

Environmental Oversight Committee

**June 5, 2008
Meeting Minutes**

Committee Members Present:

Chair Patricia Bates, OCTA Board of Directors
Vice-Chair Melanie Schlotterbeck, Measure M Support Groups
Cathy Green, OCTA Board of Directors
Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League
Jonathan Snyder, US Fish and Wildlife Services
Sylvia Vega, Caltrans
Matt Chirdon, CA Department of Fish and Game
Stephanie Hall, US Army Corps of Engineers
Merlin L. Henry Jr., Taxpayers Oversight Committee
Adam Probolsky, Probolsky Research
Debbie Townsend, California Wildlife Conservation Board

Committee Members Absent:

Judy McKeehan, SWCA Environmental Consultants

Orange County Transportation Authority Staff Present:

Monte Ward
Ellen Burton
Jim Sterling
Marissa Espino
Ryan Maloney

Members of the Public Present:

Derek Ostensen, City of San Juan Capistrano

1. Welcome

Chair Patricia Bates began the meeting at 10 a.m. by welcoming the committee members and leading the flag salute.

2. Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes from May 7 by Melanie Schlotterbeck, and seconded by Cathy Green. The minutes were unanimously approved without changes.

Marissa Espino told the members that future minutes for the committee would be more in the style of action minutes than verbatim minutes. The members approved of this change and Chair Bates commented that more streamlined minutes may reduce the number of revisions to the minutes.

3. Presentation Items

A. Conservation Efforts in the City of San Juan Capistrano

Mark Nielsen, Mayor Pro Tem of the city of San Juan Capistrano, provided the committee with an overview of the city's efforts to preserve open space, such as a proposed initiative requiring public approval to rezone open space.

After sharing several of the cities environmental accomplishments, Mark introduced Tim Neely, San Juan Capistrano Planning Commissioner and Director of the County of Orange's Planning and Development Services, to detail some of the benefits of land acquisitions to connect established land reserves in the San Juan Capistrano area. Tim advised the committee to choose land parcels carefully and consider saving funds for restoration and management. Tim said that the updated results of the Northwest biological study would be provided by the city to committee members.

Mark said that the city of San Juan Capistrano was considering a \$30 million open space bond measure in an upcoming election and was looking for matching funds in the next year to take advantage of depressed real estate prices.

Monte Ward, Director of Special Projects, said that the committee should consider how to review proposals from interested cities and agencies, as the planned public outreach campaign will increase the number of presentations to the committee. Monte asked the committee for their thoughts on how to manage requests for presentations. Subcommittees have suggested that the committee focus on the resource value and connectivity of available properties.

Chair Bates said that creating the guidelines for selection should be added as a future committee agenda item, and information should be provided to the OCTA Board of Directors.

4. Public Outreach Program

Ellen Burton, Executive Director of External Affairs, presented the committee with suggested goals and tactics for a public outreach program and requested committee input on target audiences and what level of detail was needed for evaluation. Ellen commented that the target audiences were flexible and requested committee input by July.

Adam Probolsky asked if there was a specific geographic area for property acquisitions. Chair Bates responded that the committee was looking countywide, working from the Green Vision map.

Chair Bates said that a clear statement of purpose was needed for the committee to help focus what properties would be of interest. Adam commented that with a clear sense of priority, the market will bring available properties to the committee. Cathy Green suggested leveraging Renewed Measure M funds with other sources of funding to maximize benefits. Dan Silver suggested the committee generated a

sense of eligible projects with the impact and mitigation working group before beginning a public outreach campaign.

Sylvia Vega asked if lands acquired for mitigation need to match freeway projects. Melanie Schlotterbeck said that acquired land needed to have a nexus to the freeway program, which needs to be comprehensive in nature, but not determined on a project by project basis. The committee consensus was that regional rather than direct project impacts would be considered as a nexus.

Monte provided a summary of the working group's actions to date. The group provided two suggested focuses for the committee: working to expand existing protected areas and improving the connectivity of protected lands.

Monte said that three elements of land consideration had been defined by the working group: is the area related to existing areas that are protected; does the area enhance connectivity of the existing system; and how does the land relate to existing freeway impacts.

Chair Bates asked if the Impact and Mitigation working group was considering what Renewed Measure M projects are connected to areas on the Green Vision map. Monte said that this was being considered in addition to possible impacts on vegetation and animal species. Monte commented that the working group was working to provide the committee with guidelines as quickly as possible.

Chair Bates said that it was too early for a major public outreach campaign, but more general committee information and early information needs to be available to the public so that interested publics can more easily track the actions of the committee. Ellen said that public information would offer updates on committee discussion and would wait for the guidelines before initiating public outreach program.

Chair Bates asked Ellen to present to the Orange County Coastal Coalition to provide an update on the committee.

Ellen commented that guidelines on project selection would greatly assist the public outreach campaign by providing a clearer public message.

After discussion, the committee decided to have staff generate a draft of guidelines for project selection. These draft guidelines would then be discussed by Melanie and the Impact and Mitigation working group, with a report back to the full committee in July.

Chair Bates requested the guidelines reflect the committee's discussion on reserve land connectivity, encouraging matching funds and a regional focus on freeway program mitigation.

Chair Bates asked to bring the draft guidelines along with a status report and a timeline for future action to the Board of Directors by the end of the year.

5. Master Agreement Working Group Report

Monte reported that the Master Agreement working group would travel to Carlsbad on June 11 to learn about San Diego's master agreement and its creation process. Monte commented that the working group hopes to go beyond San Diego's process agreement to directly link freeway impact mitigation with a comprehensive evaluation program. Monte suggested that the result would fall between an Environmental Impact Report and a Natural Community Conservation Program-like habitat conservation effort, or some option in the middle. Monte said the working group would report back with their findings.

Monte said that the working group has retained legal counsel to help guide discussion as the working group moves beyond San Diego's process agreement. Monte commented that resource agencies and cities may have strong opinions on the best approach for the master agreement.

6. Impact and Mitigation Working Group Report

In the absence of Dan Phu and Jim Sterling, Monte provided an update on the Impact and Mitigation working group's efforts. The group is making progress with incorporating available data to assess the direct impacts of the freeway program. Early indications are that the freeway projects have specific impacts that do not effect expansive areas. While there is not a large direct impact, the working group is considering the indirect impacts to prioritize land parcels.

Chair Bates asked for an update on these findings in July.

7. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

8. Next Meeting – July 2, 2008

9. Committee Member Reports

There were no committee member reports.

10. Adjournment

Chair Bates announced that the next EOC meeting would be on July 2, 2008, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.