

NOTES | 10/27/2010 Conference Call
Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area Scientific Review Committee
 Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy
 Reviewed & Approved by the SRC.

All SRC Members Present

Discussion Topics

- CalWEA Study**
- Status of Web-based Monitoring Data**

Meeting Outcomes

- SRC members agreed to conceptually endorse the CalWEA study.
- The Monitoring Team will pursue discussions with CalWEA to determine if the Team could provide any help to the CalWEA study, or if the CalWEA and QAQC studies could be integrated or benefit from each other's resources.
- A majority of the SRC supported the CalWEA study proceeding separately if integration was not possible.

Action Items

Party	Due Date	Action
Sandra Rivera		Distribute new Monitoring Program budget

CalWEA Study

Related Documents

- [M60 CalWEA Study Memo](#)
- [P186 CalWEA Pilot Study Summary](#)
- [P184 CalWEA Research Plan October 2010](#)
- [P172 CalWEA Cover Memo to SRC 6-18-10](#)
- [P173 CalWEA Research Plan 6-18-10](#)
- [P174 SRC Comments on CalWEA Research Plan](#)

Sandra Rivera of Alameda County indicated the purpose of the day's discussion was to consider the revised CalWEA study plan. If CalWEA has approval from turbine operators and landowners, and can come to an agreement with the Monitoring Team on strings they will study, they may move forward with a separate study. She understands that CalWEA would support some kind of coordination and sharing of resources, and that results would be made available to the SRC.

Doug Leslie said he has provided Renee Culver with a list of monitored strings.

In response to questions about the Monitoring Team's searcher detection approach, he said the details have changed and the Team is using natural carcasses. There will be two independent teams in a double-blind system, with a clearing search, a search by one team,

and a search by the second team. The manager will collect carcasses and place them randomly without the searchers' knowledge. It has been quite a task to redesign monitoring. The Team has four new units to establish an automated data collection system. Strings will be randomly chosen for the double surveys, with the number dependent on the number of natural carcasses found. If necessary, natural carcasses will be supplanted with placed carcasses. 30 is the minimum sample size. The Monitoring Team does not intend to leave carcasses in the field past 30 days.

One SRC member said the SRC was interested in the detection function of carcasses deteriorating over time. The data are subject to changing conditions over time. How to capture that? CalWEA has carcasses on the ground for a significant amount of time, which could be of benefit for gathering this type of data.

Bill Warren-Hicks of Eco-Stat Inc. summarized the new CalWEA study design. CalWEA will leave the carcasses on the ground for an extended period of time. There are a number of ways that CalWEA and the Monitoring Team could work together:

1. Seven days ago, the company that was going to provide the labor for the CalWEA study, PRBO, pulled out. The County has the Monitoring Team, and CalWEA has the money. The objective is to have blind observers walking through. The Monitoring Team could help by supplying blind observers. CalWEA could pay for others to reduce the interval between observations. CalWEA is looking at carcass condition changes and detection probability in relation to those changes.
2. There is no reason CalWEA can't use focal species. If a Monitoring Team member finds a red tailed hawk, he can mark the bird and it becomes another bird in the study with multiple observations.

SRC Questions and Discussion

SRC members raised the following questions:

- What about the different degrees of naïve observers and random searchers?
CalWEA's Answer: Earlier, CalWEA representatives concluded that SRC members would not be supportive of working with the study. In the last few days, CalWEA has been looking at how to share field biologist resources with the Monitoring Team and got a referral from the Team. The Team has some turnover, which might provide resources. If the Monitoring Team was available to CalWEA, with two or three observations in a 2-6 week period, the study could look back at the data setting and could drop data if necessary.
- Is there a minimum distance requirement between the Monitoring Team and CalWEA?

One SRC member recommended that the Monitoring Team and CalWEA work together.

Monitoring Team Project Manager Doug Leslie said implementing the double-blind observer protocol has been very difficult logistically. He wasn't sure it would be possible to add in the CalWEA study as part of the Monitoring Plan, given the blindness required with the QAQC study. It might be possible to do as an addendum to the QAQC study.

Brian Karas, a member of the Monitoring Team who is also working on the CalWEA team, said his view is that the logistics would be around the number of birds, not searchers and blindness.

An SRC member suggested that every CalWEA bird placed would reduce the number of birds the Monitoring Team would need to place.

Doug Leslie said the Team is monitoring 36% of strings. CalWEA would intensively monitor 5% of additional strings for a short period of time, for a total of 41% of strings. Bill Warren-Hicks said CalWEA would be placing 510 birds and 340 bats over 30 weeks.

SRC Discussion

SRC members had the following initial range of views on the proposal to join the two studies:

- One recommended they be joined so the monitoring program could benefit from the CalWEA data;
- One SRC member preferred that the CalWEA study be separated in space, and was concerned about the number of carcasses, which could affect predator distribution and abundance. It could bias not only the CalWEA study, but the monitoring program as well, as carcasses would be in the range of 1 to 2 birds per turbine. It would add a level of complexity that could turn out to be problematic.
- A third was intrigued with the idea of joining the two studies, but was concerned about logistics. He would prefer to keep the two studies as logistically separate as possible.
- A fourth found it easier to visualize the two studies when geographically separated than when joined, but was open to the idea of joining them.
- The fifth SRC member was more comfortable with the studies being geographically separated. If the studies were joined, would it be possible to look at if the CalWEA study influenced the monitoring program?

