

**Santa Barbara County  
Regional Conservation Strategy**

**Stakeholder Committee Development Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 28, 2006  
BOS Conference Room, Santa Maria**

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**Present:**

Supervisor Centeno – Santa Barbara County Supervisor, 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Grady Williams – Santa Barbara County, Project Manager  
Abigail Nugent – Santa Barbara County, Project Coordinator  
Bob Copper – San Diego County, Deputy CAO, Retired/Consultant  
Marc Ebbin – EMS  
Mike Ghizzoni – Santa Barbara County Council  
Mary Myer – CCDFG Plant Ecologist  
Martin Potter – CCDFG Wildlife Biologist  
Katie Drexhage – Fish and Wildlife Service  
Rhonda Lucas – California Farm Bureau Fed.  
Bill Shipsey – City of Santa Maria – Planning  
Wendy Stockton – City of Santa Maria  
Willy Chamberlin – S.B. County Cattlemen, S.B. County Ag. Advisory Committee  
Teri Bontrager – S.B. County Farm Bureau  
Steve Henry – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Jerry Bunin – Home Builders Association  
Susan Petrovich – Hatch & Parent  
Bob Royster – Santa Barbara County 5<sup>th</sup> District Staff  
Andy Caldwell – COLAB

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**1. Opening Remarks:** Supervisor Centeno stated the general purpose of these meetings is to bring the community together to meet our obligations to the California Tiger Salamander (CTS) and its habitat, while at the same time meeting our obligations to landowners. He stated that this meeting was to establish if the right people to represent stakeholder interests were present, or if others need to be involved. He pointed out that an important stakeholder, the environmental community, was absent from the meeting.

**2. Project Manager (PM) Comments:** After making introductions of attendees, Grady Williams defined the specific purpose of the meeting as follows: to define stakeholder committee membership and outline the project's purpose, goals and procedures. He explained the desire to have stakeholder reps who are committed to making this process work, and who will fairly consider all the interests of all stakeholders. He stressed that the goal is to create something that improves the status quo for all stakeholders, and certainly not make it worse for any. He pointed out that in the end, no one is going to be obligated to use it if they don't want.

**3. Stakeholder Steering Committee (SSC) Membership:**

- The stakeholders present were summarized as follows:
  - Farmers
  - Ranchers
  - Developers
  - Department of Fish & Game
  - Department of Fish and Wildlife
  - Local Jurisdictions (County and City)

The Farming Community (FC) confirmed they will represent wine growers also. They also opined that representation from the environmental community would be important to achieve legal defensibility of the subject plan.

- **Representation for the development community:** It was asked if the two interests in development, that of land owner interests and builder/development interests, can adequately be represented with one person. Jerry Bunin, who is representing the developers, stated that he would represent all sides of the development community; maintaining contact with people with varying interests.
- **Involvement of the environmental community:** The discussion included the difficulty of adequately representing a community with so many different representatives and interests, the reasons for environmental's absence, and why the Environmental Defense Center (EDC) was initially chosen as the environmental representative. A section of the EDC letter to the County explaining their absence was read, stating that presently the proposed committee has only one public, non-government interest group (EDC), and they would be one against three private non-government interest groups. Furthermore, now they believe the county is introducing lawyers to represent each group. In response, the consensus of the group present was that another environmental group be asked to represent the environmental community, in addition to EDC. Suggestions for different environmental groups and individuals included the Community Environmental Council (CEC), Orcutt Advisory Committee, the California Native Plant Society, the Nature Conservancy, the Guadalupe Dunes Center, Center for Natural Diversity, Audubon Society, Citizen's Planning Association, the Sierra Club, and John Clark. It was agreed the committee needs someone with credibility. It was agreed that if EDC agrees to participate, they should be allowed input on who the second rep will be. Supervisor Centeno asked the PM to coordinate the identification of the second environmental rep with the USFWS.
- **Number of stakeholders and role of CDFG and USFWS:** It was agreed that a smaller group is advantageous to reaching agreements and the USFWS and CDFG are there to ensure that agency requirements are being met. The Army Corps of Engineers and Regional Water Quality Control Board and others can be brought in if an issue warrants it.
- **Alternates:** The PM stated that alternates are allowed; they can come to meetings (the meetings will be open meetings anyway, with time for public comments), but only the primary representatives can participate in the committee discussions. Discussions between primary and alternate representatives will be permitted only during breaks so that meetings aren't interrupted. It was noted that there is an advantage to having local representatives who are fully aware of all local issues and can readily attend all meetings.
- It was expressed that the project needs to have the support of the EPA, USACE, USFWS, CDFG; not just local jurisdictions. It needs the approval of those in DC; and it must hold up in court. This is why USFWS and CDFG are on the team. It is an optional plan, in order for it to be helpful to people, the stakeholders need to be committed; they need to ensure that it's a viable plan with practical mitigation.
- Question about the Sonoma project – wasn't there a threat to sue by an environmental group not involved in the process, but the environmental group involved in the process influenced them not to, because they were involved? Marc Ebbin said he believed that was true; that the environmental group involved convinced them to wait until the process was completed.
- The apparent representation for each group as it currently stands is:
  - USFWS – Katie Drexhage (primary) and Steve Henry (alternate)
  - CDFG – Martin Potter

