
**San Francisquito Watershed Council
Steering Committee Minutes**

April 11, 2007

Introductions. Today's agenda was approved. March 14, 2007 minutes approved. The next Steering Committee meeting is May 9, 2007. This meeting will be devoted to a visioning exercise as part of the strategic planning process and will be facilitated by Debbie Mytels. The meeting will be offsite, possibly at the Baylands Interpretive Center; details will be announced shortly.

Pam asked the attendees how many got the email announcement she sent on April 5 for the Steering Committee meeting. She said she had learned that some people had not received it, while others had. She asked anyone who didn't get it to please check their junk mailboxes and spam filter settings and talk to their IT departments to see if we might be getting blocked.

Announcements

- The LTMAP report from the 2006 Water Year is now posted at <http://facilities.stanford.edu/environment/NonPotableHome.htm>.

Presentation: Stanford University's Habitat Conservation Plan (Alan Launer and Laura Jones, Stanford University)

Pam Sturner introduced the presentation, saying that the Stanford Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) came to the Steering Committee's attention last October, at which time some members were aware of it and others weren't. The topic produced a lot of interest, so the Watershed Council asked Alan Launer, the Campus Biologist, and Laura Jones, Director of Heritage Services and Special Projects, to give a presentation about it.

Alan Launer gave an overview of the topics to be covered today: the basics of HCPs, a description of Stanford's approach, the benefits to the species covered under the plan, and the process and schedule for completing it.

The reason that Stanford is creating an HCP is that several species on its lands are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Causing "take" (harming or killing the species, whether indirectly or directly) is prohibited without an incidental take permit, and these permits must be supported by an HCP. The HCP is designed to provide a net benefit to "covered species." It lays out the comprehensive conservation program for the covered species and also sets mitigation requirements for the take. It only covers federal Endangered Species Act requirements and does not take the place of local permits.

The elements of an HCP include a list of covered species (which addresses not only the species, but also the ecosystems required by them), the types of activities covered, the anticipated impacts of these activities on these species (which the resource agencies determine), and a conservation program. The conservation program includes minimization and avoidance measures and mitigation for unavoidable impacts; it also promotes the recovery of the covered species.

Stanford has been working on this HCP for several years. Originally there were more “covered species,” but the list has been whittled down to steelhead, tiger salamander, red-legged frog, and western pond turtle. The goals of the HCP are to respond to the Federal Endangered Species Act, support Stanford’s mission as a teaching and research institution, contribute to regional efforts to maintain biodiversity, and coordinate conservation efforts under a 50-year framework that includes both conservation planning and mitigation. Alan stressed that Stanford greatly values these natural resources and uses them as teaching tools.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service are the lead agencies on the project and will issue the permits, with Sheila Larson and Gary Stern, respectively, as the agencies’ representatives. The California Department of Fish and Game is also at the table but is not a signed participant. Stanford is not doing the state-level equivalent to the HCP, which is called a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP).

Alan then gave a short description of each covered species. Tiger salamanders were listed as “threatened” in 2004. They live in Lagunita and a few constructed ponds and were an important driver for doing the HCP: because they live so close to campus, they are the main potential “take.”

Red-legged frogs were listed as “threatened” in 2006. They are mostly found on the western side of the Santa Cruz Mountains, but there are some on the Bay side. They are usually found near creeks and ponds, but also occasionally in upland areas.

The western pond turtle is not listed yet but likely will be soon. There have been fewer and fewer turtles in the last decade. They are very spread out across their geographical area, and once the population gets below a certain density, they can’t find each other to reproduce in sufficient numbers.

The Central California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) of steelhead is listed as “threatened.” Steelhead are the anadromous form of rainbow trout, so they are a variant life history form of a more common species. This gets very complicated in a regulatory context, because there are often migratory and non-migratory fish in the creeks and the populations are often mixed. For regulatory purposes, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) classifies a fish as steelhead if it is found in the zone of anadromy (zone where it can migrate to the ocean). If it is found upstream of an impassable barrier or in the far upper headwaters where it can’t migrate, NOAA classifies it as a rainbow trout. This is a regulatory definition, not a biological definition. Most of the steelhead on Stanford land are in Los Trancos Creek, some are in San Francisquito Creek, and some are in the part of Bear Creek on Stanford land. The density of young steelhead in Los Trancos Creek is higher than in San Francisquito. Densities of young steelhead range from 20-250 individuals per mile in San Francisquito Creek and 180-700 per mile in Los Trancos Creek. Last year there were few young of the year. The late rains may have washed out the nests.

Activities covered under the HCP are any actions by Stanford University on Stanford lands that result in take of a covered species. A certificate of inclusion under the HCP also covers minor actions of non-Stanford entities (mainly leaseholders) that occur on Stanford lands. Some

activities are not covered, such as the application of biocides. Existing structures such as buildings, roads, and dams are not covered and do not need to be mitigated. Significant unanticipated actions beyond the scope of the HCP would require an amendment.