Brian Karas said one possibility would be to see if removal rates observed by the monitoring program had changed dramatically during the period of CalWEA carcass placements compared to the period prior to that.

Doug Leslie said he was frustrated and concerned about making last-minute changes, when he is already dealing with a great deal of logistical difficulties in the monitoring protocols. He doesn't have a problem with the CalWEA study, but can't integrate it into the QAQC study.

Bill Warren-Hicks acknowledged that, when he talked to Doug Leslie the day before, they were assuming the two studies would be entirely separate. He hopes he can get some support from the Monitoring Team for his study.

Continued SRC Discussion

The following questions and issues were raised in further discussion:

- Could the study potentially change predator behavior, in terms of predator preferences in relation to cowbirds? A Monitoring Team member noted that the Altamont has a lot of starlings, which are similar in size.

- Concern was expressed that there would be significant logistical issues in combining the two studies.
- Swamping could be an issue. The CalWEA study could potentially set up an experiment to examine this.
- Fifteen carcasses at a string is a fairly rare occurrence, and 5% of Altamont strings being experimented upon would be of concern. In terms of analysis, this would be one more element to adjust for, so there would be more bookkeeping on the monitoring team end.
- Is it possible for the two studies to remain separate, yet share information and insights?
- Two SRC members said the studies would need to be designed to maintain blindness. Otherwise, searchers would know they are not on a routine search and would be more vigilant.

Public Comment

Mike Boyd of CARE said it seems like it is a small number of carcasses. He doesn't have a problem with the study itself, but was initially concerned that CalWEA was doing the study. Except for the lack of transparency, the surprise to the Monitoring Team, he conceptually approves, but believes a specific work plan and budget should be brought back. It shouldn't be rushed. He wants to ensure transparency of information about what funding is going to the Monitoring Team and to the CalWEA study, so the public and wind companies can be assured that the money they are paying for it is being spent as allocated. It needs to be documented in a work plan.

Renee Culver of NextEra said that the plan cannot be developed until the SRC OKs it. She asked how much value the CalWEA study would be vis-à-vis the search radius study, and wondered if money saved could be refunneled.

SRC Agreement

- SRC members agreed to conceptually endorse the CalWEA study if logistics can be worked out.

SRC Perspectives on Key Issues

- SRC members said it appeared that more discussion was necessary between the Monitoring Team and CalWEA members before it could be determined what types of cooperation and integration might be feasible.
- A majority of SRC members said they did not object to the CalWEA study proceeding separately if integration was not possible. One SRC member said this was not acceptable. Another SRC member preferred this option, but with a minimum distance of a couple miles between the CalWEA study and monitored turbines.

Sandra Rivera of Alameda County clarified that her intent is not that Alameda County provide funding toward the CalWEA study. Her intent is to explore whether CalWEA can benefit from work the Monitoring Team is already doing.

Doug Leslie said he wants to help out the CalWEA study, if possible, given what is in the Monitoring Team's scope of work. If all the Monitoring Team needs to do is mark found carcasses, that may be doable.

Sandra Rivera said timing has made this situation difficult. CalWEA was supposed to come back to the SRC with a new study design. However, they did not provide their study design in time, and in the meantime, the SRC decided the new Monitoring Program would include the QAQC study and other studies. CalWEA is not a part of that program design.

Public Comment

Mike Boyd of CARE asked that the topic be brought back to the SRC with more details.

Doug Leslie said he would pursue discussions with CalWEA to see if the integration would be possible, and whether the logistics could be put together. There would need to be a change in the scope of work in the Monitoring Team's contract. In terms of the QAQC study, the SRC approved moving forward with it, and seven members of the team began working on it in mid-October. He would prefer not to take a step backwards and put it on hold.

Status of Web-based Monitoring Data

Doug Leslie of the Monitoring Team said the Team has been working to update the web interface, but there have been some issues. He will provide an Excel spreadsheet of the data to those who make a request to him.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Next in-person meeting:

December 13-14, two full days

Tentative topics:

- Final Monitoring Report
- New monitoring implementation review
- Burrowing owl study
- Status report on new baseline

ATTENDEES

SRC

Joanna Burger
Jim Estep
Sue Orloff
Shawn Smallwood
Julie Yee

Consultants

Doug Leslie
Brian Karas
Jesse Schwartz

Identified Public

Mike Boyd, CARE
Renee Culver, NextEra
Jim Hopper, AES/SeaWest
Mike Lynes, Golden Gate Audubon
Ryan McGraw, AWI
Jim Newman, Pandion
Nancy Rader, CalWEA
Joan Stewart, NextEra
Bill Warren-Hicks, Eco-Stat Inc.

Staff

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