Natural & Farm Lands Conservation Working Group

May 28th, 2020
10:00 am – 12:00 pm

www.scag.ca.gov
1. Meeting length: approximately 2 hours
2. This meeting will be recorded and posted on the SCAG website
3. All participants will be muted except for breakout sessions
4. At the end of each presentation, there will be a Q&A session
5. If you have a question during the presentation, type it into the chat box
6. We will log all questions and answer them during Q&A
7. Think of something later? Email brookover@scag.ca.gov
8. All presentations will be emailed to those who registered to participate in today’s meeting
AGENDA

1. Introductions
   India Brookover, SCAG

2. BRAINSTORM: IMPLEMENTING CONNECT SOCAL’S CONSERVATION STRATEGIES
   India Brookover, SCAG

3. CONNECT SOCAL COVID-19 OUTREACH
   Jason Greenpsan, SCAG

4. SOCAL GREENPRINT UPDATE
   Abigail Ramsden, The Nature Conservancy

5. RCIS UPDATE: SAN BERNARDINO & ANTELOPE VALLEY
   Josh Lee, San Bernardino Transportation Authority
   Scott Fleury, ICF

6. ADJOURN
Please type your name and the agency your represent in the chatbox.

Voluntary Icebreaker:
What is your favorite plant?
Implementing Connect SoCal’s Conservation Strategies

India Brookover, Associate Regional Planner
Sustainability Department
5/26/2020

www.scag.ca.gov
Connect SoCal: 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

- Connect SoCal Goals fall into 4 categories:
  - Economic Vitality
  - Increased Mobility
  - Complete Communities
  - Environmental Protection
    - Includes habitat and agricultural conservation

- A long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental and public health goals.
Connect SoCal Main Conservation Goal

Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats
Conservation Is Embedded In Several Connect SoCal Goals

- Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.
- Support healthy and equitable communities.
- Adapt to a changing climate and support an integrated regional development pattern and transportation network.
Recommended Conservation Policies and Strategies

- Promote Land Conservation Best Practices
- Facilitate Partnerships and Collaboration
- Encourage Regional Conservation Planning
- Expand Data Sharing
- Support Innovative Land Use Policies
Recommended Conservation Policies and Strategies

- Improve Natural Corridor Connectivity
- Encourage Urban Greening/Green Infrastructure
- Connect to Public Health
- Include Climate Smart Conversation
- Seek Funding Opportunities
Conservation Next Steps

Continue to Engage Stakeholders

Develop Regional Greenprint

Encourage Regional Advanced Mitigation Program (RAMP)

Align with Funding Opportunities

Provide Incentives for Jurisdictions to Work across County Lines
SCAG Regional Advance Mitigation Program (RAMP)

Advance mitigation anticipates and identifies mitigation needs for multiple development projects early in the planning process. By avoiding piecemeal mitigation for individual projects, this method is more conducive for maintaining habitat connectivity and prioritizing sites with the highest ecological benefits.

SCAG’s program intends to:

- Establish and/or supplement regional conservation and mitigation banks, and/or programs to address impacts for projects that support reduction of per-capita VMT.

- Support long-term management and stewardship or mitigated properties.
Potential SCAG RAMP Activities

- Inventories of anticipated impacts from transportation projects
- Endowment funds to support long-term management and stewardship of mitigated properties.
- Facilitate coordination between different agencies for shared mitigation projects.
- Support new scientific and cultural research in conservation and restoration methods.
Potential RAMP Partner Agencies

- Cities
- Counties
- County Transportation Commissions
- Councils of Government
- Land Trusts
- Resource Management Agencies
- Tribal Governments
Questions?

Please type your question in the chat box
Poll Questions

• How familiar are you with Advance Mitigation?

• Which of the recommended policies ties most closely to your work?

• Which of the recommended policies would you like to see SCAG expand upon in the near future?
Breakout Groups with Sharebacks

Q: How does your organization hope to impact the region?/ What would you like to see as a focus for conservation?/ What are some of your conservation-related priorities?

Q: What are some challenges your jurisdiction/organization is facing regarding developing or implementing conservation strategies?

Q: Elaborate on some of the strategies you selected in the Poll and how you’d like to see them happen.
Next Steps

- Review your input
- Develop list of priority strategies for FY-21
- Next meeting in Fall 2020

Questions?
Thank You

India Brookover
Brookover@scag.ca.gov
(213) 236-1919
SCAG Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal for Federal conformity purposes. Our next steps:

- “(2) Allow for more time (120 days) to review Connect SoCal and consider its implications in light of the short and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region as requested by many stakeholders;

- (4) provide a progress report describing modifications to the SCS and associated modeling and analysis within 60 days;

- (5) work with local authorities to identify and restore locally approved entitlements as conveyed by local jurisdictions...”
SCAG is listening to stakeholders and community based organizations:

• What are the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on your community’s transportation and housing needs?

• How can SCAG and our partners better engage your communities during the pandemic recovery period?

