**DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

**Arana Gulch Adaptive Management Working Group**

Louden Nelson Community Center, Room 4 301 Center Street Santa Cruz, CA

**9-2 pm November 4, 2014**

**Participants:**

Grey Hayes, Consulting Botanist, CNPS

Kate Huckelbridge, Ecologist, CA Coastal Commission

Tim Hyland, Ecologist, CA State Parks

Kathy Lyons, Biotic Resources Group

Suzanne Schettler (CNPS alternate)

Alison Stanton, Research Botanist, Facilitator

Noah Downing, Planner, City of Santa Cruz Dept of Parks and Recreation

Mike Ferry, Planner, City of Santa Cruz Dept of Planning and Community Development

Mauro Garcia, Parks Superintendent, City of Santa Cruz

ABSEBNT:

Melissa Farinha, Biologist, CDFW

Susan Bainbridge, Researcher, UC Jepson Herbarium

Lena Chang, USFWS

OBSERVERS: Jean Brocklebank and Michael Lewis, FOAG; Richard Stover, CNPS

**Summary of action items (\*REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ACTION)**

**New AMWG Members:** Sheila Barry, the UC Cooperative Extension Livestock and Natural Resource Advisor has agreed to serve on the AMWG. The AMWG now wishes to prioritize the addition of a member with wildlife expertise. The Coastal Commission will have responsibility for finding qualified candidates and making a final selection in consultation with the City.

**CCC Reporting Cycle:** The City is preparing a Draft compliance report for calendar year 2014 and will submit it to the AMWG in December for review. Alison will summarize HMP reporting requirements on one page. AMWG will have 2 weeks to submit comments to the CCC in track changes. Kate will compile the comments and send the City a single comment package. The target due date for final approval is late January, subject to change.

**Current Budgeting:** The City will update the “Expenditure Report for Fiscal Years 2013-2015” to make sure it is correct and complete.

**SCT census:** Kathy Lyons conducted repeated searches for SCT in previously occupied habitat on the following corrected dates: 7/11,7/23, 7/29, 9/2, 9/15, 9/20, 10/2. Only 4 SCT were observed in Area A. No SCT were observed along the shoulder of the new graded E-W path. Kathy will modify the census procedure to record GPS tracks of her survey path and include search time for all dates. She will also GPS the extant of the coast tarplant (Deinandra corymbosa) on the E-W bike trail.

**\*Area C soil salvage:** Before the next rain, Kathy Lyons will map the boundaries of the two areas where the salvaged top soil was placed and measure soil depth at multiple locations using a transect approach. These areas will be included in the monitoring efforts in the upcoming year.

**Scrape plots:** The City will install 6ft T-posts in one corner of each of the 3 50 x 50 ft scrape plots in the NE corner of the prairie. These plots will be included in monitoring efforts in the upcoming year.

**Grassland delineation:** Tim will inspect the grassland delineation in the field with the City before any removal. Kathy Lyons will finalize the map after the fences are installed.

**\*Woody plant removal:** The project will be split into two. Removal of woody plants within the fenced areas will occur in November. Removal of all marked woody plants outside the fences will occur in spring (May) as a single mechanical removal and cut stump herbicide application.

**\*Arana Gulch webpage:** Alison incorporated recommended changes to the template and is providing it with these minutes. The City will notify the AMWG by email when the page is updated.

**\*Grazing contract:** Noah will strike the first sentence of item 5 in the Stocking and Work Program and modify Section 3 of the professional services contract to make payment and fees flexible. Noah will keep the AMWG updated on contract negotiations. An AMWG member or qualified City staff should inspect any hay purchase that will be used at the site.

**\*Grazing public outreach strategy:**

* Noah will put Grey in touch with Arron Becker to get the database of contact info for the neighbors surrounding Arana.
* Grey will organize a community meeting to have a meet and greet with the grazer and provide education on the grazing program. Flyers will be developed as part of this effort.
* Noah will develop a simplified interpretative sign on cattle/human/ dog interactions to be approved by the AMWG and then installed on fencing.
* The City will determine if the Park Ranger Office is available 24/7 and will update the website immediately with grazing information and accurate contact information.

**Budget FY 2016:** The AMWG will continue to develop the list of priority management actions for funding consideration and will make a recommendation to the City at the meeting in January.

**\*Next AMWG meeting:** Please respond to poll with availability in late January- the 27th or 28th look best so far. Noah will bring all necessary maps in large scale.

**AGENDA ITEM DETAIL**

1. **Addition of new members to AMWG**

Sheila Barry is the UC Cooperative Extension Livestock and Natural Resource Advisor for the SF Bay Area. Sheila is a Certified Rangeland Manager and has agreed to serve on the AMWG until Deevii Rao takes the same position to cover Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties. Kate or Alison will request that Sheila review the grazing outreach strategy very soon. The quorum will need to be modified for the January meeting and as new members join.

