

# California Native Plant Society

## Conservation Visioning Meeting III

Saturday, July 9, 2005 10:30 am – 4:00 pm  
Santa Clara Valley Chapter hosts in Palo Alto, CA

### I. Introduction

- Should we post the meeting notes? Concerns were discussed: are we showing our weaknesses?
- Consensus was made to: continue to provide public notes, not attribute specific comments to individuals, allow people to be off the record (ie. No mention in the meeting notes). We will also allow conservation folks to provide comments to the notes and we will submit the comments as a part of the notes.
- This is the third of four visioning meetings to occur between January and September of 2005. The meetings will culminate with a special session at the CC meeting in September. Future meetings will be held on:
  - Saturday, July 23 in Hopland
  - Saturday & Sunday, September 8-9 at the Chapter Council meeting in Southern California
- At this meeting, we will ask following questions in order to scope out the future of the CNPS Conservation Program: Where are we at now? What are we doing well? What do we need (or need to do) in the future?
- As David Chipping said: 'this meeting is for dream-like stuff, go wild.'

### II. FY2005 Board Priorities (Witham) and Planning Calendar (Muick)

- Board set 2005 priorities based on program directors and staff core budget and duties, staff's 'dream list' of possible budget needs and the results from the first two Cross pollination meetings (where board members met with staff and volunteers from all programs to identify areas for collaboration and prioritized these opportunities).
- As their highest priority, the Board decided that to hire a part-time paid conservation director and additional development programs.
- The timing for the series conservation planning meetings is good because: there has been recent change over in staff, David Chipping is retiring in January 2006, and Emily Roberson has moved onto the Center for Biological Diversity and the program planning meeting timeline fits in well with CNPS fiscal and program planning calendar.
- In 2004, the Rare Plant Program underwent a visioning process and convened four meetings over nine months. Conservation planning will be similar, with four meetings in nine months, ending in September, and feeding into the next year. Sept. Chapter Council will make the final decision on conservation program priorities
  - Consistency exists between the meeting with attendance of Carol Witham, Ileene Anderson, David Chipping and Jessica Olson

### III. Conservation Organization Overview—Where we are now

- CallPC/CNPS relationship good and active
- Wetlands are catch as catch can
- Environmental Protection Agency, California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), allowed early conservation, which was done at the chapter level.
- The common areas, or forests, were generally not covered by chapters, and were frequently under threat of logging and development. As a result CNPS hired public lands policy staff: Jim Jokerst in mid 80's, Mary Meyers in the late '80's, Emily Roberson in 1990, Ileene Anderson and consultant Vern Goehring in 1997. There is still chapter involvement in forests in some areas, but not active in others such as Northwest Forest Plan. Since Emily has moved on to work full time on the Native Plant Conservation Campaign, Ileene has also taken on some of Emily's old responsibilities with forest issues, but there is more to be done. Forestry committee still remains, but at a lesser level.
- Desert issues: Ileene Anderson was hired on in 1997 to help the Southern California chapters combat the threats to the desert. Ileene's job has expanded since then but primarily focuses on regional issues. Her work covers multiple chapters, at a regional scale, such as the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in Western Riverside County. Few of the other chapters have used a regional approach or collaboration. Committees for HCP's exist.
- Vern Goehring was hired as consultant in 1997 to help the legislation committee, and help with CESA CEQA guidelines and regulations
- Conservation committees in general come and go. Invasive Plant committee and Invasive Plant Council have been long-lasting and effective with passionate people like Jake Sigg. Wetlands committee has fallen over time. HCP committee has fallen because individual HCP's have taken over. Central valley HCP's are covered by Carol, CNPS plays a crucial role of bringing science to the table.
- Litigation: We have only \$10,000, but we have a success rate of over 75%. State litigation program is very useful and has a healthy interaction with CEQA, CESA, wetlands, budget, and helped legislation to getting a state grass.
- CNPS litigation issues often come from the chapter. We litigate when a development is going to hit a botanical "asset," and it violates the law. Chapters, or individuals need to fill out a form found on the website, then it goes to litigation committee. Criteria will generally go along with the question "does it have ramifications at a larger scale?" For example, making or braking case law that could help plant conservation.
- In the 70's, CNPS had several full time volunteers—working in legislation. For example, Joyce Burr worked on CNACC (California Natural Areas Coordinating Committee), Alice Howard and Joe Kitts also worked in the 70's. At this time, chapters would help chapters; East Bay Chapter was the ring leader. Mary Meyer did contract work to do literature searches. Generally things moved a lot slower but there was a lot of talking.