Activities that might cause take include: academic research, facilities operations and maintenance, redevelopment, future development, and the conservation program itself. The maintenance and current operation of Searsville dam and reservoir are covered activities. However, the existence of the dam itself, while it does cause impacts, does not specifically require ESA mitigation. The dam is already in place and therefore is not covered under the HCP. If the dam were ever changed or removed, Stanford would need an amendment to the HCP.

Stanford's strategy for achieving the permanent protection of key resources is to target multiple levels of biodiversity, expand existing conservation programs, and initiate new conservation activities. The Endangered Species Act focuses on species, but protecting a species means protecting the whole ecosystem, from individuals to population to species to community to ecosystem.

To organize its conservation approach, Stanford divided its lands into zones based on the value of each area for the covered species. This allows for focused impact analyses, mitigation, and conservation efforts. The dark green areas (shown on a map accompanying Alan's presentation), which lie primarily in the riparian corridors and around parts of Lagunita, are those where the species are found. The lighter green area is buffer where they travel. The mustard yellow area is open space, which is generally less developed but includes areas where the benefits to the listed species are harder to measure. The orange zones are the built areas such as campus and Stanford facilities. Mitigation requirements are also set by these zones. The dark green zones have the highest mitigation requirements and the greatest conservation efforts.

Question: None of the covered species are serpentine. Are there any serpentine species other than at Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve?

Response: No. There are some semi-serpentine areas in both the dark green and light green zones and also by the research park, meaning there are some serpentine plants, but no other serpentine soils than at Jasper Ridge.

About 360 acres of continuous riparian corridor area covering about 13 miles of creek will be set aside as permanent easements prior to new take. These easements will serve as mitigation for future take from future development and other activities. It is not a mitigation bank, but credits can be "used up" over the years as take occurs, with the amount determined by location and magnitude of project. This is different from the way many HCPs work, which establish mitigations for projects as they come up. The easement program also includes funds for management and restoration. These permanent easements should more than cover take for the next 50 years, but they can be expanded if needed. They include areas to be restored, with an initial commitment of 50 acres. Most restoration sites will be along Los Trancos and Deer Creeks.

The San Francisquito / Los Trancos riparian easement is about 270 acres in area and covers about 10.5 miles of creek. The width ranges from 450 feet in some undeveloped portions of campus down to about 75 feet in areas where Stanford only owns half the creek bottom and there are permanent facilities and development. Management and restoration are an important part of the conservation program. Stanford will address immediate threats and problems such as collapsed banks and broken pipes. They will do both active and passive restoration such as the projects they are doing at the burial and stable sites. They will also be looking at long-term restoration objectives, such as addressing areas where the riparian is too narrow or there is a connectivity issue.

Alan then talked about the eight ponds Stanford built as tiger salamander habitat in the lower foothills in 2003. As of spring 2006, salamanders are successfully reproducing in two of them. The aquatic invertebrates and wetland plants are thriving and they are also used by many terrestrial species. More ponds will be built as part of the HCP.

Question: Do bullfrogs bother the red-legged frogs?

Response: This is a concern in the creeks and in Searsville, and Stanford does manage for bullfrogs in those locations. Bullfrogs aren't a problem for the salamanders since their ponds dry up in the summer, and bullfrogs need year-round water to survive. Bullfrog management has been successful in San Francisquito and Matadero Creek; it's more difficult in Searsville.

Since 2001 Lagunita has been managed for tiger salamander habitat, not for recreation. There are a lot of salamanders reproducing there, and Stanford is trying to shift some of them to the foothill ponds. Lagunita is filled according to essentially the same schedule as it has been for the last three decades. This includes natural runoff in December and January, which allows the salamanders to migrate to it. If the salamanders are there, it is supplemented with creek water. In dry years, if there's no runoff to fill it and no salamander migration, no creek water is added and Lagunita is allowed to remain dry. The depth of Lagunita has been reduced due to safety concerns, but it's still a sizable seasonal wetland for salamanders, frogs, and toads. Stanford will continue this management regime for the 50-year life of the HCP.

Under the HCP, Stanford will also minimize impacts on habitat through use of Best Management Practices, review of field activities, modification of diversion structures and operation, and monitoring of construction sites.

Stanford will perform monitoring, as it has been doing annually since the mid-1990s, to determine the distribution and abundance of species of conservation concern as a way to evaluate the success of conservation efforts: in other words, to see if the populations are decreasing, increasing, or unchanging. Monitoring efforts include creek and pond monitoring, night surveys, and terrestrial and aquatic surveys. The night surveys for tiger salamanders are conducted along Junipero Serra Blvd. and the Dish trail; they are harder to see in vegetated areas. Stanford also does water surveys looking for egg masses and larvae.

