

Lessons from Habitat Conservation Planning in California

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Evolution of the HCP Program

Congress indicated that HCPs should facilitate comprehensive planning that would encompass multiple landowners, multiple jurisdictions, and multiple species, as pioneered by the San Bruno Mountain HCP

The lack of any express requirements or other incentives to motivate the initial and sustained participation of the full range of potentially interested public and private parties resulted in two general tracks of HCPs

The conventional, bilateral HCP approach has been criticized as leading to patchy, ad hoc mitigation measures that limit the ability to plan for species recovery or prevent species from declining

In contrast to these bilateral plans, area-wide, multiagency HCPs have adopted a more multilateral, regional approach that seeks to promote the participation of the various affected agencies and interests to develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan

Natural Community Conservation Planning Program (NCCP)

California's Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) program, initiated in 1991 and revised and expanded by the NCCP Act of 2003, is one of the first experiments in mandated broad-scale ecosystem conservation in the United States

The NCCP program was intended to respond to some of the widespread criticisms of the federal HCP program, such as its failure to prevent habitat fragmentation and insure the long-term stability of plant and wildlife communities, by adding flexibility and an explicit multi-species focus

Almost all provisions of the NCCP Act (e.g. conservation above mitigation, habitat connectivity) require more than what is required of HCPs, and consequently it is more difficult to get NCCPs approved

California Regional Conservation Plans

Integrated Regional Conservation & Development Program

The Strategic Growth Council (SGC) has initiated the Integrated Regional Conservation and Development (IRCAD) Program to identify regional conservation priorities in advance of development

Goal: to conduct conservation planning in advance of development, rather than have conservation exist as a response to development

In 2014, the SGC engaged the California Biodiversity Council to partner in the development, promotion and implementation of the IRCAD Program

What Lessons Can We Glean?

- 1. Inter-jurisdictional Problem Solving**
- 2. Managing Scale and Scope**
- 3. Funding Habitat Conservation Planning**
- 4. Managing for Uncertainty and Change**

Promoting Inter-jurisdictional Problem Solving

Conditions for Success

1. **Clear and Efficient Organizational Structure**
2. **Open Participation**
3. **Initial Scoping of Issues and Disagreements**
4. **Managing Complexity through Information Sharing Mechanisms**
5. **Resources and Training**
6. **Strong Incentives to Work Together**

An Integrative Approach: ESA/CWA Permitting Coordination

Benefits

Better conservation results, including integrated compliance monitoring and adaptive management

Can help assure regulatory mandates are implemented in a compatible fashion if both wetlands and endangered species regulations are addressed in a concurrent, coordinated planning process

Challenges

Integrating aquatic resource planning with endangered species planning inevitably adds complexity to the permitting process

Indifference or even aversion to larger-scale planning has hampered interagency coordination efforts and led to significant time delays or even road blocks

Managing Scale and Scope

Plans needed to expand their scope from a single-species focus to a more comprehensive multi-species focus

Significant benefits from planning at a broader geographic scale

However, create the risk of HCPs becoming so deep and broad as to make the initial plan formation process very challenging and even more difficult to implement

Insufficient attention and resources are given to providing the funding, monitoring, and research commensurate to a plan's increased complexity

Funding for Habitat Conservation Planning

Challenges for Funding

1. Lack of Broad Political Support Historically
2. Increased Complexity, Uncertainty, and Costs

Lessons for Addressing Identified Funding Challenges

1. Seek Diverse and Innovative Funding Sources
2. Build a Broad Coalition
3. Potential for State-wide Habitat Conservation Funding
4. Front Load Costs and Advance Mitigation

Managing for Uncertainty and Change

Lessons from California HCPs

1. Robust Monitoring is Essential
2. Appropriately Targeted Monitoring Data is Essential
3. Incentivizing Effective Adaptive Management
4. Reducing Uncertainty with Advance Mitigation

Managing for Climate Uncertainty and Disruption

1. **Greater weight on the development of effective adaptive management strategies**
2. **Challenges to successful implementation**
3. **Future design of HCPs**
4. **Fundamental reconsideration of the focus and goals of the HCP program**
5. **Efforts to manage climate change effects outside of the HCP program**

Thank You!

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