

SCB meeting minutes 20060213

Student introductions

Presentation from Helen Thompson, Yolo Co. commissioner and Petrea Marchand
Both involved in developing and passing an oak conservation plan for the county

Helen:

Tried to get an oak ordinance in Yolo Co. in 1977 – people used oak to heat during the energy crisis. Trying to save oak trees is difficult when you're a regulator. - Helen went into the legislature in 1999 and worked in a bill for oak woodlands conservation.

Belongs to California Oak Foundation.

Realized as she got older that the regulatory side wouldn't be that helpful. Bill was incentive based – help those who wish to preserve their oak trees through donations, the purchase of easements, etc, to help farmers, rangeland people, etc.

When Petrea came to work as water resource specialist they decided to work towards an oak tree ordinance for the conservation of the trees. Put a grant in to the wildlife conservation board – up on Feb. 23rd for \$30,000 planning grant, so when Helen finishes next term she will have ordinance in place. Might not be an ordinance – but will be part of general plan.

This is a rapidly growing regional area and it's important to the board of supervisors that we maintain our open spaces and do the right planning for conservation. We have a habitat planning conservation effort – Maria Wong working with joint powers authority. Science panels give recommendations – bigger steps in the last 3 years than previous 9. Working hard on Cache Creek resources plan and general plan – general plan hasn't been updated since 1983. Dixon is now the most northerly point for the Bay area, expansion is happening quickly throughout the area.

A lot of money has recent been allocated so that we have the capacity to respond to conservation issues.

One of the hardest things to deal with making public policy is to get the good science to make the decisions – with good science it's difficult for the politician not to make a good decision, so thanks to all the students doing conservation research to help them make their decisions.

Petrea

How do you influence assembly member? At the staff level there's very little time to make decisions, so staff need to be in touch with scientists who have reliable information – you have to go to them and make yourself available. It's an important transfer of information.

Petrea is the water resources coordinator in parks and resource management division.

They have 3 general areas of conservation.

Parks – managed for open space resources and conservation

Limited public access areas – oak woodlands, terrestrial habitat areas

Riparian and aquatic habitat areas

More resources devoted to parks and management in the last 5 years – from staff of 1 to 5. Has been in her position 1.5 year. Department is in the planning stages for many of their conservation efforts. They're rapidly completing plans and after will aggressively pursue grant funds

Cache Creek Resource management plan

In-channel gravel mining for years, finally reached agreement to move off channel and pay co. 20 cents per ton for every ton mined. We had to have a plan that the co would abide by. It focuses on channel stabilization and habitat restoration

Has gone through CEQA process

This is guiding document

Helen: Cache Creek Conservancy is part of the plan and is a great place to visit and volunteer.

Petrea – one of the most diverse groups of native fish present here. Her dad (Moyle) did study in 1997 to determine status of fish in Creek.

In the last year they've started bank stabilization and habitat restoration projects
Funded by gravel companies.

25 years to get this plan – has won many conservation awards. There are enormous technically studies that went into the creation.

Capay Dam to i-5 – you can do work above the Capay dam if it will help implement this plan

Q – who can apply for those funds?

Co controls all the funds under this plan – they contract out for a lot of work though. Use technical advisory committee and county staff run that process to determine whether a project is appropriate for funding.

Also every year in May we do a creek walk and identify priorities and document changes in the creek.

All these meetings are open to the public; also feel free to contact staff with creative ideas. There's actually money to implement if there's buy in from the TAC and board of commissioners

Q-grad students?

Certainly – grad students are welcome to apply. Plan is also online. There's a lot of flexibility.

Plan itself doesn't have milestones, only annual reports.

Helen: quite a bit of progress has occurred because of the money. In 20-30 years there could be a linear park all along Cache Creek. Not all public access, but will be much more beautiful. The major thing is getting mining out of the creek without lawsuits.

Petrea – A lot comes back just allowing the creek to recover itself from the mining. Another goal is channel stability. There's a lot of potential to do work that's more restoration oriented.

QThe gravel companies wanted to keep mining - what was the value to the Co. to allow that?

Helen: The gravel companies knew that they'd had a free ride without a tonnage fee. The mining was changing as well. Once they understood the new standards they were easier to deal with but there was the leadership of Randy Stader at Tycher construction. When Helen was a new supervisor he took her to off-channel mine and said they could do it in Yolo Co, but no one asked them to.

Once Helen did office hours on campus the plan went to the ballot, but there was a lot of anger from students about allowing gravel mining, but gravel was crucial to on campus construction. The question was how do we do sustainable mining? It was a long difficult political struggle. You have to have higher expectations or no one conforms.

