

**NOTES | Tuesday, 2/27/2007, Conference Call  
Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area  
Scientific Review Committee**

Notes Prepared by Gina Bartlett, Center for Collaborative Policy  
Reviewed and Final Approval by SRC on 12 June 2007

**Participants**

Joanna Burger, SRC

Jim Estep, SRC

Sue Orloff, SRC

Shawn Smallwood, SRC

Julie Yee, SRC

Sandi Rivera, County of Alameda

Brian Walton, USCS, Monitoring Team Rep

Facilitator and Notetaker: Gina Bartlett, CCP

**Feb 2007 SRC Meeting Highlights (P12)**

The Center for Collaborative Policy developed the first draft of the February 5-7, 2007, meeting summary and circulated it to the SRC for review. The facilitator from the Center posted the draft meeting summary on the public web site because it was on the agenda of the SRC for this conference call and subject to the Brown Act. The SRC expressed concern that members had not been able to review the draft summary before the posting and that elements of the summary might not be accurate or complete and lead to misinformation in the public, who might not ever review the final version. All SRC members typically approve the meeting summary and feel this is important.

The SRC agreed to approve all communications summarizing its deliberations, recognizing the need to communicate meeting outcomes in a timely fashion. The SRC discussed the possibility of providing an audio, but some members thought it would be cumbersome to review if needing to find specific information. The SRC would like the meeting summaries to contain more detail on its discussions, especially leading up to consensus recommendations, rather than just document decision outcomes. Since the SRC doesn't have a vote count, the meeting summary needs to reflect concerns of those members who can just "live with the agreement" as well as those who really like the agreement or decision outcome. These concerns could inform others who are not participating in the meeting, educate policy makers as to the complexity of decisions that are never easy nor perfect in the face of scientific uncertainty, demonstrate the evolution of SRC thinking on matters of importance, and provide a record for future SRC discussions. In consideration of the above, the SRC will:

1. Need to agree at the end of the meeting on the 6-10 key outcomes that are posted and communicated to interested parties immediately after the meeting.
2. Develop a self-imposed deadline to ensure the meeting summaries are finalized with 2-3 weeks of the meeting. This entails each committee member editing notes.

The SRC identified this process to finalize the February meeting summary:

1. Shawn already reviewed
2. Gina insert Joanna's comments
3. Jim review
4. Julie review
5. Sue review
6. Gina clean-up and circulate final draft
7. Recirculate to SRC for final review and approval

### **The Evolution of SRC Thinking on Pooling Species**

The SRC discussed that interested parties could benefit on understanding the SRC's thinking about a pooled-species approach and the implications of pooling for the Altamont-wide monitoring program. Members expressed concern that the pooled versus individual approach seems to have caused some confusion for the Board and others.

The current recommended approach to the monitoring program recommends looking at four target species, pooled together, to measure the 50% reduction in avian mortality, with a plus or minus 10% margin of error. The SRC has also recommended that mortality estimates be made for individual species, but the widths of confidence intervals around these estimates might be larger than the widths of confidence intervals around the estimate for the pooled species.

While the recommendation on sample size for achieving this margin of error is scientifically defensible, pooling the species is not the best approach from the SRC's perspective. The SRC thinks that the best approach is represented in the "optimal program" (Jan 2007) which would measure the mortality change in individual species with a plus or minus 10% margin of error. The SRC's decision to recommend a less optimal monitoring program as another option was prompted by cost considerations and in response to the County's request.

When the SRC first began meeting, the general thought was that the conditional use permits stipulated a 45% reduction, which should be measured by looking at the change in four target species pooled together. However, upon further investigation, the County informed the SRC that the 45% reduction had become common thought based on public input letters to the County from California Department of Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Attorney General and others and was not specified in the permits. After learning that the permits did not stipulate the four target species in December 2006, the SRC held a conference call (12/21/2006) to revisit the four target species and percent reduction. During the December 21 conference call, the SRC agreed that the monitoring program should focus on the mortality of the four target species: golden eagle, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, and burrowing owl while also monitoring the fatalities and mortality of other birds. The SRC did not discuss pooling on the conference call. However, the SRC did develop a set of recommendations for the County of Alameda submitted on January 4, 2007. The recommended approach for looking at the 45% reduction was these four species, pooled, as an overall indicator of avian mortality. The SRC stipulated in its recommendations that the optimal approach would be to look at the four species individually.