- In the East Bay, in the 1970s women were active because they did not have jobs. Some of the information they compiled, or research they did was put on the shelf because it was not considered to be done by professionals. Now women have jobs, thus we don't have the luxury of full time volunteers.
- How does CNPS get involved in plant protection with Land/conservation easements? (this will be discussed later in the meeting and at a separate meeting.)

#### **IV. What are we doing right now that's working?**

- A lot of active volunteers
- Basing our efforts on sound science- inventory
- We have developed respect for CNPS in the local community by showing up, listening, participating, and doing what we say we will.
- We aren't shrill, we don't appeal to emotions
- We fill a niche with other environmental groups to add plant science
- Do a lot and keep focus with limited resources
- Exotic removal is effective, almost every chapter has a focus area
- Cautiously professionalizing: East Bay chapter has increased volunteerism with new staff briefing volunteers
- This meeting—face to face interchange is a great thing in this age of the internet.
- Public outreach, gardening with natives, horticulture.
- Organization appears congenial and respectful organization
- "Cautiously professional"
- We are good at blending science based education in a congenial way
- CNPS collaborates with a diversity of organizations regardless of what they focus on.
- Name recognition in the public
- Good mix of activities and ages
- For 40 years, CNPS has been able to maintain a dual existence (plant club and advocacy group)
- The fact that we are open to the public in what we do, to gain respect
- Participation in numbers: CALIPC, weed management areas
- Best organized non-profit, lots of experience, lots of cross pollination occurring
- Lots of cooperation between committees
- Scholarships to do academic research—investing in the future
- Publications, we don't over-do it, high quality, well thought out
- Plant sales and native plant gardening are good way of reaching out educating to the public

#### **IV. What is the conservation program doing right?**

- We can separate our science and advocacy well and still provide positive credibility
- Putting biology first when taking a stance on conservation issues
- Supportive and encouraging of locally on issues, other organizations do not do this as well (Sierra Club)
- Rare plant program is the best thing we do for conservation- remarkable
- Staff and volunteers help chapters be as good as they can be
- Exceptional staff—very professional
- Chapter service in terms of science and strategy does well
- Strategic litigation, making the most of our opportunities to meet our conservation goals and create good case law

- Approaches the problem on many different angles
- Conservation is successful in that we do it all, plants protect the rest
- Advocates use plant science as a resource
- Vegetation staff training local volunteers, helps volunteers make a contribution
- Plant sales and plant shows are great
- Native Garden shows in schools
- Posters in schools, media and outreach
- Innovations start in the 32 “think tank” chapters
- Exceptional staff AND volunteers—very knowledgeable

