

2021 Year in Review

East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan/ Natural Community Conservation Plan



Land Acquisition



Project Permitting



Habitat Restoration



Partnerships

Photo credits: Conservancy staff, Save Mount Diablo (bottom picture)

The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan / Natural Community Conservation Plan (“HCP/NCCP” or “Plan”) gives local jurisdictions control over state and federal endangered species permitting in the region.

Through the HCP/NCCP, project proponents pay a mitigation fee or provide their own conservation, conduct limited avoidance measures, and receive species permits from their local land use agency. Mitigation fees and grants fund conservation efforts in the Plan area which includes land acquisitions, management, restoration, and research.

The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (“Conservancy”) implements the HCP/NCCP, oversees the permitting program, carries out the Plan’s conservation strategy, and ensures overall compliance with the permits.

2021

The Conservancy continued implementation of the HCP/NCCP. In 2021, streamlined permitting through the Plan provided species coverage for 19 projects. These projects include residential and commercial development, transportation, utility, rural infrastructure, rural operation and maintenance, and habitat restoration projects. The Conservancy, in partnership with the East Bay Regional Park District, acquired one property, adding 80.5 acres of habitat to the HCP/NCCP’s growing Preserve System. The Conservancy continued to implement conservation actions ahead of what is required for permitted impacts, including design and planning on restoration projects.

Conservancy Governing Board

Juan Antonio Banales | City of Pittsburg

Joel Bryant | City of Brentwood

Diane Burgis | Contra Costa County

Randy Pope | City of Oakley

Carl “CW” Wolfe | City of Clayton



Project Permitting

The HCP/NCCP gives local cities and agencies control over state and federal endangered species permitting in their jurisdiction. In 2021, 19 projects received take coverage under the Plan, including 11 urban development projects, 1 rural infrastructure project, 5 rural operations and maintenance projects, and 2 Preserve System activities. These projects total approximately 121.5 acres of permanent impacts and 95.2 acres of temporary impacts on terrestrial land cover types, including 398 linear feet of temporary impacts on streams.

The HCP/NCCP was designed to enable permit streamlining to extend beyond endangered species regulations and include regional permitting under state and federal laws for impacts on jurisdictional wetlands and waters. On May 4, 2012, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued Regional General Permit 1 (RGP) aligned with the HCP/NCCP. This Permit was reissued on April 12, 2017 and has a five-year duration. In 2021, the Conservancy discussed with the Corps the 2022 expiration and began coordination on re-issuing the RGP. The RGP streamlines wetland permitting in the entire Plan Area by aligning the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures in the Plan with the Corps' wetland permitting requirements. To date, 23 covered projects and 3 Conservancy restoration projects have benefitted from coordinated permitting under the RGP.

Permitting Program Highlights:

- **Residential:** The City of Clayton permitted the Diablo meadows project to develop 18 single-family residential units, each with a home and ancillary services. The City of Oakley permitted the Cypress Preserve Project, a nearly 1,250-acre regional mixed-use development. The project includes residential, commercial, public schools, parks, open space, flood control, and roads among other elements, including an on-site restoration project.
- **Transportation:** The Contra Costa County Public Works Department's Byron Highway/Byer Road Safety Improvements project includes installation of traffic safety improvements along approximately 2,000 feet of Byron Highway in front of Excelsior Middle School in the community of Byron. The project consists of construction of left-turn lanes and road widening to improve traffic circulation and improve safety near the school.
- **Utility Infrastructure:** Contra Costa County provided permit coverage for the Byron Highway Solar Project, the first solar energy facilities project outside the UDA to receive permits through the Plan. The project consists of the development of a small-scale commercial utility solar and energy storage facility that will generate a total of 5.0 megawatts of solar energy.

ACTIVITIES BY THE NUMBERS

Projects Permitted

In 2021: 19
Cumulative: 219

Acres Impacted

In 2021: 122
Cumulative: 1,270

Acres Conserved

In 2021: 80.5
Cumulative: 12,632

Mitigation Fees

In 2021: \$2,315,560
Cumulative: \$21,465,900

Restoration Projects

In 2021: 0
Cumulative: 11

Grants & CTR

In 2021: \$428,289
Cumulative: \$71,516,200

Note: The Conservancy periodically reviews our databases and as a result, cumulative totals reflect refinements and corrections.

