



**TOWN OF MARANA HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP
JANUARY 2011 UPDATE
MARANA OPERATIONS CENTER, 5100 W. INA RD.**

HCP Progress

The comments of the public and the agencies have been addressed in the HCP. Impacts have been recalculated since some projects have been completed since the 2009 Draft HCP and other water projects have been included. Maps are currently being revised and chapters are being reviewed internally.

State Land Update

The Town and USFWS met with State Land, including Maria Baier and a number of her staff in September and October 2010. Then ASLD called Jennifer and said that HCP meetings would have to be put on hold because they were involved in litigation for using some State Trust Land funds for staffing rather than for the beneficiaries; however, the department won a reprieve to continue funding staff through the end of their fiscal year. Marana needs to follow up with ASLD again to see whether they are interested in continuing talks on the HCP. If not, the HCP will be finalized as it stands, with any state lands that are sold coming under the Marana HCP if rezonings, annexations, or specific plans are initiated. The hope would be that ASLD will work with Marana to develop a conceptual plant that sets aside larger blocks of habitat in Zone 3, rather than going with the more dispersed 80% open space required by the HCP. Jen said that it would be helpful if the Town can purchase open space at conservation value rather than development value.

Scott reported that USFWS had an additional meeting with ASLD, in which the ASLD discussed their options for dealing with HCPs that cover State Land. ASLD wanted more info on HCPs in general and how they could participate. They were looking at the pros and cons of three options: (1) do their own HCP (2) partner with a county or municipality, or (3) do nothing. They had a lot of mitigation banking questions also. Scott said the USFWS replied that the real value would be to partner with a municipality or other entity who is doing an HCP. If ASLD did their own HCP, once the lands were sold they would lose control, and couldn't provide the long-term certainty required by an incidental take permit. The USFWS suggested that if ASLD chose to partner with the municipality or county, they would have some say in how the HCP is structured and have input on what happens after the land is sold.

Riparian Mitigation Discussion

At the recommendation of the TBT, the riparian map is included in the Marana General Plan by reference only, so that if/when changes are needed the Town won't have to go back to the Council for map revisions. Riparian areas are identified as a priority for natural undisturbed open

space (NUOS) set-asides within the Conservation Zones. The riparian map will be used to evaluate washes for their value related to continuity to riparian areas off-site, whether there is linkage value, or if the washes connect to other preserved open space. The Riparian Mitigation Guidelines will apply in areas not covered by Conservation Zones such as the 2-mile development corridor along Tangerine Road, areas on the west side of the freeway, and in the Santa Cruz River. Any off-site mitigation purchased in the wildlife corridors would be at a ratio of 1:1, and would not include the NUOS requirement, as an incentive to acquire land there. Purchase of mitigation land in other areas of the Conservation Zones not in the wildlife corridors would include the NUOS set-aside in addition to the mitigation acres required to offset impacts. Parcels with less than 1/3 acre of ground disturbance would be exempted from mitigation.

On the Santa Cruz River, the total allowable disturbance is 5% for both capital improvement projects (CIP) and development, as a percentage of the entire stretch of river in the Town (not on a parcel by parcel basis). The Town's projected CIP impacts over the next 25 years are 2.5%, which leaves 2.5% for development projects on a first-come first-served basis. The Riparian Mitigation Guidelines drafted by Recon Environmental Consulting will apply to all impacts in the Santa Cruz River. Scott clarified that the 5% impacts do not include temporary impacts; for example, when a utility line is constructed across the river and revegetation is completed with the project. Bridge construction would be considered a permanent impact and included in the 5% impacts calculation because the area under the bridge would be permanently shaded. Permanent impacts due to bank stabilization would require off-site mitigation and restoration.

Areas with potential as off-site mitigation lands that have been discussed include Barnett Channel, Hardy Wash near the De Anza Development, along park edges, and the El Rio Open Space aka the old Borrow Pit – which Tucson Audubon is working with Marana to revegetate with native plants. In previous discussions Matt Clark, SWG member, felt that the Continental Ranch drainage channels should not be considered for riparian mitigation through tree planting because of the concentration of development surrounding them. Today the TBT stated that there are so few options for off-site riparian mitigation that the Continental Ranch drainage channels should remain on the list as a lower priority mitigation area. Scott also mentioned the possibility of working with Pima County to enhance wildlife habitat on mitigation land the west side of the Avra Valley Rd./I-10 underpass, although there would have to be negotiations on how credits for this are divvied up.

Tucson Shovel-nosed Snake (TSS) Mitigation

One of the measures listed for TSS mitigation was the development of a standardized survey protocol since surveys will be required in potential habitat. The TSS Potential Habitat map indicates where habitat is most likely to be found, but field identification of habitat in the Site Resource Inventory will provide the definitive areas where surveys will be required.

Other Items

Scott said he has been promoted to Supervising Biologist (Jim Rorabaugh retired) and will eventually turn HCP coordination work over to other biologists. Sherry Barrett is moving to manage the Wolf Reintroduction Program in Albuquerque.