

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the SSHCP, the goals, actors, scope and process associated with preparing the document. There is also a detailed discussion of the regulatory context of the SSHCP and an overview of the biological resources in the SSHCP Area.

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This chapter is made up of seven sections: introduction, geology, topography, soils, atmospheric conditions, hydrology, and references. Chapter 2 provides a detailed setting and description of the diverse ecologies within the SSHCP Area. The chapter's discussion of underlying habitat conditions, from the history of geological formations to future climate change, is intended as a foundation for understanding the habitat requirements within the Plan Area.

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This chapter is made up of three sections: introduction, land use, and demographics. The land use section is an overview of how the region developed historically, and the current structure of land use development as guided by laws and policies that apply to the SSHCP Area. This chapter provides a background on how land development is guided by local general plans and community plans. Following that overview, more specific information on general plan land use designations (e.g. agriculture, intensive industrial, residential) and associated acreages allotted to each designation, as well as specific plan and community plan designations, is provided for each local jurisdiction participating in the Plan. Lastly, the demographics section reviews SACOG’s future population projections and associated development implications.

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This chapter addresses covered activities under the SSHCP inside and outside the UDA, activities to be covered to implement the conservation strategy, as well as proposed spheres of influences and activities not covered under the SSHCP. Only the covered activities described in chapter 4 are eligible for coverage under the SSHCP Permits.

Covered Activities within the UDA: With certain exceptions, covered activities will occur within the SSHCP Urban Development Area (UDA). The UDA corresponds to locations inside the SSHCP Area that are within the Sacramento County Urban Services Boundary (USB), City limits of Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, and Galt, and Galt’s adopted sphere of influence (SOI). Covered activities in this area include, residential, commercial and industrial development. In addition, projects associated with water delivery, wastewater, flood control, energy and utilities, parks, and transportation are covered.

Covered Activities and Specific Projects Located Outside the UDA: Specific infrastructure improvement projects are noted as covered activities outside the UDA. These projects are the Live Oak Waste Water Treatment Facility, recycled water projects (South Sacramento County Agriculture and Habitat Lands Recycled Water Project), and multiple transportation projects (rural collector road, thoroughfare, arterial, road realignment, road interchange, and Capital Southeast Connector).

Activities and Actions Not Covered by the SSHCP Permits: The SSHCP does not cover agricultural practices, activities within the Rancho Murrieta Community, agricultural-residential development, trail systems, airport operations/expansion, rural infrastructure not identified as a covered activity, landfills, mining, and alterations to the Cosumnes River.

Proposed Spheres of Influence: The cities of Galt and Elk Grove have pending applications to expand their SOIs. The approval of the SOI applications is at the discretion of LAFCO. If LAFCO approves the SOIs, the SSHCP will incorporate the expanded areas into the UDA.

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This chapter describes the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of implementation of the covered activities in chapter 4 on habitat, species, and jurisdictional waters within the Plan Area. Baseline conditions were established with subject matter experts through mapping data and modeling assumed species and habitat distribution. Levels of take were identified based on alterations to the baseline conditions. Analysis of direct impacts to land within the UDA is based on the assumption that all undeveloped land outside of identified preserves (or other areas where the Plan precludes development) will be developed and habitat/species will be lost. Estimated footprints of various (conceptual) infrastructure projects outside the UDA were used to quantify the impacts of these projects. Lastly, based on known or approximated distribution of water resources, impacts on jurisdictional waters were estimated. However, future project specific analyses will provide more detail and accuracy when surveys of resources are conducted.

Impact Mechanisms: Impact mechanisms are actions that result in negative impacts on covered species and habitat. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts are defined. Direct impacts are “ground-disturbing covered activities that remove habitat for covered species or directly result in incidental “take” of covered species.” Direct impacts can be either temporary or permanent. Indirect impacts are caused by a project, but occur later, or go beyond a project footprint. Cumulative impacts are generally the product of multiple projects.

Under direct impacts, the SSHCP anticipates that the implementation of covered activities will result in the loss of 49,921 acres of habitat within the UDA. In addition, 2,687 acres of habitat loss is anticipated outside the UDA for transportation/infrastructure projects. This section breaks down the anticipated lost acreage numbers based on cover types within and outside the UDA. Furthermore, potential transportation projects and area impact assumptions are identified.

The SSHCP also recognizes hydrologic alterations, pollution, invasive plants and animals, habitat fragmentation, species isolation, recreational activities, and -noise -vibration - light pollution as potential indirect impacts within and outside the UDA.

Effects on Natural Communities, Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waters, and Covered Species: Further analysis is provided that details impacts to each habitat cover-type inside and outside the UDA. There are a series of data tables presenting the existing conditions (acres of each cover types) of habitat cover types inside the UDA and the precise number of acres according to cover type to be permitted inside the UDA. Impacts to each of the species are assessed based on areas of suitable habitat and habitat loss covered under the plan.