• What are the long term considerations regarding COVID-19 and your communities?
Connect SoCal & COVID-19

During the 120-day period:

• Listen to varied stakeholders

• Develop research and data to assist informed decision making

• Make limited technical refinements to Connect SoCal regarding entitlements

• Refine planned implementation programs based on community input to address a “post-pandemic recovery world”

• Identify long-term considerations for future plan amendments & the 2024 plan update
Opportunities for Engagement

- Regional Planning & Technical Working Groups *(May–July)*
  - Safety
  - Active Transportation
  - Natural and Working Lands
  - Public Health
  - Climate Adaptation
  - Sustainable Communities
  - Environmental Justice
  - Technical Working Group
- Regional Workshop *(June)*
- Survey *(June)*
- Community Based Organizations *(May–July)*
- Stakeholder Briefings *(Ongoing)*
SoCal Greenprint Update
Natural & Farm Lands Conservation Working Group

Abigail Ramsden, The Nature Conservancy
May 27, 2020

www.scag.ca.gov
What is a Greenprint?

A greenprint is a strategic conservation plan or assessment tool that reveals the economic and social benefits that parks, open space, and working lands provide to communities.
Why do we need a Greenprint?

- Urbanization has led to habitat loss
- Conservation is not considered early in planning
- Decision-makers have uneven access to natural resource data
- Multi-benefit and landscape-scale planning is uncommon yet desired
What is the SoCal Greenprint?

- A custom, web-based, interactive map tool
- Diversity of geographies, landscapes, communities
- Guided by feedback from potential users
- Compiling regional data about conservation and growth
What could the SoCal Greenprint do?

- Support goals of Connect SoCal
- Foster collaboration
- Support better land use planning
- Direct conservation actions
- Guide infrastructure siting and assessment
- Accompany grant and funding applications
- Become an educational resource for communities
The Goal of the Greenprint is to protect, restore, and enhance natural lands, public greenspace, working lands, and water resources and the benefits they provide to people and nature throughout the SCAG region.

As a planning tool, the Greenprint provides relevant data and analysis to help prioritize and conserve our valued natural assets and working lands, ensure access to urban green spaces for all, and guide development to avoid conflicts with nature.
Key Users

- Infrastructure agencies
- Conservation practitioners
- Community-based organizations
- Developers
- Town, city, and county planners
Project Timeline

2020

SCOPING

2021

STRATEGIC OUTREACH

- Connect with stakeholders
- Intersect with SCAG working groups
- Gain insights on tool uses and datasets
- Conduct rapid assessments
- Develop case studies

DATA GATHERING & TOOL DEVELOPMENT

- Develop themes, goals and objectives
- Gather datasets
- Connect with science advisers
- Develop reporting framework
- Wireframe/mockups

LAUNCH & EVALUATION

- Website and Greenprint tool
- Report on funding and implementation

2022
Advisory Committee Meeting 5/20

Meeting Goals:

• Get to know each other

• Build understanding about greenprints and why SCAG is sponsoring one now

• Set expectations about how to participate in this process

• Get your feedback on the purpose, audience, themes and uses of a greenprint
Ideas we have heard are important

- Transit and transportation networks
- Pollution (especially air pollution)
- Renewable energy development
- Resource extraction (e.g. sand, oil, etc.)
- Environmental justice
- Urban areas
- Public health
Questions to Consider

• How would you use the SoCal Greenprint?
• Who are the users we should be focusing on, and what are those 'use cases'?
• Who are the other users who should be included in this conversation?
• What themes are important?
Q & A

Please use the raise hand function or put your question in the chat

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Antelope Valley RCIS Overview

Scott Fleury, Ph.D.
Conservation Biologist, ICF

May 28, 2020
Antelope Valley RCIS Background

- Planning process began in Spring 2016
  - Funded by Bechtel Foundation
  - Managed by Conservation Strategy Group
- Steering Committee
  - Desert and Mountains Conservation Authority (lead)
  - California Energy Commission
  - Caltrans
  - LA Metro
  - Transitions Habitat Conservancy
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - Conservation Strategy Group
- Active Advisory Committee
  - (30+ members)
## 27 Focal Species in the AV RCIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plants (5)</th>
<th>Reptiles (4)</th>
<th>Birds (13)</th>
<th>Mammals (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alkali mariposa-lily</td>
<td>Coast horned lizard</td>
<td>Burrowing owl</td>
<td>American badger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua tree</td>
<td>Desert horned lizard</td>
<td>California condor</td>
<td>Desert kit fox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California juniper</td>
<td>Desert tortoise</td>
<td>Golden eagle</td>
<td>Mohave ground squirrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading navarretia</td>
<td>Western pond turtle</td>
<td>Le Conte’s thrasher</td>
<td>Tehachapi pocket mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-joint beavertail cactus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Least Bell’s vireo</td>
<td>Mountain Lion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loggerhead shrike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mountain plover</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northern harrier</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prairie falcon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willow flycatcher</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Swainson’s hawk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tricolored blackbird</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Long-billed curlew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Process to Determine Conservation Priorities

