

NOTES | 3/19/2007 Conference Call

Altamont Scientific Review Committee

Notes Prepared by Gina Bartlett, Center for Collaborative Policy

Reviewed and Final Approval by SRC on 12 June 2007

Documents Related to this Meeting Summary

[S13 Questions for Settling Parties Response—Follow-Up to Feb 5 SRC Meeting](#)

[S14 Attorney General Concerns Regarding the Baseline \(3/1/07\)](#)

[S15 Smallwood Estimated Effects of Proposed Measures to be applied to 2500 Wind Turbines \(3/8/07\)](#)

[S16 Smallwood's Replies to the Parties' Response to Queries from the SRC and the...Attorney General \(3/9/07\)](#)

[S17 Yee Comments 3-12-07 on S16 Smallwood's Replies to Parties](#)

[S19 Smallwood Estimated Effects of Full Winter Shutdown and Removal of Tier 1 & 2 Turbines \(3/19/07\)](#)

Agenda Topics for April SRC Meeting

The SRC reviewed tentative agenda topics for its April meeting and added a few more items:

- Review the Diablo Winds data and monitoring methodology to consider possible incorporation into Altamont-wide monitoring program
- Inviting settling parties to a session to discuss in person the SRC responses to the parties' replies document.

The County requested that the SRC discuss:

- Monitoring two sets of conditions (G1 and G2)
- Criteria for derelict and non-operating turbines

Facilitator Gina Bartlett will develop an agenda and coordinate the timing of other participants. The SRC decided to wait until June to hold a technical workshop tailored for the wind power working group and other interested parties.

Repowering

The SRC briefly discussed the opportunities and problems associated with including repowering projects in the monitoring program. There was general agreement that it would be valuable for repowering projects to be included into the scope; however, the problems associated with integrating mortality data into the monitoring program was again identified as problematic. In the absence of an agreement with Contra Costa County regarding the Buena Vista project, the SRC decided to postpone further discussion on this topic until a decision is reached. Sandi will be following up with Contra Costa County.

50% Reduction

The SRC clarified its position on the issue of the 50% mortality reduction as required under the Settlement Agreement and discussed the need for a formal agreement on the part of the Settlement Parties that indicates that all understand and agree that the 50% will have a $\pm 10\%$ margin of error and thus the actual mortality reduction could potentially be less than 50% or greater than 50%.

Scaling Factors

The SRC generally agreed to apply its best scientific methods in estimating mortality adjustment factors and to ensure the baseline and 2007-09 mortality estimates are compared using the same methodologies and assumptions.

Baseline and Alternative Approaches

The SRC continued its discussion of the use of a baseline, including the validity of using the baseline required under the Settlement Agreement. The SRC also discussed the possibility of an alternative to using a baseline to evaluate whether a reduction in avian mortality occurs. Variability in abundance (i.e. year-to-year differences in the number of birds) could make the baseline unsuitable since mortality could “decrease” if fewer birds are in the area. If use drops, the number of fatalities should be reduced. This type of reduction, due to fewer birds in the area, is not really a reduction in mortality. Abundance in the region can change for many reasons, including weather or other environmental differences. Annual variability in other factors such as predator abundance (affecting scavenging rates), species composition, and weather patterns could also alter the baseline. This makes comparing one year to another challenging.

Smallwood & Thelander (2004) estimated mortality based on 5 years of data and recommended that any future estimate consider at least 3 years of data. The winter-time shutdown study is an example of an alternative experimental study to evaluate reduction in mortality that controls for year-to-year variability. Another example would be to introduce mitigation in one part of the APWRA and not in another so the differences between the two areas would not be influenced by year-to-year variability.

The SRC thinks it’s important for others to understand these issues as they relate to the baseline. Some SRC members are concerned that talking about the baseline gives the impression that the SRC endorses using a baseline even if another type of study might be more effective to evaluate reduction.

Addressing the scientific methodology while conforming to the settlement agreement is proving challenging. The SRC discussed sharing its preferred approach to the baseline and other issues generally to ensure that others understand the preferred scientific methodology and any limitations of the scientific approach stipulated by the settlement agreement.

Settling party Mike Boyd clarified that the settling parties want the SRC to evaluate the baseline and make recommendations. If the settling parties don’t disagree with what the SRC puts forward, then it goes forward. If not, it goes back to the SRC.

The SRC agreed to provide a formal statement on the baseline in the near term and in the longer term consider a different approach entirely. The SRC recognized that it needs the data from the American kestrel and burrowing owl data to assess the methodology and baseline.

SRC Agreed to Prepare a Document in the Short Term for the Settling Parties

- Incorporate Smallwood Estimate 3-19-07 (S19)
- Summarize language on the baseline and associated challenges

Format of SRC Document to the Settling Parties

- Respond to all the issues raised by the parties
- Organize topically
- Attach the precision memo

Process to Finalize SRC Document

1. Shawn first draft
2. SRC send comments at the same time
3. Shawn incorporate comments

4. SRC do a final review

Monitoring Program Scope

The SRC briefly discussed one question related to observation. The SRC had previously recommended 10-minute observation and recording some limited behavior data (perching).

SRC Agreed:

- Monitoring Team to do a total of 30 minutes at each observation point. The first 20 minutes to record data on bird behavior followed by a 10-minute point count.
- Location selection: The MT should select the location of the observation point based on key topographical features in order to maximize observability of raptors while retaining a good view of the turbines. The MT should select the location that is the most appropriate for that survey with clear documentation to keep the same point for future observations. The observer should have a good view of the turbines and the landscape around those turbines (which may not necessarily be at the top of the hill).

Public Comment

Joanne Stewart: Is the monitoring team replicating any of the observation points from previous studies?

--No one was able to provide an answer during the call.

Participants

Joanna Burger, SRC

Jim Estep, SRC

Sue Orloff, SRC

Shawn Smallwood, SRC

Julie Yee, SRC

Sandi Rivera, County of Alameda

Facilitator: Gina Bartlett, Center for Collaborative Policy

Members of the Public

Tara Mueller

Rebecca Perree'

David Cleary FPLE

Mike Boyd

Joanne Stewart