Effects on Critical Habitat: Critical habitat is designated in formal rules by USFWS and NOAA Fisheries for specific areas that have the physical and biological features essential to the conservation and recovery of listed species. Section 7 of the ESA prohibits the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat by any activity authorized by a federal agency. Because USFWS will be issuing a federal permit to participating jurisdictions through Section 10 consultation, the Plan’s effects on critical habitat must be evaluated against these regulatory standards, which is provided in chapter 5.

Effects of Projects not Covered: Projects not covered by the SSHCP will result in loss of habitat and are considered in chapter 5. The build out of ag-res communities outside the UDA is the primary focus of this section. Eight existing ag-res community areas (Alta Mesa, Clay Station, Galt Area, Herald, Hood Franklin, Point Pleasant, Sloughouse, and Wilton) are analyzed in term of impacts on cover types assuming the build out of underutilized parcels. Furthermore, agriculture, mining, and existing roadways and maintenance impacts are explained.

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Chapter 6 - Conditions on Covered Activities

This chapter describes the process for issuing Incidental Take Permits including biological survey requirements and project design and evaluation. The majority of the chapter is dedicated to identifying the measures and practices that reduce impacts to covered species from covered activities.

Compliance Determination and Issuing Take Authorization: This section explains the project review process including the roles of federal, state and local reviewing and approving entities for different types of projects. The project review process includes pre-submittal evaluation, completeness review, project evaluation and environmental review. These tasks provide a determination of SSHCP eligibility and mitigation fees, and will evaluate proposed mitigation lands, if any.

Standard Project Components: The standard application must include basic project description (location, site map) with details of site impacts and activities. Several reports are required including reports on SSHCP consistency, proposed planning surveys, pre-construction surveys and habitat restoration or enhancement, if any.

Project Design Requirements: This section details the types of project planning and design considerations to ensure that it is consistent with the SSHCP Conservation Strategy. Much of the focus is on minimization measures, best management practices (BMPs), and low impact development (LIDs) techniques for proposed projects within the UDA where high-quality habitat will be preserved adjacent to development.

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Chapter 7 - Conservation Strategy

This chapter states the SSHCP's overarching conservation goals, objectives and detailed measures.

Preserve and Linkages System: Land Acquisition for the development of the preserve and linkages is ranked according to various factors. These include habitat types present, known species occurrences, and suitable habitat for species. The preserve system will be designed, developed, and managed to minimize fragmentation, minimize edge effect (incompatible land use), create connectivity (preserve linkage), establish buffers, maximize heterogeneity, maximize populations, and maintain distribution (genetic variation).

Habitat Description and Conservation Criteria: There are six broad habitat categories, vernal pool, valley grassland, stream and riparian, other wetland and open waters, blue oak woodland and savanna, and agriculture. There are 18 habitat cover types that fall under the larger groupings above. This section provides an inventory of existing habitat acreages inside and outside the UDA, and the covered species reliant upon the recorded habitats.

Conservation Strategy: First conservation goals and objectives are presented, followed by a discussion of proposed habitat preservation and restoration techniques based on the broad habitat groups and their relationship to covered species. The SSHCP Area is broken into 12 zones, and this section outlines the preservation to occur in each of the distinct zones. Lastly, habitat conservation measures by and large provide values in acreage to preserve, restore, enhance, or create habitats, with guidelines on site selection and site design.

Conservation Strategy for Covered Species: This section is coordinated with the previous section, however, its focus is on how present covered species benefit and remain viable based on the conservation strategy. There are 40 species covered by the SSHCP. Species specific conservation goals, objectives, and measures augment the habitat conservation strategy by clarifying individual species needs, and vulnerabilities.

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Chapter 8 - Monitoring and Adaptive Management

This chapter describes the need for an Adaptive Management and Monitoring Program (AMMP) for successful implementation of the SSHCP perpetual management of the preserve system. Definitions on adaptive management terms are provided upfront.

Plan Implementation and Administration: The Implementing Entity will coordinate the operations and management activities, including monitoring and management of preserves: acquisition and planning, inventory and status assessment, and long-term. Preserve Managers will deliver annual reports with monitoring data, the past year's management methods, and recommendations to the Implementing Entity. Other major reports include, annual compliance monitoring reports, and effectiveness monitoring reports both written by the Implementing Entity.

Compliance Monitoring: Compliance monitoring will verify that the SSHCP and implementing agreement are executed as adopted. Examples of compliance monitoring include tracking SSHCP conservation requirements, biological resources, project impacts, and preserve acquisitions.