Species Grouped by General Habitat

1. Desert species
2. Grassland/Agriculture species
3. Foothill/Riparian species

- Conservation Value Areas identified for each group
## Determining the Conservation Targets

### Total potentially suitable habitat (modeled or mapped) in the RCIS area

### Higher conservation value suitable habitat in the RCIS area

#### Higher conservation value suitable habitat in the Habitat Cores Areas and Landscape Linkages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected (GAP1 – GAP3) higher conservation value suitable habitat in the cores and linkages</th>
<th>Unprotected higher conservation value suitable habitat in the cores and linkages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Conservation Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RCIS Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential Preservation Gap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Conservation Goals for <em>Preservation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Conservation Actions: Restoration, enhancement, and long-term management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **How much habitat?**
- **How much is high value?**
- **and in cores/linkages?**
- **How much is protected?**
- **How much is not?**

Set conservation target based on sensitivity and risk.

- **In protected areas create mitigation credit by restoration, enhancement, and management/monitoring.**
- **In unprotected areas create Mitigation credit by acquisition or easement and management/monitoring.**
Conservation Values Map to Guide Priority Conservation Areas

Biological Values

Terrestrial Intactness

Legend

High Conservation Values
- High Biological Value, High Intactness
- High Biological Value, Moderate Intactness
- Moderate Biological Value, High Intactness
- Moderate Biological Value, Moderate Intactness

Low Conservation Values
- High Biological Value, Low Intactness
- Low Biological Value, Low Intactness
- Low Biological Value, Moderate Intactness
- Moderate Biological Value, Low Intactness
- Low Biological Value, High Intactness

Figure 3-19
Conservation Values Mapping for the Foothill/Riparian Species Group in the Antelope Valley RCIS Area
Using the RCIS:

**Finding Mitigation for Focal Species (locating MCAs)**

**Example:**

Joshua Tree

*(Yucca brevifolia)*

Note: The habitat cores and landscape linkages depict concentrations of high conservation values and the connectivity between these areas. Priority conservation actions also may occur in the RCIS areas outside of cores and linkages (see text and other maps). This voluntary conservation strategy does not in any way restrict development within the RCIS areas, including within the mapped habitat cores or landscape linkages.
## Recommended Conservation Actions to Create MCAs

### Using the RCIS: Finding Mitigation for Focal Species (locating MCAs)

**Example:**

**Joshua Tree** *(Yucca brevifolia)*

### Table 3-13. Conservation Actions for Joshua Tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Cons. Obj.</th>
<th>Conservation Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Acquire parcels with known Joshua tree stands through fee title purchase or conservation easement, prioritizing large patches of continuous Joshua tree woodlands or areas adjacent to already-protected lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Restore burned areas by planting young Joshua trees (caged to prevent herbivory), native shrubs, and perennial grasses to restrict invasion by annual invasive species. Burned Joshua trees should not be removed because they can resprout on occasion and provide habitat for wildlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Fence preserved Joshua tree woodlands, excluding vehicle access that can increase human-caused ignitions of wildfire and garbage dumping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Periodically patrol preserved Joshua tree woodlands to monitor human uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Prepare wildfire suppression plans for preserved Joshua tree woodlands to minimize resource impacts from fire suppression tactics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Conduct a fine-scale regional assessment to determine the most intact, largest extent of the oldest Joshua tree stands remaining in the RCIS area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOTR-7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Conduct monitoring and aid in research of Joshua tree populations—including, but not limited to, flowering timing and frequency, seed germination, sprout dispersal, and Yucca moth activity—to better understand effects of climate change on these populations and identify actions to facilitate adaptation to these effects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria for Locating MCAs in the AV RCIS

Mitigation Credit Agreements should be:

- On land with:
  - Willing landowners
  - Presence of high conservation value and/or conservation potential
  - Without foreseeable future urbanization pressure

- In conservation priority areas

- Meet the mitigation needs and interests of the entities using the RCIS
  - e.g., which focal species, and which conservation actions

- Able to support intended conservation actions for the duration of the MCA
Potential Users of the Antelope Valley RCIS

- **Conservation Investments**
  - Desert and Mountains Conservation Authority
  - Transitions Habitat Conservancy
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - Other conservation organizations and agencies

- **Infrastructure Mitigation (through Mitigation Credit Agreement)**
  - Los Angeles County Public Works/Planning/Parks
  - California Energy Commission/Solar Developers
  - SoCal Edison
  - LA Metro
  - Caltrans
  - Others
Schedule to Finalize the Antelope Valley RCIS

- **October 2019**: Submitted to CDFW for Completeness Review
- **November 2019**: CDFW Letter determined RCIS is complete
- **December 13, 2019**: Public Review initiated (60-day review period)
- **December 23, 2019**: Local jurisdictions notified in writing
  - At least 60 days prior to submitting final RCIS
  - Allowed minimum of 30 days to comment
- **February 10, 2020**: End of Public Review period
- **Summer 2020**: Receive CDFW adequacy comments
- **Summer 2020**: Address public, local jurisdiction, and CDFW comments
- **Fall 2020**: Final RCIS Submitted to CDFW