
Gaviota Coast Planning Advisory Committee

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES MEETING No. 23

***Wednesday December 1, 2010
Vista de Las Cruces School Auditorium***

Meeting No. 23 Called to Order: By Chair Kimbell at 6:32 p.m.

1. Roll Call

GavPAC Members Present: Baer, Boise-Cossart, Bowman, Feeney, Kimbell, Lloyd (arrived after roll at 6:40), McGinnis, McKenna, McNabb, Tautrim, Van Leer

GavPAC Members Absent: None

County Staff Present:

Jeff Hunt, Long Range Planning Division Director

David Lackie, Long Range Planning Division Supervising Planner

Brian Tetley, Long Range Planning Division Senior Planner

2. Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda: None

3. Administrative Briefings

Jeff Hunt, the new Director of the Long Range Planning Division, introduced himself to the Committee, described his background, and expressed that he is looking forward to working with the Gaviota Coast community.

Chair Kimbell: The action taken by the CCC at the recent hearing may hinder the Gaviota planning process. The fundamental problem in this LUDC certification process is that the relationship between the state and local authorities has been distorted. The CCC Staff has provided only rationalizations for their assertion that the remaining requested modifications are required for the LUDC to be in compliance with the Coastal Act. The CCC public hearing process seems bogged down in minutiae and seemed to disregard public testimony.

Deliberations: Tautrim inquired about the possibility of withdrawing and resubmitting the LUDC certification application. Staff responded that P&D will present the BOS with all options at the December 14th meeting.

Public Comment: None

4. Meeting Minutes from Meeting No. 22 on November 10, 2010

Deliberations: Kimbell and Feeney requested the minutes be amended to correct two typographical errors.

ACTION: Feeney moved, seconded by McGinnis and carried by a vote of 8-0, with 3 abstaining due to absence from that meeting, to approve the minutes with modifications.

5. Discussion of Existing Resources & Open Space Policy

Deliberation: Discussed during Meeting 22.

6. Consideration of Resource Stewardship & Open Space (RSOS) Preferences for the Gaviota Coast



To address the numerous interesting questions that arose after the last GavPAC meeting, Staff has assembled four speakers that will address different aspects of natural resources to help inform the discussion on RSOS on the Gaviota Coast.

Presentation by Matt Stoecker: Mr. Stoecker is a biologist who works in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties and is primarily focused on Steelhead recovery and watershed restoration. Corridors allow wildlife to move between fragmented lands and adapt to climate change. Riparian areas are critical migration corridors. On the Gaviota Coast, there is an east-west migration pattern along the Santa Ynez Mountain Range and a north-south migration pattern along watersheds. Steelhead (salmon) is a keystone species; therefore restoring Steelhead habitat can positively impact other species.

Lagoons act as important transition areas from fresh water to the ocean for migrating juvenile fish, however, earth fill generated from the development of Highway 101 has historically been deposited in such lagoons. The lower portions of many creeks and associated lagoons are therefore heavily impacted. The road crossing and campground area at the mouth of Gaviota Creek are examples of impacts to the lower portions of a creek. Railroad and road culverts also act as migration barriers for Steelhead. The Las Flores plant, which sits back in a canyon, is also a barrier to wildlife migration along this watershed.

Public Comment:

Mike Lunsford: The County owned the land around the mouth of Gaviota Creek prior to State Parks.

Public Comment (name not stated): Major rivers in the County (i.e. Santa Maria, Santa Ynez) are often not flowing to the ocean. When are Steelhead able to move from the ocean to these bodies of freshwater? Mr. Stoecker responded that during high rainfall, typically in the spring, these waterways can reach the coast.

Public Comment (name not stated): Do the estuaries need to be restored before the Steelhead populations can be restored to previous concentrations? Mr. Stoecker replied that studies have shown the critical importance of estuary areas and lagoons for rearing Steelhead as well as marine fish.

Deliberation: Lloyd asked for Mr. Stoecker's suggested top priorities for restoration projects in the planning area. Mr. Stoecker replied that the Gaviota Creek watershed would be an important area to focus on, as well as supporting the removal of Caltrans barriers along Highway 101, which will be critical for Steelhead migration. Kimbell asks for suggested standards and policies that could be incorporated into the Plan. McGinnis asked for a list of priority pilot projects, which Mr. Stoecker will provide to the Committee at a later date. Kimbell asked about landowner concerns regarding the introduction of endangered species onto their property as a result of habitat restoration projects. Mr. Stoecker responded that individual agreements can be created to limit landowner liability, and that he does not think there is widespread concern on the behalf of landowners about introducing endangered species onto their property.

Presentation by Nancy Siepel of Caltrans: Caltrans has worked on wildlife connectivity issues both statewide and at the District level. The South Coast Wildlands organization and Caltrans were partners in a project to create a statewide wildlife connectivity map, to create criteria for defining corridors, and to develop a strategic plan.

Caltrans hired UC Davis to create an internal road kill database. UC Davis has also created an online tool for the public to input road kill data.

Caltrans is partnering with the Big Sur Land Trust and the Transportation Agency of Monterey County to promote wildlife connectivity. These groups have also obtained



funding to map wildlife corridors throughout the County. In addition, studies have shown that Caltrans bridges between Fort Ord and large ranches act as wildlife migration routes.

