

East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan / Natural Communities Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP)

Preparation of the East County HCP/NCCP is a project of a Joint Powers Authority, the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan Association (HCPA). The HCPA consists of the following seven member agencies:

- City of Brentwood
- City of Clayton
- City of Oakley
- City of Pittsburg
- Contra Costa County
- Contra Costa Water District, and
- East Bay Regional Park District.

The County serves as the Coordinating Agency for the HCPA.



San Joaquin kit fox

Mission: The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan will provide comprehensive species, wetlands and ecosystem conservation and contribute to recovery of endangered species within East Contra Costa County, while:

- balancing open space, habitat, agriculture, and urban development;
- reducing the cost and increasing the clarity and consistency of federal and state permitting by consolidating and streamlining these processes into one, locally-controlled plan,
- encouraging, where appropriate, the multiple use of protected areas, including recreation and agriculture,
- sharing the costs and benefits of the habitat conservation plan as widely and equitably as possible, and
- protecting the rights of private property owners.

Planning Area: The HCPA has identified an 185,000 acre planning area that includes all watersheds draining the eastern flanks of Mount Diablo and portions of the Mount Diablo Creek watershed within the City of Clayton's Sphere of Influence. The East Contra Costa County area is one of the fastest growing regions in the Bay Area. The area also provides habitat for a variety of rare, threatened, and endangered species. More than 44,000 acres of land are already preserved for open space and/or habitat purposes.

Desired Permits: The HCP/NCCP effort will seek to provide the following regional permits:

- U.S. Endangered Species Act (Section 10)
- U.S. Endangered Species Act (Section 7 assurances)
- U.S. Clean Water Act, Section 404 (via Regional General Permit / Simplified Permit Program)
- U.S. Clean Water Act, Section 401 (desire programmatic water quality certification on Regional General Permit)
- CA Endangered Species Act (Section 2835)
- Programmatic Streambed Alteration Agreement

Covered Species: The HCPA is proposing to cover 28 plant and wildlife species, some listed, some not. Proposed covered species include: San Joaquin kit fox, Alameda whipsnake, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, western burrowing owl, Swainson's hawk, vernal pool fairy shrimp, and brittle scale.

Committees and Public Meetings: The HCPA is governed by the Executive Governing Committee, a body of elected officials representing the seven member agencies (quarterly meetings). The Coordination Group is a working committee comprised of stakeholders, local agencies, and federal agencies (monthly meetings, periodic subcommittee meetings). The Science Advisory Panel is comprised of six scientists and one facilitator from the university and professional consulting sectors (4 meetings). All meetings are open to the public.

Schedule and Progress: The HCPA initiated the planning process in late 2001. A Preliminary Working Draft HCP/NCCP was released in November 2003 and is available on the project website. The formal Draft HCP/NCCP is scheduled for release in early 2005 with the Final HCP/NCCP to follow in later in 2005. Preparation costs for the plan will total about \$1,400,000. Funding has come from a variety of local, state, and federal sources.

Key Features of Working Draft HCP/NCCP:

- Partially flexible permit area for urban development linked to the ULL but constrained by conservation priorities;
- Conservation acquisitions from willing sellers scaled to match impacts (20,000 to 34,000 acres to be acquired);
- Seeks permits for major infrastructure projects such as Byron Highway and Vasco Road Improvements;
- Costs of implementing HCP/NCCP over 30 years estimated at \$230 to \$290 million; 2 funding scenarios are being explored; fees on new development would be a major source (40–67%); access to additional state/federal funding and continuation of existing conservation investments at past levels are another source (33–60%).

Contacts: If you have questions or comments about this project, or for more information, please contact:

John Kopchik at 925-335-1227
jkopc@cd.co.contra-costa.ca.us

Or visit the project website at:
www.cocohep.org