Petrea

We welcome ideas. Our other efforts are in the planning stages – parks and open space master plan. Our parks are typically open space areas. There are rafting, campgrounds, boat launches, etc. Parks all over Yolo Co. have potential projects – plan outlines projects, but it hasn't been decided yet what will be done first. Look through and contact them with ideas. They're moving towards the implementation stage – are applying for grants (full time employee working towards that) state park funds – work with UCD reserve

Timeline for comments – comment periods over, but it's in CEQA. If you're interested in the projects contact Petrea, set up a meeting to discuss particular ideas that are in there.

They're developing criteria for ranking “what first?”

Just got grant money to develop a new park

And applied for a grant from proposition 50 - \$500,000 to improve fishing access and boat launch sites to remove invasives.

Q - How do you coordinate with other counties – watersheds don't see those boundaries. Lower Putah Creek working group

Cache Creek Watershed forum.

A lot of work to be done there

Can't spend money in the upper cache creek area very easily – tamarisk and arrundo, Me contamination from up stream mines in Lake Co. So they're working toward collaboration

Bypass?

There are discussions going on – one issue is that the other side of the river was planning how to use our resources for their flood control (Sac co) If we want to stay viable as part

of a solution we did facilitated discussion. Yolo bypass is complicated- a lot can be done to coordinate better with other entities

Developing integrated water management resources division

Aquatic and riparian ecosystem enhancement – included Freemont weir

Eventually they will get to watersheds

A topic paper that outlines every issue they could think of

Waterfowl habitat, invasive removal, etc.

Would love feedback on Freemont weir issues, etc, will use these in the next couple months - send Petrea comments by then

This will then use money from Gov. infrastructure bond. 2 billion for integrated water regional management planning right now has 250 million dollars we could be eligible for those funds for a very long time. This plan will serve as Yolo County's guide to prioritizing projects and we have prioritization criteria with tiers and flexibility.

Helen-

The causeway and bypass starting in Redding down to Rio Vista is part of the whole flood control works that we see, Since the flooding in New Orleans there's been a major new awakening out here that Sac is the 2nd most flood prone city In the Us. Part of the solution to Sac Co's flood issues is seen in the bypass.

The Freemont Weir is a wall way up in the bypass where water spills over and spreads out. Fish later doesn't work, so sturgeon and salmon are abandoned up there, so they transport the fish by truck. Have to talk about this to fix it. Helen needs the facts to make a decision and it's fascinating to her that even the scientists will sometimes get uptight – CDFG, FWS, and Dept of Water resources fighting over turf and scientific evidence. Anytime that the government has a hard time making a decision they ask for another study.

Hopefully they'll have a good discussion – broaden the weir perhaps, fine, but let's make sure the fish get taken care of too. It's hard when the money is short to spread it amongst all the needs, but the environmental community has made a good point that you have to consider the environmental impacts. Hopefully that's more the ethic today than 25 years ago when Helen Started. Local government is the place to be - it's where you can get things done.

Petrea

Willing to meet with students in groups or one on one – email or call and give her feedback on what's important in Yolo Co. Even if you don't have time to go through the documents, contact Petra directly and keep in touch. Submitting specific comments on documents helps too. All they require to consider a project is 3-4 page description, how much it will cost, and a budget – sound it out to them first. It's really important to have people involved from the university.

She'll let everyone know about the creek walk too.

There will be more (public outreach consultant) public meetings on the water plan – get your ideas in so she can submit ideas to the water resources commission, so any ideas she gets now she can put down. The ideas will get prioritized through their process, reviewed in June, adopted in October. Has to be finished by Jan. 2007 so we can apply for funds. The county needs to look at flood control and environmental issues. England is participating

Q - The spatial scale?

The county – we have to get our house in order. Goal is in 5 years to be looking at a watershed level- some coordination is occurring right now. Making sure plans are consistent right now. Other counties are at the same stage.

Project is well funded, so land and water use planning are being integrated. The water resources division will review. Exciting =, broad scale of projects. Supervisors are progressive and willing to entertain aggressive policies. State

General plan won't be done for a couple more years, setting a timeline and hiring a consultant. There was a year of an attempt and it wasn't that successful. There have been staffing issues and there's been reorganization. Not in a big rush.

The general plan will be integrated with the transportation plan as well. The metropolitan transportation planning effort. There's a lot that will be included in the general plan. Habitat conservation plan will guide future iterations of all the other plans – 3 years away from a completed plan, but seeking input, releasing a biological assessment in another month that needs feedback.

Oak planting plan: on Feb. 23rd proposal will be submitted for a \$30,000 grant for an oak planting plan to identify oak woodlands conservation projects. Will be restoration and preservation. Hoping our oak planting program will tap into this (Rodd). Other grant funds outside the county for us to apply for funds to further some of our programs.

Helen – Co has many advisory committees – can see from website. There are parks, wildlife conservation, and a planning commission – 56 committees, many have vacancies. Great on resume, helps folks on committee – student participation is great. Send Lois an email if you're interested in participating. Most are once a month meetings.

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