

July 21, 2008

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El Dorado County
Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA

Re: INRMP revised draft Work Program
July 22, 2008 Agenda

Dear Supervisors:

This analysis includes a copy of the proposed INRMP draft work Program for RFP with commentator's remarks in red and the PAWTAC involvement that exceeds General Plan requirements highlighted in green.

Issues

At the BOS workshop regarding the INRMP scope of work the BOS directed staff to address two specific issues:

1. Define the role of Pawtac as required by the GP and compare to the scope;
2. Clarify the studies that will be undertaken as part of the INRMP process.

Pawtac (TAC) and the Stakeholders (SAC)

The Scope elevates Pawtac, a technical advisory committee or **TAC**, far beyond the role provided by the GP and reduces the role of stakeholders advisory committee (**SAC**) as empowered by the GP. The attached analysis highlights in green where Pawtac is accorded far greater role than the GP requires.

Policy 7.4.2.8 (A) provides the INRMP shall inventory and map the following "important habitats" (deer, aquatic, riparian, large expanses, special status species). "The inventory and mapping effort shall be developed with the assistance of the PAWTAC, CDFG and USFWS". This is the only reference to a Pawtac role that does not include the Stakeholders. In fact, the five listed habitats have mapped and are the Initial Inventory and mapping approved by the BOS on April 1, 2008 so the immediate role of Pawtac is limited.

There remain significant effort in Identification of additional "important habitat" (choke points, critical corridors) and the creation and implementation of the INRMP. Policy 7.4.1.6 states, "The County Agricultural Commission, Plant and Wildlife Technical Advisory Committee (Pawtac), representatives of the agricultural community, academia, and other stakeholders shall be involved and consulted in defining the important habitats of the County and in the creation and implementation of the INRMP.

The references highlighted in green place Pawtac above the GP role and reduces the role the GP grants to the stakeholders. For instance, SubTask 4.4 reads, “ Working with PAWTAC, CONSULTANT will develop principles and guidelines for establishing the INRMP conservation areas (i.e., habitat lands that are identified where willing landowners could be approached to negotiate habitat mitigation and other types of habitat conservation land acquisition under the INRMP). The habitat conservation system design guidelines will provide landscape-level conservation. These habitat conservation system design guidelines will address such parameters as the appropriate size, locations, and landscape position relative to other habitats for the identification of habitat conservation areas.”

Comment: Policy 7.4.1.6 requires the stakeholders (including Pawtac) to be “involved and consulted in defining the important habitats of the County and in the creation and implementation of the INRMP.” Pawtac’s role should be precisely that provided in the GP. Wherever Pawtac is mentioned in the Scope beyond that role “and stakeholders” should be added. This comports to the relative roles of Pawtac and the Stakeholders as balanced in the GP. The scope should recognize that balance and the fact the Consultant will prepare the connectivity studies and they will be reviewed and commented upon by the Stakeholders and the Pawtac.

Recommendations:

1. SAC will assist in defining the important habitats and in the creation an implementation of the GP;
2. PAWTAC (TAC) will assist in the inventorying and mapping of identified important habitats;
3. SAC members may attend any TAC meeting. This makes sense since the TAC is a part of SAC and SAC is empowered to assist in defining the important habitat and creation and implementation of the INRMP;
4. This process of the TAC reporting technical information to the SAC to assist the BOS is not only required by the EDC GP but is common throughout the United States usually as part of an HCP process. For instance, a recent HCP notes, “The TAC’s role is to provide biological recommendations based on the best science available to the SAC.”; and, *Q: What is the Stakeholder Advisory Committee role?* A. The SAC will be the appropriate venue for discussing policy issues with technical assistance from the TAC.

INRMP/IBC Studies

Throughout the OWMP process the subject of habitat connectivity and corridor composition has been deferred to the INRMP with the understanding that studies would be conducted as part of that processes.

The studies or report described in Scope Subtasks 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 relate more to development of a GP land use map than habitat connectivity. In fact, Saving-Greenwood conducted an extensive study of the potential impacts of development on wildlands in El Dorado County. Their models of the impacts of full buildout of the 1996 General Plan Land Use Map was used as a base document in the 2004 EIR.

The GP EIR presented an objective: “Preserving connectivity between large areas of natural habitat is a key to maintaining opportunities for wildlife movement. Natural linkages often exist in the form of riparian corridors, canyon bottoms, and ridgelines. But connectivity is not just corridors: habitat

linkages are best provided by maintaining a permeable landscape, one that permits the uninhibited movement of wildlife species across great distances. Connectivity as it relates to wildlife movement, is afforded more by the suitability of the overall landscape matrix than by the presence or absence of discrete corridors. (EIR 5.12-89)". Studies that should be required to meet this objective may include the following:

1. Prepare a biological study that will assess the matrix of connectivity and may include species specific wildlife movement reports and sample wildlife in both riparian and non-riparian areas to determine possible corridor composition and connectivity policies. Determine whether to conduct studies for both umbrella and focus species movement. Any studies should utilize generally accepted field survey techniques such as photo stations, scent stations, searching for scat and tracks, and incidental direct observations;

2. Address the "potential" north-south connector discussed by Saving-Greenwood along with Weber Creek with a decision as to its feasibility. The barrier effect of Highway 50 on north- south wildlife connectivity will be included in this study to avoid any funneling of wildlife into "mortality sinks". Was there an indicator species protection plan that led to the north-south potential connection discussion ?;

3. Include feasibility analysis (including costs) of connectors. This would include compliance with GP Policy 10.1.2.5;

4. Determine whether appropriate to conduct a "landscape permeability analysis", a computer technique that models the difficulty that the various species would have moving between large conserved areas. Factors include vegetation types, elevation, slope and road density;

5. Effect of riparian corridors on habitat connectivity needs to be addressed. This includes implementation of CO-O;

6. While the Scope comments there is no precedent for the mapping and inventory requirements. In fact, there are no limitations on the authority of the BOS to determine the appropriate resolutions – other than the deferential "abuse of discretion" court standard;

7. After public input, the BOS will identify the habitats among these inventoried habitats that are not otherwise protected (7.4.1.5), and should be protected and conserved to achieve the greatest biological benefits. This process will include the identification of essential corridors, choke-points and missing links for priority acquisition. The BOS will also determine what habitats require a no-net loss policy.

Recommendation: The RFP should require the proposed consultants to assist the County by proposing what studies, including the above stated, are necessary to assess habitat connectivity.

MND/EIR

Assuming the INRMP includes studies and analysis adequate to allow the revision of IBCs and/or, to establish base data for appropriate connectivity planning, an EIR is required. An INRMP that does not result in significant changes to programs or policies that would trigger the need for an EIR is probably not worth the effort of spending money or time in development.