Grey mentioned that NRCS has provided pro bono grazing consultations in the other places. The AMWG would like to make adding a wildlife specialist the next membership priority.

1. **CCC reporting**

The City has asked Kathy Lyons to prepare a draft monitoring report to meet the requirements of the HMP. Alison will provide a one page summary of HMP requirements. Calendar year 2014 will be Year One. Draft report will be available in December. The AMWG will have a two week comment period. Comments will be submitted to Kate in track changes in Word and should exclude grammatical errors or re-arrangements. Suggestions for inserted text is best included in comment boxes. Kate will compile all comments from the AMWG and CCC staff into a single package for the City. The target for approval is Late January.

The CCC acknowledges that this first review cycle will need to be flexible and that the due date may change or be extended significantly. The report is approved by CCC staff only, not the Coastal Commission.

1. **Implementation of AMWG recommendations**

**a. Budget allocation for FY2014-15**

* The City will update the “Expenditure Report for Fiscal Years 2013-2015” to make sure it is correct and complete.
* Members thought that $4,500 for perimeter mowing seems exorbitant and would like more information on why it is so expensive.

The group would like to see a scope of work for the Social Trail Closure and provided several recommendations:

* use zigzag cables rather than split rail fencing for deterrence
* apply sterile hydroseed mix only on steep areas, such as near harbor
* do not disc compacted trails- this could eliminate the small number of native grasses that occur only on the trail margins
* the $10,000 price tag can be reduced with the above suggestions

**b. Hear Kathy Lyons report on E-W bike road shoulder survey: see action item above**

**c. monitoring methodology for Area C topsoil salvage and 3 scraped areas**

The salvaged topsoil from Area C was spread contrary to the AMWG recommendation because construction materials and heavy equipment were in the way. The top 6” of soil was removed with an excavator and a skiploader, shaken off the bucket, and hand-raked to a depth of 1” or 1 ½’. Kathy did not measure the depth. The AMWG requested that she map the boundaries of the two areas where the salvaged top soil was placed and measure soil depth at multiple locations using a transect approach. These areas will be included in the monitoring efforts in the upcoming year and the map and methods of the salvage will be in the monitoring report.

The AMWG learned that the contractor refused to allocate the time necessary to load the soil into a pickup and spread the soil across a broader area by hand with a shovel and viewed it as an extra outside of the contract. Therefore, the AMWG was really too late to make such a recommendation. In the future, the AMWG may want to see some scopes of work for recommended work before it is contracted, if this is possible.

The City will install 6ft T-posts in the northern most corner of each of the 3 50 x 50 ft. scrape plots in the NE corner of the prairie. These plots should be included in monitoring efforts in the upcoming year with point transects. Some thought the plot size was too small, but not everyone agreed.

**d. grassland delineation and plan for woody plant removal**

Kathy will finalize the delineation after the fence install. Tim agreed to walk the site with Noah soon to look at the trees that were recently marked for removal as part of the delineation.

The group decided that it was most efficient to split the project into two phases.

Phase 1: Jimmy Smith will remove woody plants, including cotoneaster, blackberry, coyote bush and live oak inside the fencing. The group learned that Jimmy Smith generally does not submit written bids and that the scope of work is a verbal agreement. As such, the AMWG would like the City to provide the following guidance on Phase 1:

* All equipment needs to be free of mud to prevent spread of Sudden Oak Death.
* Apply treatment within fence and for an additional 3 feet out.
* Cut as close to ground as possible- there will be no cut stump follow up since cows will presumably keep them low
* All material is hauled off site.
* Minimize soil disturbance
* Limb large trees no higher than 7 ft.
* Cut beyond the branch collar when limbing oaks.

Phase 2: Woody Plant removal outside of the fencing will occur in spring, just as the soil is beginning to dry (often in May). The treatment will include mechanical and hand removal, followed immediately with a painted herbicide application on the cut stump. A new contractor will need to be hired because Jimmy Smith is not a licensed applicator.

Phase 1 will cost less, but Phase 2 could cost more and together they might exceed the $8,000 estimate.

**e. Seedbank assessment and soil analysis-** Sue was not able to attend, follow-up by email.

10:30 Break

1. **Arana Gulch Webpage**

Alison developed a template for the webpage for review at the meeting. The group made additional comments and rather than listing them here the revised template is included with this agenda. Better quality photos are needed. Alison can provide some but the City may solicit more from the AMWG.

The group spent time on learning some of the design and communication constraints imposed by the structure of the City of Santa Cruz website and recognized that the Arana page is but one of many. Mauro explained that public comment from the webpage must go to the general address parksandrec@cityofsantacruz.com and that is viewed by administration and then routed to the appropriate staff. This sentence of explanation will be added to the webpage.

One discussion centered on the ability of the City to post to the Parks and Rec Dept. Facebook page and Twitter account and to link announcements on the webpage page to both these social media. Mauro can send items to Scott Collins to post on the Dept. social media, but items sent for posting on the City of Santa Cruz social media accounts are competing with many things and might not get posted.