The primary reason for pooling the species is to reduce costs. The sample size necessary to look at the four species individually would be more than 3000 turbines (as compared to 2000 turbines for the pooled species). The sample size drives the budget because monitoring is labor-intensive, time-consuming work. In an effort to balance costs with science, the SRC recommended pooling the species.

The January 2007 settlement agreement between the County, wind companies and Golden Gate Audubon stipulated a 50% reduction in avian mortality within 3 years. The settling parties clarified that the 50% reduction should be measured by looking at the four target species pooled. The SRC then discussed the implications of the 50% target and issued its recommendations on the monitoring program. At its Feb. 5-7 meeting once the settlement agreement was in place, the SRC agreed once again that the monitoring program would measure the new target of 50% reduction by looking at the pooled four target species with a plus or minus 10% margin of error and individual species with a lesser degree of statistical certainty. The SRC concurred at that time that the optimal approach would be to measure the individual species with the plus or minus 10% margin of error, but recognizing cost constraints, recommended measuring the 50% reduction for the pooled four target raptor species.

The SRC and monitoring team share significant concerns about the implications for individual species. For example, while it may be possible to reach a 50% reduction for pooled species, reaching a 50% reduction for red-tailed hawk as an individual species is unlikely. Reaching a pooled 50% reduction may have similar implications for other species as well as it does not indicate a 50% reduction for each. Finally, the monitoring results can demonstrate that an individual species' mortality has been reduced, but results will likely not have the same degree

of confidence in the change in mortality for another species (primarily because the certainty is affected by the number of incidents or fatalities).

#### **Compliance Reporting Summary Table (P5)**

The County is moving forward with modifying the conditional use permits based on SRC recommendations in December 2006. The facilitator requested that the SRC review the summary documenting its agreements on removing end-row derelict turbines and towers. The SRC reviewed the language and confirmed that its recommendation was to remove end-row derelict towers (Exhibit G, item 2B). The SRC agrees that end-row towers should be removed. Additional mitigation strategies will be discussed as part of the SRC agenda at a future meeting.

**Action Item:** Document on the chart that the compliance reporting table (P5) is compiled from Exhibit G and the parties have reported the information as documented in the table.

#### **Action Item: Parties Response to Remaining SRC Questions**

The parties did not provide responses to the remaining SRC questions identified Feb. 5, 2007, and the SRC will request a response.

#### **Monitoring Program**

The SRC did not have much time to discuss the Monitoring Program in detail, but was able to highlight a few concerns:

- The board could move forward on the monitoring program without realizing that additional studies could be necessary, which might raise funding issues in the future.
- The ambiguity with regards to the recommended program and intensive study on a study plan must be corrected. The intensive study on burrowing owls and American kestrels is an integral, required part of the Altamont-wide scope and budget, and SRC strong support should be stated. The County requested that the Monitoring Team include it as a task in the monitoring program scope and budget.
- The SRC offered to present the monitoring program to the board before considering the long term contract.
- How will the blade painting study be addressed?
  - The County has explained to the companies that companies are responsible for paying for studies in the conditions, for example, the blade painting study.
  - SRC members expressed concern that the companies are not clear about that and the County should inform the companies that it might need to be a separate, peripheral program.
  - The SRC needs to review the study plan to evaluate whether the blade painting study would be part of the existing monitoring program or a separate peripheral study.
  - If the study needed to be separate, the monitoring contract could be amended.
- The tiered turbine removal is another confounding variable to the studies.

#### **Memo on Data Precision: Finalize to Send to Settling Parties**

The SRC would like to send the memo to the settling parties. Jim Estep wanted to offer clarifying language on one sentence in the memo before sending it to Chris Bazar to forward to the settling parties. The SRC agreed to the language on the conference call verbally. Jim agreed to forward the text to the SRC and cc the facilitator in preparation for the County to forward it to the parties.

**Next Conference Call:** March 13, 9:30-11:00

#### **Draft Agenda for Next In-Person Meeting (April 9-11)**

- Management strategies: put on agenda for next meeting. Consider how strategies will affect the monitoring program.

- **Action: Shawn will review the list of studies related to management actions and highlight the critical ones for SRC review.**
- **Concerned about Exhibit D and the charter are inconsistent with relationship to the SRC role and representation of interested parties. This issue will be addressed at the next in-person meeting.**