

Draft NOTES | 3/16/2011 Conference Call
Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area Scientific Review Committee
 Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy is no
 Reviewed but not yet approved by the SRC

All SRC Members Present

Discussion Topics

- Burrowing Owl Data & Study Plan**
- Monitoring Team Update**

Meeting Outcomes

- SRC members supported the burrowing owl distribution and abundance study moving forward, assuming there will be SRC review and monitoring of its implementation.
- SRC members asked that their role in regard to the study be made explicit, and that the County pursue an MOA or MOI with NextEra to arrange the specifics of the joint study, including making results available.

Action Items

| Party | Due Date | Action |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--|
| SRC | 9 AM April 4 | Next Conference Call Meeting. Topics: Review of Shawn Smallwood's burrowing owl distribution & abundance sample, consider burrowing owl singles versus pairs issue - is it important to devote resources to clarifying this, or can more resources be placed on expanding the sample? |
| Sandra Rivera | | To pursue MOA/MOI with NextEra for joint burrowing owl distribution & abundance study |
| Sandra Rivera | | Clarify/make explicit SRC role in reviewing burrowing owl study |
| Sandra Rivera | | To discuss with SRC nominating organizations the issue of Shawn Smallwood replacement |
| Julie Yee/Brian Karas | | To have update on QA/QC simulation for April 4 conference call |
| Jesse Schwartz | 3/31 | Public peer review package of 09-10 data |

Next Meeting

Conference Call Meeting, April 4, 2011, 9-11 a.m.

Announcements

SRC Member Shawn Smallwood announced that he will soon be stepping down from the SRC, when he begins scientific work for NextEra to inform siting of its repowered turbines. Alameda County had been concerned about a potential conflict of interest if he stayed on the SRC while working for one of the wind power companies in Alameda County. He will

miss the SRC, but feels like he needs to go where he can be most effective, which is with the repowering effort. He expects to sign a contract with NextEra in the next few days.

Sandra Rivera said there is no explicit process for replacement of an SRC member. She will talk with the organizations that had originally nominated SRC members.

Joan Stewart of NextEra said the company's agreement with the Attorney General's Office requires them to use the best science in siting their repowered turbines. Shawn Smallwood is the most up-to-date on the science in the Altamont, and she hopes her company's participation will get more information into the models quickly.

Burrowing Owl Data & Study Plan

Related Documents

[M70 Burrowing Owl Distribution and Abundance 3-3-11 Subcommittee Meeting Results](#)

SRC Member Shawn Smallwood said he is prepared to proceed with the burrowing owl distribution and abundance study (at the February in-person meeting, the SRC had recommended implementation by the Monitoring Team of his proposal, [P198 Smallwood Proposal to Sample Burrowing Owls across APWRA](#)). He will be undertaking the study for NextEra, under additional funding, but hopes the Monitoring Team can also provide field personnel for the study, as he needs their help and can benefit from their knowledge of the APWRA. He thinks it will be a good union. He expects the study will be able to cover more area faster than originally planned. Data will be made available to the Monitoring Team, the SRC, and the public.

Sandra Rivera of Alameda County said the County may be able to join with NextEra to conduct the study in a similar manner to how the QAQC and CalWEA studies could have been integrated.

Doug Leslie of the Monitoring Team said it should be easier to integrate in this case, as each party will be addressing the exact same topic.

SRC Discussion

SRC members raised the following issues:

- The SRC, ICF and Shawn Smallwood may have different goals that will need to be worked out.
- It will be important to clarify what the SRC's role will be as far as reviewing and making recommendations on the study, and having access to data.

Sandra Rivera said the SRC should use its own goals in evaluating the study. If the SRC agrees to the proposal, they can still review the study, and provide comments.

Public Comment

Renee Culver of NextEra said Shawn Smallwood's proposal and objectives are the same as that of the SRC - it is the same proposal that the SRC considered in February. Bringing him into the study will add his strength as an experienced burrowing owl researcher to the existing strength of ICF, with ICF and Smallwood working together. It will also minimize

extrapolation by expanding the areas that can be sampled. She believes that the SRC's goals are met.

Facilitator Mary Selkirk suggested that, for the purposes of the day's discussion, the group proceed with a working assumption that the SRC has a role in review of the study. The four continuing SRC members agreed.

Review of Burrowing Owl Historical Fatality & Siting Data

Jesse Schwartz of the Monitoring Team gave an overview of the historical burrowing owl fatality and siting data and map package memo that will soon be posted on the SRC website for SRC and public review. It can be provided as GIS layers or PDFs. It shows historical fatality information by string, season and year. There are 56 maps, including a summary map, 27 maps of fatality densities and maps of environmental variables. His analysis did not find any new information than that reported at the February meeting -- there is very little variability by season, and there are the same hotspots at blobs 17 and 11, as well as some hotness at blob 26.

In regards to working with NextEra and Shawn Smallwood, Jesse said it should be an easy collaboration and suggested that the two groups comanage the data management system so that the data is in one place.

