valley based on TNC's Willamette Valley Ecoregion plan and will be contacting the top 200 landowners. TNC will not, however, be asking for access to the property to locate listed species. Ed would be happy to share information on Benton County properties identified.

Covered Activities – Is this List Complete

The Subcommittee will review the list and send IAE any activities that should be added.

Draft Biological Goals/Conservation Measures

Conservation measures could be that all mitigation will occur on County property and private landowners will not need to mitigate for impacts to the species on their properties (resulting in the possible loss of these species on private property), or there can be no take on private or public property – no loss of species, or somewhere in between. Most likely the conservation measures proposed will fall somewhere in between. A recommendation was made that IAE staff meet with staff of the West Eugene Wetlands Project to see how they manage their mitigation bank. The County will need to look at how to pay for the conservation measures, either through increased taxes, permit fees, etc.. Incentives under consideration include tax incentives and expedited permitting. A suggestion was made to focus on the conservation aspects of the plan, and secondarily how it can meet regulatory requirements. Ed Alverson noted that W. Eugene had received a large amount of grant money, and this could be the funding source for restoration.

Tasks:

Carolyn - Check rare species collection locations at OSU Herbarium. Check with other federal agencies, botanists – they may not have provided data to ORNHIC.

Carolyn – Prepare species checklist to use during plant community inventories

Nick – Provide ODOT species data information to Carolyn

Ed – Provide IAE with information on TNC's portfolio sites for Benton County.

Michelle – Contact DSL to check T/E species info with wetland fill/removal permits

Carolyn – Contact BLM re: survey work on their property and what data they might have.

Carolyn – Include on the GIS maps areas already surveyed.

Deborah – Contact OSU staff members for survey suggestions in 2007 and 2008.

Duncan - Prepare write-up for Beazell monitoring work planned

Everyone – Review covered activities list and provide any additions to IAE.

IAE Staff – Consider holding a public workshop on how to survey for the HCP species.