

**San Benito County Conservation Plan (SBCCP) ADHOC Committee**

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, February 9, 2022  
4:00pm**

**1. Call to Order**

*Committee Chair Robert Gibson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.*

*County staff read the Zoom instructions for the meeting and provided the instructions for submitting speaker cards.*

*Roll Call of Committee Members Present: Chair Robert Gibson, Sara Steiner, Valentin Lopez, Robb Rodriguez, and Jason Lingo.*

**2. Public Comment**

*Brian Schmidt from Green Foothills commented via Zoom, noting that since committee meetings are held quarterly, he would like to see an agenda item that is an update detailing what has happened in the interim.*

**3. Announcements(s)**

**A. San Benito County Conservation Plan Contract Award to ICF**

*RMA Senior Planner, Arielle Goodspeed, announced that the County awarded the HCP contract to ICF. Aaron Gabbe, ICF, Project Manager, introduced the project team: David Zippin, Jennifer Piggott, Tiffany Mendoza, and Bernadette Clueit.*

**B. PAC representatives from the Developer and Environmental communities wanted**

*Arielle Goodspeed noted that a few additional people are interested in participating in the committee. Betsy Dirks from the County and Andy Hsia-Coron as the environmental committee. Andy introduced himself as a retired teacher. Was originally a marine biologist and he's been involved in a number of citizen's initiatives. He is concerned with development patterns in the County and preserving natural and cultural resources.*

*Sara Steiner motioned to add Andy Hsia-Coron to the Committee, Valentin Lopez seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

*Arielle Goodspeed announced that if anyone else is interested in becoming a committee member to reach out to County staff.*

**4. Action Item(s)**

**A. Adopt August 2, 2021, minutes**

*Robert Gibson noted a correction to the spelling of Valentin's name in the August 2, 2021 minutes. Robb Rodriguez also corrected the spelling of his name. No other corrections were made. Andy Hsia-Coron moved to accept the minutes; Sara Steiner seconded. Motion passed.*

**B. Rename ADHOC Committee to SBCCP Public Advisory Committee**

*Arielle Goodspeed noted the change from Citizen's Advisory Committee to Public Advisory Committee (PAC) to be more inclusive. Sara Steiner motioned to change the name of the committee to Public Advisory Committee; Valentin Lopez seconded. Motion passed.*

## **5. SBCCP - ICF project team, roles, and responsibilities**

*Aaron Gabbe, ICF, provided information on the ICF team that will be preparing the SBCCP and the breadth of expertise the ICF team brings to support the County.*

## **6. Public Advisory Committee purpose and guidelines**

*Aaron Gabbe provided a brief presentation as a reminder on what the HCP/NCCP is, to help better understand the role of this committee and the role of the members.*

*Committee members asked the following questions:*

- Valentin Lopez asked if ICF has experience working with Native American Tribes and the importance of landscapes to Tribes. Aaron Gabbe responded that we have a part of our team that will focus on this and work with the Tribes.*
- Sara Steiner asked about the set up for take permits. How does the strength of the Plan compare to county/city policies for mitigation, as well as the Planning Commission. There are so many opportunities to sidestep opportunities for good mitigation. What is the strength of the HCP? Aaron Gabbe responded that the County will develop a partnership with the permitting agencies to determine how much mitigation will be necessary on an acre-by-acre impact basis, incorporating fees so that the County can implement the Plan and report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure the County is in compliance with the Plan. The enforcement lies with the wildlife agencies.*
- Andy Hsia-Coron gave an example of the San Juan interchange with Hwy 101. Was well done with native planting, etc. But the land along Cole Road has been essentially turned into a parking lot where biologists and others used to work. Cars started using it as a pull out. Aaron Gabbe responded that this shows a benefit of the long-term planning with the agencies to really negotiate the terms and conditions of the Plan to address issues like this.*

*Jennifer Piggott, ICF, provided information on the purpose of the PAC – to hear from everyone on their concerns and interest areas.*

*Jennifer noted we still need a representative of the Development community. Rachel Reed from Santa Cruz County is interested in participating. Her current role is with Granite Rock, which is a landowner in San Benito County. And she helps manage and implement two HCPs in Santa Cruz County. She is interested in serving as a landowner/business representative.*

*Jason Lingo spoke firsthand to Rachel's experience. He's worked with her pretty extensively on cattle grazing mitigation work. Believes she would be a great resource and would look at issues equitably. Others expressed concern with having a representative of Granite Rock on the Committee.*

*Jason Lingo motioned to add Rachel Reed as a Committee member; Robert Gibson seconded the motion. Motion passed with Robert, Jason, and Sara Steiner voting in favor; Andy Hsia-Coron voting against; Valentin Lopez abstaining.*

*Sara Steiner noted she voted in favor of adding Rachel Reed to the Committee as Granite Rock has a large impact on the County and she'd rather have them at the table early.*

*Jennifer Piggot continued to provide information on the role of the PAC as an advisory committee, not a decision-making entity. Role is to review, evaluate, and consider documents as they are brought forward.*

*Committee members asked the following questions:*

- Sara Steiner asked who the decision making body is? Aaron Gabbe responded that the County is the applicant. So the County Board of Supervisors is the ultimate approver of the HCP/NCCP that is submitted to the wildlife agencies. If the local cities wanted to be a participant in the Plan, they would go through similar processes with their City Council for approval.*
- Robert Gibson asked for clarity on the process. The process is not iterative at every step. ICF will be developing an outreach workplan that will speak in more detail to the input and feedback cycle.*
- Valentin Lopez asked that their advisory role could be in the form of a recommendation. Yes, Aaron Gabbe confirmed the PAC could make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.*

## **7. HCP/NCCP and HCP/NCCP CEQA/NEPA process and project timeline**

*Aaron Gabbe spoke to the schedule for the Plan's Phase 1 through first quarter of 2024. Phases 2 and 3 will run concurrently in 2024-2026. Public and stakeholder outreach will be ongoing throughout all three phases. Public review and comment is expected in Q2 2025.*

## **8. Adjourn**

*Andy Hsia-Coron motioned to adjourn; Sara Steiner seconded. Motion passed/meeting adjourned.*