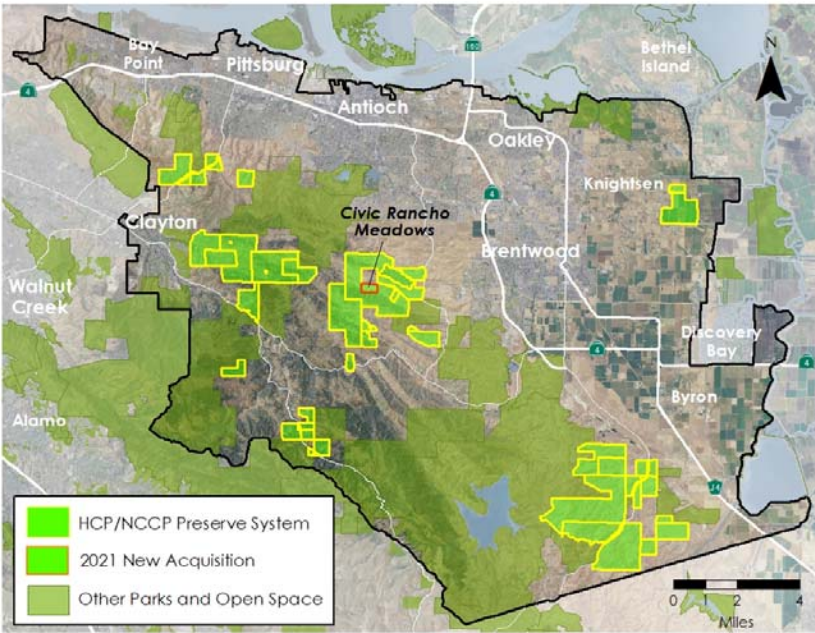
Partnerships

The Conservancy continues to work closely with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) and Save Mount Diablo on land acquisition opportunities, management of Preserve System lands, and habitat restoration projects. EBRPD has been the Conservancy's primary partner in Preserve System acquisitions to date. Together, the Conservancy and EBRPD acquired 80.5 acres of newly protected land in 2021.

The Conservancy's other partners include state and federal regulatory and funding agencies, as well as members of the development community, conservation advocates, agricultural representatives, and members of the public. The Conservancy continues to build on these partnerships and expand on collaborative conservation projects and efforts in the Plan Area.

Land Acquisition

The Conservancy has conserved 12,600 acres to date and has made significant progress toward land acquisition goals of the Plan during the first fourteen years of Plan implementation. In 2021, another property was acquired, adding 80.5 acres to the Preserve System. All but one acquisition to date have been completed in partnership with EBRPD, where EBRPD owns and manages those Preserve System lands in accordance with the HCP/NCCP. The Viera North Peak property, acquired in 2017 from Save Mount Diablo, is owned by the Conservancy with the anticipation of transferring the property to California State Parks. The Conservancy continues to stay ahead of the average pace necessary to assemble the 30,300-acre Preserve System estimated to be required by Year 30 of the Plan (2037).



Highlights of achievements:

- Over 1/3 of the Preserve System has been assembled by year 14 of Plan implementation.
- Acquisition of the Civic Rancho Meadows property added 80.5 acres to the Preserve System, and fills a portion of what is an inholding within a larger area that has already been conserved.

Habitat Restoration and Creation

The Plan requires restoration and creation of stream, wetland and pond habitat to compensate for impacts to these land covers and to benefit the recovery of species. The Conservancy has aggressively pursued wetland and pond restoration requirements. To date, 11 restoration projects have been constructed. These restoration projects provide a range of benefits to covered species.

Conservancy projects are monitored and managed to ensure that they achieve habitat goals. This monitoring continues for a minimum of five years. Close monitoring of restoration sites has informed management actions including: reseeding areas, adjusting grazing patterns and combating invasive weeds.

No new restoration projects were constructed in 2021. Six of the Conservancy's restoration projects have met success criteria and are no longer monitored annually against their restoration success criteria. In 2021, the Conservancy monitored five wetland and stream restoration projects. However, monitoring efforts in 2021 were hampered at several restoration projects by the severe lack of rainfall which made it impossible to determine whether performance criteria were being met for seasonal wetlands.

Two large restoration projects are currently in the planning and design phases. These are: 1) the Roddy Ranch Golf Course, a former golf course that will be restored to provide habitat and support passive recreation and 2) the Knightsen Wetland Restoration Project, former irrigated agriculture that will be restored to provide habitat for special status species.