## **V. New Ideas (Unconstrained—what can be done in Conservation the next 3-5 years)**

- Native plant garden at every school, with stipend for person in charge
- Maybe we don’t want to be active and political because it is risky and could divide us?
- More active in the political process
- Plants should have rights and standing, lawyers should represent plants. Try to get good facts for case law. Litigation committee needs strategy
- Native garden award for city/school gardens at state-wide level, recognizing people outside the organization
- Education- goes across everything we do
- Some things are inevitable- negativism is one dimensional
- Advocate for the “best executed” thing you are against
- Embrace more stewardship in conservation? OR make it clear to the general public that we do conservation advocacy not stewardship. (Conservation grants tend to be for stewardship, we need to change this public perception)
- Need to be proactive but conservation is reactive
- We need a state pool of money that chapters can tap into based on activity. Funds given to chapters who apply and need it and will promote chapters to do more advocacy,
- We need to expand the organization, need to advertise, need a public strategy, we need to look Sexy
- Need more trainings for volunteers, and tools to offer support to locals on: HCPS, general plans, CEQA, legislation
- More species listed and increase the number of plants in the inventory
- CNPS literature and outreach to different ethnic communities, they see connection between natural world and community
- We need to change our name and focus—“ecosystem” organization
- Triage philosophy, ecosystem advocate—“Save California”
- ESA is being revised, we must think politically, we need to be aware of the issue
- People generally believe that once you set aside land the work is done, but habitat restoration needs to occur. Limited resources seem to be a hindrance to doing a complete job. We need examples to hold onto to show the public what is worth saving.
- Need to expand our ability to apply our scientific expertise in conservation. Speak for the portion that is not being spoken for. We need to be positive in that we are helpful not the enemy.
- Emphasizing how the general public can help—you do not have to be an expert to help.
- Public outreach, preserving ecosystem, need ecosystem, web information for general education purposes.
- Work to make ESA recognize plants at the same level as it recognizes animals.

- 1<sup>st</sup> change the name, 2<sup>nd</sup> more effective outreach to youths and other groups, 3<sup>rd</sup> more money will be brought in to allow regional offices to house regional staff and interns
- Hands-on Trainings/workshops to help empower local citizens to do conservation—Conservation strategy, how to write an effective press release, effective grassroots organizing, as well as CEQA, NEPA, CESA, general plans, and more.
- Plant community conservation language in every general plan
- Likes small groups specific to science
- Separate organization for legislation, we need to attack different organizations, agencies, etc
- CNPS should be involved in every habitat conservation plan in the state
- There are other native plant societies in the country; we need to tap into those. (Emily Roberson is doing that with the Native plant campaign)
- Annual conservation meeting for southern chapters works well
- Conservation easements—develop strategy to protect plants
- We need to change the name of our publications
- CNPS member in every city in every county monitoring the planning websites to see what is coming down the pipe.
- Mitigation monitoring under CEQA—case law or amendments
- Attorney expert on CEQA law
- Need to change in how CNPS Chapter Council does business, especially regarding conservation
- Strengthening communication within conservation.

## **VI. How to prioritize Conservation issues (Reasonable suggestions for what the statewide conservation program can do in the next year)**

- Make more noise politically—at the local and state level
- We need to incorporate the whole ecosystem in our message
- Associations- plant community more important than any single species
- Training and communication opportunities for volunteers
- Publicity
- Save ESA x 2, strategies include outreach
- Training for conservation chairs in CEQA, NCCP's, general plans
- Empower volunteers thru trainings and tools-- Leverage web resources, trainings/workshops for volunteers---x3
- Tier training, so that beginners do not feel overwhelmed.
- Consultants to NCCP HCP, General plans
- Reaching out to schools
- Plant conservation curriculum needs to be developed. (sacsplash.org- 60 classrooms participating)
- Paid conservation director
- Local development staff/ outreach and communication

## **VII. Conservation easements**

- Support for private owner contacts? Tools?
- How do we get to the table with conservation easement discussions that are going on?
- Do we have formal plans and guidance on mitigation?
- This would be good for trainings—what is an easement, how to hold an endowment, alternatives, and more...
- Need a broader discussion of CNPS policy

- Need as a tool in the box
- How to work with local land trusts?
- CNPS as a contractor to do monitoring for easement holder?
- Find ways to make the structure work better?
- Can we bring our science to bear on conservation easements with out risk of exposure?
- Techniques to find out about them?

### **Attendees**

Jessica Olson, East Bay Chapter  
Drew Shell, Santa Clara Valley Chapter (SCV)  
Don Mayall, SCV  
David Chipping, State Conservation Director  
Ileene Anderson, Southern California  
Judy Fenerty, SCV  
Devin Bryant, SCV  
Charli Danielsen, East Bay  
Michael Yantos, Yerba Buena Chapter  
Carolyn Dorsch, SCV  
Georgia Stigall, SCV  
Brianna Richardson, SCV  
Pam Muick, Jepson  
Carol Witham, Sacramento Valley Chapter  
Wanda Alexander, SCV  
Carol Castro, East Bay