Questions and Comments

Brian Karas of the Monitoring Team and an SRC member asked whether the data could show for each year which strings were monitored, as that information would influence the fatalities that were recorded. The visual information would also help in generating hypotheses. He is concerned that so many burrowing owls die in winter, and they may be in different places at that time than they would be during breeding season.

An SRC member suggested that Getis-Ord could be used to perform hotspot analysis, which weighs the factor of where turbines were surveyed.

Burrowing Owl Distribution & Abundance Subcommittee Meeting

Doug Leslie reported on the March 3, 2011 meeting of the Monitoring Team and the SRC's Burrowing Owl Distribution & Abundance Subcommittee of Shawn Smallwood and Jim Estep. Meeting participants did not modify the study plan, but clarified certain aspects of it. He is referring to the watershed and subwatershed sampling units as "area constrained viewsheds" or "ACV." Each one of the ACVs would be sampled by a crew member using a binocular or spotting scope. In addition, there will probably be some walking along transects in areas with less visibility. The assumption is that this study would be undertaken through July, but that may now be open to modification.

One unresolved issue is whether it would make sense to devote a level of effort to identifying whether a burrow is occupied by a single burrowing owl, or a pair, and whether the pair is breeding.

A member of the SRC subcommittee said another issue to resolve is how to determine the sample size.

Shawn Smallwood said his intention would be to undertake multiple surveys, returning in one month to check a site. Lower areas have less visibility and require walking. From April to June, the birds have more stable social arrangements and are easier to survey. In response to a question, he said he has no plan to survey winter populations. This would require a different study design and level of effort, to allow for more walking in tight transects.

Public Comment

In response to a question about NextEra's siting timetable before next winter, Joan Stewart of NextEra said she didn't have an answer at this time.

Brian Karas of the Monitoring Team asked if the historical fatality data could be used to identify places of interest related to winter fatalities that could be part of the sample. He is concerned that many burrowing owls die in winter and believes it is important to gather information on that issue. In response, Shawn Smallwood said a distribution and abundance study requires a random sampling protocol to begin with, so it would be inappropriate to select sampling locations based on fatality patterns.

SRC Discussion

The four continuing SRC members said they were comfortable with the study as it has been described. One SRC member said this is based on the assumption that the study design will be formalized, the SRC will have an opportunity to review that, and will have access to the data in a timely manner.

Shawn Smallwood said he will develop a sample distribution of plots for SRC review.

An SRC member asked if it might be possible to devote resources to expanding the sample size, as a trade-off rather than the extra work that might be required to identify singles versus pairs.

SRC members, Shawn Smallwood and Doug Leslie agreed that two visits to each site would be a minimum, but surveyors would need to make field judgment calls about whether further site visits were needed. Doug Leslie said he would prioritize expanding the sample over identifying singles and pairs, although it would be beneficial to have that information, as well. At least one SRC member agreed.

SRC members supported the study moving forward, with an assumption there will be SRC monitoring of implementation. SRC members also asked for the following:

- The SRC's role and responsibility for review of the study should be clarified and made explicit;
- Shawn Smallwood's role should be made explicit; and
- An MOA or MOI should be pursued between Alameda County and NextEra arranging for the joint study and describing the SRC's role.
- Data should be made available to the SRC when available.

This item will be agendaized for the next conference call meeting on April 4.

Monitoring Team Update

Monitoring Data & Reports

Jesse Schwartz of the Monitoring Team said the 2009-2010 Bird fatality data set is completed and will go public on the web by Friday, March 18. The Monitoring Team has reviewed NextEra's feedback on the data, which resulted in missing data being found that needed to be entered.

Doug Leslie said the annual report is expected to be out in mid April.

QAQC Simulations

SRC Member Julie Yee said she, Jesse Schwartz and Brian Karas held a conference call meeting on March 8 on how to modify her simulation to make it consistent with current QAQC conditions. The group is working on a call summary, as well as on the results of the discussion, and there are no outcomes yet.

Jesse Schwartz expects by the end of March to have QAQC study information, including the search schedule, which will be made public as part of the public peer review package that will be released.

Julie Yee and Brian Karas will provide an update on the next conference call meeting.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Next conference call meeting:

April 4, 2011, 9 AM-11 AM (Noon-2 PM Eastern Time)

Tentative topics:

- Review of Shawn Smallwood's burrowing owl distribution & abundance sample
- Consider outstanding study issues: singles vs. pairs, etc.

Next in-person meeting:

While a date was not set, the SRC would not be available to meet in person until late May.

ATTENDEES

SRC

Joanna Burger
Jim Estep
Sue Orloff
Shawn Smallwood
Julie Yee

Consultants

Doug Leslie
Brian Karas
Levin Nason
Jesse Schwartz

Identified Public

Renee Culver, NextEra
Jim Hopper, AES/SeaWest
Sandra Menzel
Juliana Spector, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Compliance
Joan Stewart, NextEra

Staff

Sandra Rivera, Alameda County
Mary Selkirk, CCP
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