Preserve Operations and Maintenance: For preserves owned in fee title, preserve specific management plans will be developed by preserve managers, and approved by the Implementing Entity and Agencies within a year of the land acquisition. The Preserve Manager will conduct preserve operations and maintenance, from taking baseline surveys to patrolling properties and enforcing conservation measures.

Adaptive Management and Monitoring: As more is known about natural resource dynamics, it is important that the SSHCP Management Plan evolve with both continuously updated resources data and the best practices.

Changed and Unforeseen Circumstances: The SSHCP considers uncertain, but foreseeable changes to the Plan Area such as: fire, flooding, or drought so that if incidents occur the Implementing Entity and Permittees are prepared for potential effects. In addition, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has the authority to make findings of unforeseen circumstances that may require Permittees to undertake additional mitigation. Section 10 requires that the SSHCP identify procedures to respond to unforeseen circumstances when they arrive.

Funding for Changed Circumstances: The SSHCP operating budget must have funds, independent of local jurisdictions' funds, for actions needed to address changed circumstances. Private landowners with SSHCP conservation easements can recoup costs of damages related to changed circumstances if the damages impacted covered habitat or species.

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Chapter 9 - Economic Analysis and Funding Program

The federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act require evidence that the SSHCP is funded before Incidental Take Permits are issued. This chapter estimates the costs to implement the Plan and develops a financial strategy to offset the costs.

Methodology and Data: This section describes the conceptual approach to the analysis, including an overview of the methodology used and data sources.

HCP Implementation Costs: This section presents planning-level cost estimates for the various actions and activities associated with implementation of the SSHCP.

HCP Funding Program: This section presents SSHCP funding requirements and outlines the parameters for the HCP funding program that is tied primarily to mitigation fees and land dedication, in conjunction with potential alternative funding sources; it also presents an adaptive fee mechanism to account for fluctuating HCP implementation costs over time. Lastly, this section addresses the framework for managing the financial resources associated with the SSHCP.

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Chapter 10 - Plan Implementation

This chapter first defines the roles of the Plan Participants, and then in detail covers the steps needed to carry out the Plan.

Incidental Take Permits: Plan permittees (local jurisdictions and partnering agencies) and the Implementing Entity will hold incidental take permits (ITPs) to implement activities covered by the SSHCP. In addition, local jurisdictions may extend coverage to private parties (i.e. project applicants) and Participating Special Entities (i.e. school districts). An Implementing Agreement will ensure that all covered activities utilizing ITPs follow the guidelines and requirements of the SSHCP.

Organizational Structures, Authorities, Duties, and Responsibilities: This section defines the authority, duties and responsibilities of SSHCP parties known as the Resources Agencies, Plan Permittees, Implementing Entity, SSHCP Advisory Committee, and Third Party Participants (project applicants and participating special entities).

Fee Title and Easement Acquisition: Land acquisition and management is the responsibility of the Implementing Entity, which should prioritize land acquisitions according to the SSHCP conservation strategy. All land purchases will be negotiated with willing sellers. This section defines the process for acquiring interests in land. The SSHCP will work with conservations banks, conservancies, and non-profits to determine how their landholdings may be incorporated into the Plan's conservation strategy and/or mitigation requirements. In addition conservancies and non-profits could be utilized as partners in land acquisitions for cost-sharing purposes. To ensure that all lands in the preserve system are managed consistent with the objectives of the SSHCP, the Implementing Entity will require that each property be subject to an appropriate Management Plan.

Plan Modifications and Amendments: Modification and amendments are categorized (from least to most extensive) as administrative revisions/errata, minor modifications, Plan amendments, or permit renewals. Depending on the level of change being requested either the Implementing Entity or the Resources Agencies will act as the approval authority for modifications.

Implementing Agreement: The Implementing Agreement is a separate binding legal document between all Plan Participants that states the roles of each entity in the Plan's implementation, parameters associated with ITPs, penalties of violations to the SSHCP, related documents, and Regulatory Agencies assurances. The Implementing agreement takes precedence over the Plan, if there are conflicts between the two documents and is referenced in this section.

Implementing Ordinance: Each jurisdiction involved in the Plan will independently adopt an Implementing Ordinance to carry out the Implementing Agreement. Before local jurisdictions can extend ITPs to eligible parties, they must first adopt Implementing Ordinances.

Reporting: The Implementing Entity will be responsible for providing various reports. An Annual Report will review the activities that occurred over the prior year. Furthermore, every five years there will be an audit of the Implementing Entity's operations. Another more detailed

report to be issued five years after the expiration of ITPs and will evaluate the effectiveness of the preserve system.

Public Participation: To facilitate public participation in the SSHCP, there will be annual workshops where the public can submit comments on the implementation process to the Implementing Entity. The Implement Entity’s Annual Reports will be a key item for review at the workshops. A website with SSHCP documents and information will be an additional mechanism to inform the public on the Plan.

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