The anticipated benefits of the HCP and conservation program to covered species are that they will improve the quality and increase the extent of habitat, increase population size, increase range, and increase the connectivity between occupied areas. In the case of steelhead, the

population size fluctuates due to weather, but the hope is that the conservation program will increase the baseline numbers.

Question: For the western-pond turtle, would Stanford move them closer together so they could find mates?

Response: Yes. Increasing the population size of the turtle will probably require something active, like moving them closer together or even ranching, and given the 50-year time frame of the program, there should be enough time for this. Also, since the turtles crawl out of the creek in high flows and lay eggs in upland areas, providing better setbacks along the creeks should help, too.

Question: What enhancements will steelhead benefit from?

Response: Steelhead will benefit from wider, healthier riparian zones that will increase food supply and stabilize temperatures. Wider riparian zones will help reduce minor pollutants and dust, both of which kill the aquatic invertebrates that steelhead eat. Stanford won't be trying to "fix" natural sediment sources, but if a bank caves in or if a hanging pipe is causing erosion, Stanford will remediate those situations to keep the fine sediment out of the creek. Stanford will continue to work in partnership with other organizations to remediate migration barriers. In general, steelhead will benefit from having human presence incrementally farther away from the creeks and from changing the diversion regime.

There will be other benefits to the ecosystem in that protection for covered species will provide an "umbrella of protection" for many other species that are not federally listed. The HCP also includes substantial mitigation up front (meaning prior to take), creates a unified program to identify and address future threats and impacts, and provides a coordinated, long-term framework to take advantage of future opportunities and partnerships.

Process: Stanford will continue coordinating with the resource agencies and communicating with the public about the plan. The federal agencies will develop an Environmental Impact Statement; Stanford will develop the Habitat Conservation Plan for acceptance by the agencies; the agencies will issue incidental take permits to Stanford once the HCP is complete; and there will be an implementation agreement between Stanford and the agencies with more details about the dates, times, and ways things will be done.

Schedule: Stanford is currently working on the draft EIS and HCP, and is trying hard to stick to the following schedule:

- EIS Scoping: Fall 2006
- Preparation of Draft EIS: Spring/summer 2007
- Release Draft HCP and EIS: Winter 2007 (with public review and comment for 60 days)
- Release Final HCP and EIS: Spring 2008
- Prepare Final Documents: Summer 2008
- Agencies issue incidental take permits: Fall 2008

Since there are only 60 days for the public comment on the draft EIS and the document will be really big, Stanford is doing more public outreach now to help familiarize the community with the program so that it can be ready to make comments.

Question: When will the maps showing the zones of habitat value officially be available?

Response: This is the proposed schedule. It is not set in stone and is meant to provide technical colleagues with an idea of the direction. Stanford will wait until the agencies sign off to release the maps, probably right before they go public.

The Stanford HCP is a fairly simple one – it involves only one entity and there is not a lot of take proposed. Hopefully it will be possible to stick to this schedule, but nothing is guaranteed.

Question: Will you be expanding Jasper Ridge so the public can get to more? I'm specifically thinking about species movement on the north-south axis.

Response: The goal of our conservation program is to increase habitat connectivity. Birds, mammals, and other wildlife should benefit from an expanded riparian corridor and from the work we do in the foothills. The Dish and Cow Hill will receive lots of conservation benefits. SLAC and CTETA are barriers to connectivity with Jasper Ridge, but they have some value or at least open space.

Question: Will you consider putting in an animal bridge?

Response: There is no project big enough to require mitigation of that scale. The combination of SLAC, Sand Hill Road, and the Horse Farm do make it tough for wildlife by limiting connectivity, but Stanford has no plans to put in an animal bridge.

Question: We had the presentation from Tom Zigterman last month and wrote the Department of Fish and Game a letter about the Felt Lake diversion project. Did Fish and Game approve Stanford's permit?

Response: No, there are not permits yet.

Question: Are there outreach efforts to schools associated with Stanford's conservation program?

Response (Laura Jones, Stanford University): Yes. Stanford is doing active outreach to the community. Cindy Wilbur has more information about internships, curriculum, and hands-on activities. Stanford is also working on a website and brochure about the NEPA process, which will cover both general question about what the HCP is and more detailed technical questions. With this suite of materials, Stanford will do undergraduate and community education at the same time. Since there are many institutions doing environmental education in ecology for K-12, Stanford's approach is to focus on how to coordinate with and add content to existing environmental education programs, rather than to invent a new program. They also plan to do education in coordination with their restoration partnerships.

