



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060  
(831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123  
ALVIN JAMES, DIRECTOR

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October 25, 2001

AGENDA: November 6, 2001

Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

### **HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR THE ZAYANTE SAND HILLS AREA**

Members of the Board:

On September 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Planning Department presented a report to your Board regarding the presence of State and federally listed endangered species in the Zayante sand hills, an area which encompasses the City of Scotts Valley and portions of the San Lorenzo Valley and Bonny Doon. At that time, your Board authorized the Planning Department to explore various issues associated with the preparation of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the Zayante sand hills with the City of Scotts Valley and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to provide regulatory relief, reduce development-related expenses to property owners in the affected area, and to increase the effectiveness of conserving these species and associated habitat.

Planning Department staff has attended two meetings with representatives of the City of Scotts Valley. The first of these meetings was used to discuss an overall strategy for information gathering. As a result of this meeting, the Planning Department has prepared GIS maps depicting the occurrence of the sand hill area overlain with parcels and zoning. The parcels are broken into various size classes and are designated as either developed or undeveloped. These maps will begin to provide information about the location of future development in the affected area, as well as the location of potential mitigation sites.

The second meeting was attended by U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Department of Fish and Game personnel for the purpose of discussing the pros and cons of developing an area-wide HCP versus a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). While development of an HCP would allow the local jurisdictions to issue permits without the need for the applicant to obtain a separate "incidental take" permit from the federal government, no such relief would be provided if the subject property contained a State listed threatened or endangered species. In such cases, a State "take" permit would still be required, an expensive and time consuming process. Certification of an NCCP would create a "regulatory umbrella" under which permitting authority for projects involving both federal and/or State listed species would revert to local control.

Staff has not yet formulated a recommendation regarding which path, development of an HCP or an NCCP, would be preferable. Additional meetings to discuss these issues are scheduled for November and December. Following these meetings, and the generation of additional GIS information, the Planning Department will present your Board with an analysis of the available options for improving the permitting process and conservation of species in the Zayante Sand hills.

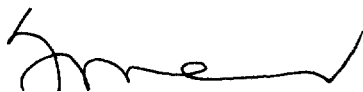
It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report on habitat conservation planning in the Zayante sand hills area.

Sincerely,



Alvin D. James  
Planning Director

RECOMMENDED:



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SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
County Administrative Officer