12:00- 12:30 lunch break (provided)

12:30-2:00

1. **Grazing program**

The City has given Tommy Williams the Stocking and Work Program and a contract but there is no deal yet and the negotiations have just started. Noah gave an overview of a recent site visit with Tommy where some potential deal breaking items emerged: use of hay to condition cows, use of dogs to herd, and use of a pick-up for fence inspection. The bottom line was that Tommy is expecting to expend a lot of effort for only a few cows, almost no profit and possibly a loss.

Everyone present agreed that starting grazing as soon as possible is imperative. There was strong agreement that Tommy Williams is the right person for the job and that the City cannot let a grazing contract fall through and should take necessary steps to make the job more profitable and alleviate his concerns as much as possible.

A discussion ensued about the use of hay, vehicles, and dogs. The group made a recommendation in July to not allow hay on site because of the risk of spreading weeds. Certified “weed free forage” is not readily available in this area and is only required to be free of particular noxious weed species (CDFA A and B list sp.), so it often contains many other invasive species. Alfalfa or wheat hay are better alternatives, but are often expensive. The City may want to offer to buy the hay. The AMWG would like any hay to be inspected by a member or by qualified City Staff before purchase to ensure it is free of weeds. This step will moderate the concern over weeds and all agreed that the group should reverse its recommendation and allow use of hay. This year quality hay cost $16/bale, and will likely be more in the future.

The AMWG made the following recommendations for the near term grazing effort:

* Noah will strike the first sentence of item 5 in the Stocking and Work Program and modify Section 3 of the professional services contract to make payment and fees flexible.
* Noah will keep the AMWG regularly updated on grazing contract negotiations.
* The grazer should document the location of water troughs, feed stations, and salt blocks on a map.
* A reasonable storage solution needs to be developed for the pieces of plywood that will be placed on the permeable bike paths sections before driving across or herding cows. One option is attaching them to the gates.
* If the City cannot find a reasonable storage solution for the plywood, then consider replacing the crossing sections with solid concrete.

**Grazing outreach strategy**

The objective of the group was to recommend to the City a strategy for reaching out to the immediate neighbors in advance of the start of grazing and dealing with public comments and reaction once it starts. Given that the group wants grazing to begin as soon as possible in December, **the following strategy needs to be implemented immediately.**

The first step is to obtain the database of contact information for the surrounding neighbors from Aaron Becker, the PR point for the Dept of Parks and Rec.

The AMWG recommends the following 7 point strategy:

* Develop a flyer to mail to the target group
* Modify the EBRP informational sign on cattle/dog/ human interaction and install on fences
* Schedule a neighborhood meeting to have a meet and greet with the selected grazer and introduce grazing operations (Grey volunteered to do this-thank you!)
* Make sure there is number for people to call to report livestock injury or escape or other issues that is available 24/7. This # is listed on the fence signs and webpage.
* Update the Arana Gulch webpage with information about upcoming grazing and include a form for reporting incidents and/or comments in a specific format.
* Emphasize dogs in all outreach. Specifically that “your dog may be harmed are even killed by livestock if not kept on leash.”
* Emphasize success of City in improving SF popcorn flower and Ohlone Tiger beetle in Moore Creek with a similar grazing operation.

In addition to the broad target group, other entities require specialized outreach about what to do if and when a cow ends up on their property:

* The Harbor (an escaped cow if likely to head down and towards water).
* Neighbors with an adjacent fence
* The City Ranger’s office- if it is available 24/7 and will be receiving calls about grazing

The AMWG viewed the EBRP informational sign and made several recommendations about content:

* Less words
* No technical words (6th grade reading level)
* Bigger emphasis on dogs
* Mention benefit to SCT

The incident report form on the website should include specific fields to help people provide useful information.

* Location of incident
* Description of cow including coloring and ear tag # if possible
* Look for template

2:00 The group agreed to cancel the optional site visit due to low attendance and extend the meeting for an extra half hour to cover the remaining agenda items and make up for the late start.

2:00 -2:30

1. Identify management actions and prioritize budget needs for FY2016

The group agreed that there was insufficient time or information available to address this item fully. The main missing information is the complete list of budget items that the group will need to prioritize in January. Because the FY begins July 1, any spring work needs to be considered separately.

Spring work in FY 2015

* April baseline monitoring
* AMWG facilitation
* Continued weed mapping
* Priority weed control
* Woody plant removal and cut stump application
* Perimeter fuel break mowing ($4,500 is exorbitant)

There were questions about how things are funded:

* Special reporting required for USFWS?
* grazing outreach strategy
* weed management outside of fences
1. Debriefing of objectives and outcomes and timing for next AMWG meeting

The next meeting will happen in January. Please fill out the poll with availability.

1. Public comment period

2:30 Adjourn meeting