Local Jurisdictions – Bill Shipsey  
Development Community – Jerry Bunin (no alternate)  
Ranching Community– Susan Petrovich (primary) and Willy Chamberlin (alternate)  
Agriculture – Ronda Lucas (primary) and Teri Bontrager (alternate)  
Environmental I – Undecided: EDC perhaps  
Environmental II – Undecided: Dependant on first contacting EDC

**4. Project Goals:** A preliminary set of goals were presented in a handout (attached) and discussed. The following changes were suggested:

- 1. The plan/product should be politically feasible.**
- 2. The plan should include incentives to land owners.**
- 3. The plan needs to be a science driven/scientific document**

**5. Procedures and Rules of SSC Meetings:** These were handed out at the meeting (see attached).

**6. Other Discussion:**

- **Species included in the plan:** There was discussion of which species should be included in the plan. The PM stated that the SSC, after becoming fully formed, would need to address that issue. Several pointed out the benefits of including all species that would require a land developer to mitigate for his project. Side note: The USFWS is undertaking a review of whether or not the La Graciosa thistle will be de-listed because of a new study by Dr. Kiel on the thistle and it's similarity to two other common thistles. They will provide updates.
- **Meaning of consensus:** It was asked if consensus means voting or unanimous agreement. The PM stated that it will be defined and agreed upon at a later meeting, but preliminarily his view is that it means all the members can live with a particular decision. It was noted that if an individual was identified by the whole group as being an obstructionist, the person could be removed.
- **Options available for the plan:** There was a short discussion on methods for implementing the conservation strategy, including a Section 7/MOU approach, an HCP, and NCCP (Natural Communities Conservation Plan). A more thorough exploration of the various options available will occur when the Stakeholder Steering Committee has been established. The FWS noted that they have been talking to the County about how this project can be done the quickest and easiest way. They see Section 10 (HCP) as one option and using Section 7 like Sonoma [first tried] as another. They see Sonoma as far ahead of us in trying Section 7. The FWS is exploring this approach. For now, there is no process sanctioned by the FWS on a national level. The answer from FWS today is that it needs to be an HCP. Either way, they recognize this process is essential.
- **Facilitator:** It was asked if the SSC would have a facilitator. The PM stated that would be up to the committee. For now, getting the SSC assembled and operational will be his focus. Once the SSC is up and running, if it feels there is a need for a facilitator and if there is funding available, he sees no reason the committee can't have a facilitator.

**7. Next Meeting – 1 pm Oct 25<sup>th</sup>.** Tentative Monthly Meetings – 10:30 am, 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month; mostly in North County, but possibility of minor fraction in South County and/or Buellton; whatever the committee decides.