SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION of the
PLANT AND WILDLIFE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(PAWTAC)
April 1, 2010

Members in Attendance:

Jim Brunello

Jim Davies

Dan Corcoran

Todd Gardner

Mahala Young

Valerie Zentner

Others in Attendance:

Kris Kiehne, SEA

Ethan Koenigs, SEA

Rick Lind, SEA

Art Marinaccio

Jordan Postlewait, SEA

Fraser Shilling, SEA

Robert Smart, SEA

Peter Maurer, EDC

Beverly Savage, EDC

Members Absent:

Sue Britting

Elena DeLacy

Bill Frost

Ray Griffiths

Jeremiah Karuzas

Craig Thomas

The April 1, 2010, meeting was called to order by Chair Jim Davies at 9:15 AM. There was no quorum to conduct committee business. It was decided that members present would discuss agenda items.

A.   Approval of Minutes

There was no quorum to approve minutes.

B.   Public Comment

There was no public comment.

C.   INRMP

C. 1.   Discussion of March 16, 2010 Board of Supervisors meeting and direction on definitions

Peter Maurer updated the Committee on outcome of the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to approve key term definitions. After discussion, the BOS approved a motion to clarify that the word "define" in the SEA scope of work means "to create a map."

The following comments and discussion points were provided:

- It was suggested that progress updates be provided to the BOS at regular intervals, perhaps monthly.
- In order to avoid delays due to the BOS agenda approval process, "INRMP Update" could be a standard monthly or bimonthly agenda item.

C. 2. Review and discuss revised important habitat map showing large expanses of native vegetation

Jordan Postlewait presented on behalf of the SEA team. The previous map, showing large expanses of native vegetation, used road density data to indicate disturbance. The revised map uses a combination of road density and parcel use to indicate disturbance. Native vegetation layers are then added to arrive at a map depicting large expanses of native vegetation. Mr. Postlewait referred to a chart, "Figure 1, Phase I INRMP 'Large Expanses' Mapping Process." Disturbance is defined as road density above $3km/km^2$. Some small patches of native vegetation appear on the map since small areas may be important habitats for small species.

The following comments and discussion points were provided:

- It was noted that some small rural roads appear larger on the map seeming to indicate greater disturbance. This appearance can be caused by curving and switch-back of roads. Rock Creek Road was discussed by example. It was suggested that some roads be evaluated individually, with input from Committee members regarding roads where disturbance is in reality lower than it appears on the map.

- Discussion that developed lands are not useful for conservation and that these areas should not be included in a map of Large Expanses of Native Vegetation.

- An opinion was expressed that through development of the Oak Woodlands Management Plan, the BOS designated Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs), reducing the initial oak woodlands mapping from 250,000 acres to 60,000 acres. Concern was expressed that the current mapping process should not incorporate these areas already excluded by the BOS.

- County and SEA staff pointed out that the current process is limited to defining large expanses of native vegetation. Decisions regarding what areas to designate for conservation efforts will be the focus of future phases.

- An opinion was expressed that Important Biological Corridors (IBCs) should be mapped. SEA informed that analysis and update of IBC's is not part of the INRMP Phase I scope. This task will occur in Phase II.

Public comment was invited on the topic:

- Opinion was expressed that the map does not illustrate large expanses of native vegetation but is actually a map of less disturbed vegetation. It was further expressed that

the BOS will not approve the proposed as mapping large expanses of native vegetation and suggested that the name of the map be changed.

C. 3.   Request Committee position on the Revised Administrative Draft Habitat Inventory and Mapping Report

Revised Administrative Draft Habitat Inventory and Mapping Report was disseminated.

The following comments and discussion points were provided:

- Discussion regarding Table 3 on page 6. Suggestions were made to refine or narrow the list of species to those that may be listed as indicator species.

- In the absence of a quorum, a Committee recommendation could not be made. However, general consensus of those present was there were no objections to the Revised Administrative Draft Habitat Inventory and Mapping Report.

C.4.   Review and discuss Working Draft of Indicator Species Report

Fraser Shilling presented on behalf of the SEA team. Working Draft Indicator Species in the INRMP Report was disseminated. Committee members were asked for their input, specifically regarding selection criteria and species/species group suggestions based on the criteria. A PowerPoint presentation with four species examples was reviewed.

The following comments and discussion points were provided:

- Discussion regarding whether plant species should be included in the group of indicator species. No plants are currently on the list of species. Consensus was that in looking at conservation, plants cannot be ignored. Plant fragmentation also needs to be addressed.

- It was noted that a separate process is underway relating to Pine Hill rare plant species. This process is more focused and regulatory in nature than the INRMP. The INRMP process should not duplicate the Pine Hill process.

- Suggested that aquatic and transition habitats, and the species they support, should be included. Issues such as hydrology, water quality, water temperature and fragmentation affect these species. The yellow-legged frog was suggested as an indicator species.

- There was comment that habitat of the yellow-legged frog increased due to disturbances from mining practices and their numbers grew. Recent decline in their numbers might not be significant because of the past increase. Since their increase was never measured, their decease may not be significant.

- The rainbow trout was suggested as an indicator species.

- The lark sparrow was suggested as an indicator species.

- Discussion regarding selection of abundant versus special status species. The former may be in decline; the later may evoke emotion.

- An important consideration in the selection of species is whether data sources are available and monitoring efforts ongoing.

- The coyote was discussed as an indicator species. It may represent a good indicator since the balance of its population is important. If too many exist, there is a problem; if there are too few, other problems occur. However, coyotes are not sensitive to fragmentation, which is one of the selection criteria.

- The red-winged black bird was discussed. This is a common species and prefers a pond habitat with vegetation. It might be a good umbrella species.

- Discussion regarding the process for selecting indicator species. The process to be utilized by the SEA team will include: 1) a list of species will be identified; 2) the species will be grouped into like assemblages by habitat types; 3) one species from each assemblage will be chosen (for which existing data is available) to represent each habitat type; 4) the species will be linked to the habitat-type maps; and (5) the health of the habitat studied using species data.

Public comment was invited on the topic:

- Suggestion that the BOS's purpose for identifying indicator species is to prove if a species depended on a north-south migration corridor. Therefore, selection criteria should include dependence on a north-south corridor.

F.   Committee member comments; next meeting agenda items

Next meeting will be May 6, 9:00 AM. Meeting adjourned at 11:33 AM