

Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan released

By Democrat staff

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The long-delayed Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan has been released for a 90-day public comment period.

A draft environmental review document prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act accompanied the release of the draft plan.

The Yolo Habitat Conservancy and its partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will accept comments on both documents through Aug. 30.

The Yolo Plan is a countywide conservation plan to provide Endangered Species Act permits and associated mitigation for infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and levees and development activities like agricultural facilities, housing, and commercial buildings identified for construction over the next 50 years.

The plan will coordinate mitigation to maximize benefits to 12 identified sensitive species, as well as conserve additional habitat while supporting agricultural sustainability.

Species protection and mitigation is required by state and federal law.

By establishing a county plan, Yolo County assumes local control of this process. In absence of a local plan, state and federal agencies would direct where and how habitat is protected.

The Yolo Plan will be a model for other communities throughout California in its promotion of the conjunctive use of land for both agriculture and habitat, according to Petrea Marchand, executive director of the Conservancy.

Habitat projects on working farmland are also a source of potential additional income for farmers struggling to maintain their agricultural operations.

“We intend to demonstrate that protection of endangered species can be accomplished hand-in-hand with promotion of agriculture and a strong farm economy,” said Jim Provenza, chairman of the Conservancy and a Yolo County supervisor.

“The Yolo Plan strikes a sensible balance between natural resource conservation, agricultural land protection, and economic growth in the region,” said Marchand. “The Conservancy achieved this balance through a collaborative process that included not only the state and federal government, but dedicated members of the environmental, agricultural, and development communities in Yolo County.”

“The completion of the Yolo Plan will improve outcomes for endangered species through a science-based conservation strategy, as well as partnerships with local conservation organizations and city and county open space programs,” said Conservancy Vice-Chair Lucas Frerichs, also a member of the Davis City Council. “The Board of Directors is proud to bring this innovative approach to Endangered Species Act implementation to Yolo County.”

The Conservancy is a joint powers agency consisting of Woodland, Davis, West Sacramento, Winters and Yolo County, with UC Davis also participating as a non-voting member.

The Conservancy will be conducting public meetings over the coming weeks.

public meetings

Tuesday, June 6: 6 p.m. — Woodland City Council Chambers, 300 First St.

Thursday, June 8: 8:30 a.m. — Yolo County Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors Chambers, Room 206, 625 Court St., Woodland.

Monday, June 12: 6 p.m. — West Sacramento Environmental and Utilities Commission, West Sacramento City Council Chambers, 1110 W. Capitol Avenue, West Sacramento.

Thursday, June 15: 6 p.m. — West Sacramento Planning Commission, West Sacramento City Council Chambers, 1110 W. Capitol Ave., West Sacramento)

Tuesday, June 19, 5:30 p.m. — Yolo Habitat Conservancy, Board of Supervisors Chambers, Room 206, 625 Court St., Woodland. At this meeting, oral comments will be recorded by a court reporter.

Tuesday, June 27, 1 p.m. — Yolo County Board of Supervisors, Board of Supervisors Chambers, Room 206, 625 Court St., Woodland. At this meeting, oral comments will be recorded by a court reporter.

Wednesday, June 28, 7 p.m. — West Sacramento City Council, West Sacramento City Council Chambers.

Thursday, June 29, 6:30 p.m. — Davis Public Meeting, Davis Senior Center, 646 A St., Davis. USFWS staff will attend this meeting, where oral comments will be recorded by a court reporter.

Tuesday, Aug. 1: 6:30 p.m. — Winters City Council, Winters City Council Chambers, 318 1st St., Winters.