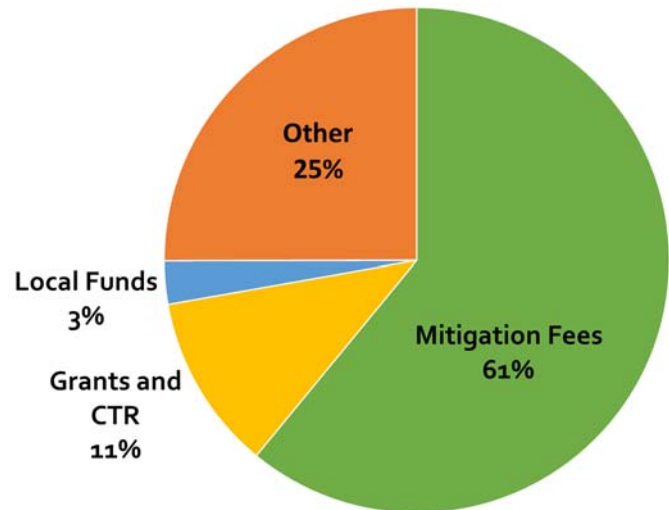


Hess Creek Channel Restoration, April 2021. Photo Credit: Nomad Ecology

Funding

The Conservancy receives revenue from the following primary sources: mitigation and permitting fees (development fees, wetland fees, and temporary impact fees, administrative/staff time fees, and contributions to recovery payments) and grants. These sources fund Preserve System acquisitions, management, monitoring, and restoration projects.

<u>Revenue in 2021</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Mitigation Fees ¹	\$2,315,560
Grants and CTR ²	\$428,289
Other ³	\$103,873
Local Funds ⁴	\$951,335
Total	\$3,799,057



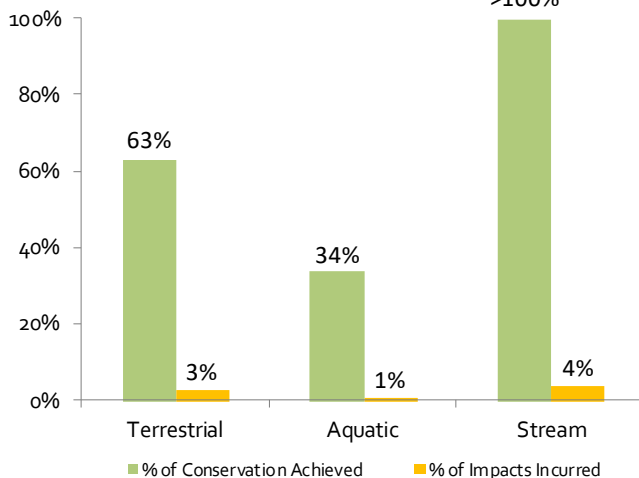
¹ Development fees, wetland fees, and temporary impact fees.

² Grants from various state and federal agencies including CDFW, USFWS, and WCB. The amount shown includes grant funds spent (not grants awarded). "CTR" are Contributions to Recovery.

³ Includes staff time/administrative fees, interest, and miscellaneous.

⁴ Local funding includes contributions by EBRPD and its own funds or grant funds for joint acquisitions and preserve management.

Progress Toward Conservation Goals and Impact Limits



Staying Ahead

For streamlined permitting to continue under the HCP/NCCP, conservation must stay ahead of impacts. The HCP/NCCP specifies detailed metrics that the Conservancy uses to track progress of Plan implementation.

The summarized data displayed (left) illustrates all categories of conservation are ahead of the impacts to these habitat types.

A more detailed accounting of conservation, restoration, creation, and impacts is provided in the 2021 Annual Report.

AGENCY PARTNERS IMPLEMENTING THE HCP/NCCP

- City of Brentwood
- City of Clayton
- City of Oakley
- City of Pittsburg
- Contra Costa County
- Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
- East Bay Regional Park District
- East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Agricultural representatives
- Building Industry Association of the Bay Area
- California Farmland Trust
- California Native Plant Society
- Contra Costa County Farm Bureau
- Discovery Builders Inc.
- East Bay Leadership Council
- Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed
- Rural/suburban residents
- Save Mount Diablo

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More information about the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy can be found online at www.cocohcp.org.

The HCP/NCCP Overview booklet and the 2021 Annual Report can be both downloaded from the website. To reach the Conservancy, please contact maureen.parkes@dcd.cccounty.us or 925-655-2909.