For any other questions about the HCP, contact Alan Launer (aclauner@stanford.edu) or Laura Jones (ljones@stanford.edu). The website about the HCP should be up in the next month. Alan will send the link to Pam to distribute to the Watershed Council.

Strategic Planning Activity: Steering Committee stakeholder interviews

Pam introduced the next activity. She referred to our first discussion about strategic planning and reminded the group that we identified information from stakeholders as a key element of our process. It has been a while since we stood back and assessed how well we're serving the community, and hearing from people both in our circles and farther out will help us understand what we're doing well and what we should do differently. Today, our members will interview each other about their participation in the Steering Committee. This activity will give everyone the chance to say what you want to see happen in this forum in the future.

Everyone present broke into pairs and interviewed each other using the questionnaire Pam handed out.

After the interviews were completed, the Steering Committee came back together and made the following comments about interviewing each other:

- The interviews had elicited good feedback about the Watershed Council.
- People enjoyed getting to talk to each other on a slightly deeper level than they usually can at a Steering Committee meeting.
- People had more to say than they thought they would.

Pam said that the strategic planning committee will review the results of today's exercise in preparation for our strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/ threats analysis. The data will be summarized into highlights, although the verbatim responses will be available to the strategic planning committee. She then shared the committee's plan for external stakeholder interviews and asked for feedback.

Comments on external stakeholder interviews:

- Don't make it too long: 15 to 20 minutes is the longest it should be.
- The interviewer should let the person know what they will get out of participating. (Pam responded that we will offer to share the resulting strategic plan with everyone that participated in an interview.)

Question: Are there any Steering Committee members who aren't present and submitted interviews by email?

Response: No.

Question: I'm curious about what the limiting factor to the Watershed Council is from the staff perspective.

Response: Pam said that her answer would require more than the five minutes left in the meeting, but she would like to agendize a discussion about this question for a future meeting.

Pam then described next steps for the Strategic Planning process. At the May meeting, the Steering Committee will do an exercise to create a vision for the watershed resulting from our work. This exercise will be done off-site and will be facilitated by Debbie Mytels. The strategic planning committee will interview external stakeholders, analyze the results, and finish the information-gathering phase. Sometime after this, the Steering Committee will do a day-long retreat at which we will synthesize the results of the stakeholder interviews, staff program

evaluations, history and lessons learned exercises, and visioning to come up with themes and priorities for the Watershed Council's future.

Question: Will the Searsville Lake bathymetry presentation that was originally scheduled for May be rescheduled?

Response: Yes.

Staff reports

Katie Pilat, Restoration Projects Manager: During this past month, we completed the tours and final report for the stormwater demonstration projects at Parking Plaza #5 in Menlo Park and 735 Homer Avenue in Palo Alto. We held two tours, March 24 and 25, and had 23 attendees at each one. They had good questions and most people seemed really interested in using some kind of runoff reduction techniques in their own yards. One of the follow-on project ideas that came out of talking with people at the demonstration site tours is to put together a list of properties – whether private, commercial, or public – that have used interesting runoff reduction techniques and permeable materials and make a list of addresses (of those properties with willing owners) available on the Watershed Council website. This would both give people more ideas and places they could go to see how they look in the ground, and also get the idea across that these techniques are becoming more and more common. Katie asked the Steering Committee members to send her any ideas of places to check out for this list. Ideas mentioned by Steering Committee members included:

- 2755 Sand Hill Road – unit paver parking lot
- Sand Hill Road swales
- Agilent parking lot
- A green roof in Santa Clara
- Lockheed Martin parking lots (ask Art Kramer for details)
- Palo Alto duck pond parking lot (ask Joe Teresi or Phil Bobel for details)

On March 21 the Watershed Council co-sponsored a presentation by Andy Lipkis, the founder of TreePeople, called “Helping Nature Heal Our Cities.” About 120 people attended, and a video of the talk is posted on the Watershed Council's website (www.sanfranciscuito.org).

Ryan Navratil, Field Coordinator: Ryan has focused on preparing El Palo Alto Park for the Going Native Garden Tour on April 29. He's also done some willow staking and invasive weed removal at other sites.

In attendance:

Katie Pilat – SFWC
Ryan Navratil – SFWC
Molly Graham – Stanford Public Outreach
Catherine Palter – Stanford Planning
Laura Jones – Stanford

Alan Launer – Stanford
Marge DeStaebler – PV Conservation Committee
Julie Skelton – Stanford Real Estate
Trish Mulvey – SFWC volunteer
Libby Lucas – CNPS
Liz Schwerer Duffie
Marty Laporte – Stanford Utilities
Bill Springer – SCVWD
Art Kraemer – Crescent Park Neighborhood Association
Darrin Gambelin – Stanford Linear Accelerator Center
Janet Cox – RWQCB
Viv Blomenkamp
Pam Sturner – SFWC

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Pilat.