

# Public Advisory Committee

SAN BENITO COUNTY CONSERVATION PLAN

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Bernadette Clueit, ICF  
May 22, 2024



# Using Zoom

- If you need help with the Zoom platform, please raise your hand (call-in users press \*9).
- To call in to the meeting:
  - Phone number: 1-877-853-5247
  - Meeting ID: 870 6735 0273
  - Password: 646233
- Please close all apps and programs and limit other streaming or downloads.
- All Planning Team and PAC members are participants and can self mute/unmute and turn video on/off.
- All non-PAC and public participants are muted. Please hold your questions until the Public Comment portion towards the end of the meeting.



# Agenda

- 1. Land Cover Mapping Update (Bernadette Clueit, ICF)**
  1. PAC Q&A
- 2. Review of the Science Advisor Committee Process (Rose Kronberg, ICF)**
  1. PAC Q&A
- 3. Public comment**
- 4. Next steps**
  1. Next PAC Meeting: August 28, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.





# LAND COVER MAPPING UPDATE



# Land Cover Mapping

- Digitization of land cover throughout county is complete
- Scheduling a randomized field verification process
- QA/QC of full dataset to be completed
- Writeup of methodology and metadata in progress
- Anticipated final publication of dataset Q3 2024
- Explore the project map:

<https://ecosystems.azurewebsites.net/SanBenitoCounty/>





## SCIENCE ADVISORY PROCESS OVERVIEW



# Basis for the Science Advisory Process

- The NCCP Act (*California Fish and Game Code sections 2800-2840*) mandates the inclusion of **independent scientific analysis and input** in the NCCP process.
- Conservation and land use planning decisions are to be **based on the best available science to identify foundational principles** for landscape and habitat conservation, species protection, and adaptive management.
- Not mandatory for HCPs but recommended for complex landscape level plans (*HCP Handbook, 2016*).

# Overview of process

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- The ideal time to convene a panel is **after key initial decisions have been made about the HCP/NCCP** such as plan area, covered species, covered activities, permit term, and a framework for the conservation strategy.
- We want **a broad scientific advisory team**, including experts on the natural communities present, local ecosystem function, ecological requirements of species in the planning area, and conservation biology principles.





# Overview of process

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- Selection criteria are developed based on previous experience and input from County and wildlife agencies.
- Professional scientists independent from the County and wildlife agencies are invited to participate.
- The County selects the science advisors in collaboration with the wildlife agencies.
- A smaller group is likely to be more efficient.



Photo: John Greening

# Overview of process

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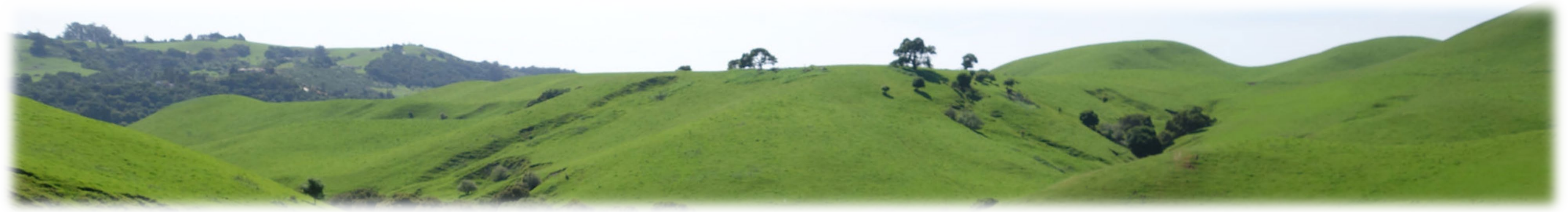
Photo: Mark Chappell

- The panel is asked a set of questions, typically on the following topics:
  - Existing data, species and habitats
  - Conservation strategy
  - Land management and monitoring
  - Information gaps and uncertainties
- The questions are developed collaboratively by the County and wildlife agencies. Would also like to solicit input from the PAC prior to convening the science advisory panel.
- The advisors are not limited to answering only the questions asked.

# Science Advisors Committee Format

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- Typically, there is a multi-day workshop at the beginning of process. Part of this will be open to the public.
  - Field trips to key locations of plan
  - Presentations by County/consultant
  - Questions from science advisory panel
  - Public comment
- The panel is asked to provide scientific information and analysis, and expert opinion that will be used to inform the NCCP and HCP planning process.





# Tasks of the Committee

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- Propose principles that will guide the conservation and recovery of covered species and natural communities.
- Develop locally-relevant reserve design and landscape-level conservation principles.
- Identify potential for changed circumstances, e.g. large-scale fires, floods, drought, non-native species invasions, windstorms.



# Tasks of the Committee

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- Advisors will issue a report. Can provide a preliminary summary report of initial findings after workshop to more quickly **inform development of the plan**.
- The County decides whether or not to implement the outcomes of this process, however, there needs to be a good reason if a recommendation is not implemented.



## PUBLIC COMMENT



# Public Comment

- Use raise hand feature in Zoom if you are a member of the public (i.e., not a PAC or Planning Team member) and you wish to provide a comment or ask a question.
- If you called in from a phone, type \*9 to raise your hand.
- Please limit comments to 3 minutes per person.
- Comments/questions must address agenda items and/or the SBCCP.



# Next Steps

- 2024 Q3 Public Advisory Meeting: Wednesday August 28, 3:00 pm
  - Planned discussion topic – TBD
- For more information, please contact the SBCCP Project Team:
  - Visit the [project website](#) and click the [Contact Us](#) button
  - Or email us directly at: [SBCCP@cosb.us](mailto:SBCCP@cosb.us)