Caltrans hired Cal Poly Students to monitor wildlife movements prior to construction of wildlife fencing, escape ramps, and connections to underpasses at Cuesta grade in San Luis Obispo County.

SB 857 requires Caltrans to address fish passage issues within a project's limits when the project encompasses fish habitat.

Caltrans does not have the ability to initiate projects that only deal with fish passage/wildlife connectivity issues. However, Caltrans' environmental stewardship program does long range planning to address wildlife connectivity.

In-lieu fees could be used, in addition to required on-site mitigation, to help fund mitigation or restoration efforts elsewhere in a watershed.

Public Comment (name not stated): Have State budget issues restricted available funding for mitigation and restoration projects? Ms. Siepel responded that a district-wide wildlife habitat connectivity plan was not able to be conducted due to budget deficiencies, but that mitigation is still being funded.

Mark Chaconas: Which projects qualify for mitigation? What is the threshold for constructing a fish passage as mitigation? Ms. Siepel responded that in-stream work would require mitigation dealing with fish passage. Caltrans has developed a database of culverts that have fish passage issues which is referenced when developing mitigation for in-stream work.

Deliberation: Lloyd stated that a collaborative process should be created to prioritize projects and to pool agency funding.

Presentation by David Chiang, from the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office: Mr. Chiang discussed the invasive and noxious weeds disrupting the Gaviota Coast ecosystem, particularly the rangeland environment. A noxious weed is a plant that is difficult to control and disruptive to agriculture. Invasive plants are not regulated and noxious weeds are prohibited from interstate trade.

The worst weeds on the Gaviota coast are: Carnation Spurge, Artichoke Thistle, Purple Star Thistle, Giant Reed (Arundo), Onionweed, Pampas Grass, Yellow Star Thistle, and Fountain Grass. These weeds negatively impact agricultural operations because they increase fire risk, can be toxic or inedible to rangeland animals thereby reducing rangeland grazing acreage, and can create large monocultures.

Arundo is flammable, even when green, and can clog creeks. Artichoke thistles are toxic to rangeland animals and can be introduced from artichoke plants which have gone to seed over numerous consecutive years. Pampas grass can create monocultures and is not grazed by rangeland animals. Yellow Star Thistle is very common and numerous insects have been released for biological control of this plant. Star Thistle's density and distribution goes in cycles. It is difficult to get rid of artichoke thistle without herbicides and landowners that resist the use of herbicides to prevent the spread of such thistle or other invasive plants, could be required to remove such a plant if the Agricultural Commissioner were to declare that plant a public nuisance.

Public Comment:

Anne Coates : How much money has been spent on weed eradication? Mr. Chiang replied that the California Department of Food and Agricultural has funded about \$16,000 worth of treatment for weed control over the past 2 years for his projects.



Public Comment (name not stated): What are the most effective methods for reducing noxious weeds? Mr. Chiang responded that the Plan could promote outreach, education, awareness, and voluntary programs for preventing the introduction and spread of noxious and invasive weeds.

Deliberation: Kimbell reminded the GavPAC and public that they need to be focused on creating policies to address weed management. Motivating landowners to prevent the spread of invasive species could include the use of conservation easements containing a provision for dealing with invasive plants. Owners could voluntarily create a master plan for a specific watershed which addresses how to deal with weed eradication.

Presentation by Mariah Chen of the Midlands School: Ms. Chen helped conduct pilot projects on rotational grazing, which boosts carbon sequestration and is more indicative of a non-fenced setting for rangeland animals. Midlands School contains about 2,000 acres of grazing land. A full study on rotational grazing would take closer to four years to conduct.

Deliberation: Baer asked whether the rotational grazing practices take into account seasonal plant cycles. Kimbell asked the Committee to direct Staff to come up with a list of policies or issues that they would like to see addressed and bring that list to the next meeting for discussion.

7. Consideration of RSOS Planning Tools

Deliberation: Included under Item 6.

8. Discussion of LUDC Certification Process

Deliberation: Discussed during the Administrative Briefing item.

9. Discussion of Long Term Meeting Schedule

Deliberation: Kimbell stated that the meetings at Vista have been better attended than those in Goleta. McNabb feels meetings should be held in the planning area. Feeny said that he has not heard complaints from people in Goleta about the meeting location.

Public Comment:

Mike Lunsford: Having meetings at Vista instead of Goleta inhibits those who do not own land in the planning area from attending the meetings. Those Goleta residents concerned about the future of the shared resource of the Gaviota Coast should be given the opportunity to attend meetings in Goleta.

Nathan Alley: Suggested a second public workshop be conducted in Goleta at some point.

Mark Chaconas: Says landowners are in favor of keeping the meetings at Vista and therefore suggests keeping the meetings at this location.

Bob Easton: The Vista location discourages public attendance due to its remote location and the dimly lit road access road to the school. Noticing of public meetings is not very visible and it is difficult to figure out when meetings are going to be held. He supports having a workshop in Goleta.

ACTION: Feeny moved, seconded by McNabb and carried by a vote of 10-1, to have the remainder of this phase of GavPAC meetings at Vista de Las Cruces School and to conduct a public workshop in Goleta prior to Staff beginning the Draft Plan.

Meeting Adjournment – 9:12 p.m.

