

Date: November 13, 2006

Attention: EBRPD Stewardship Manager Joe DiDonato

Subject: EBRPD Grasslands Goals and Management to Achieve Those Goals

Dear Joe,

For more than fifteen years, the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (EBCNPS) has played a role in providing public commentary on EBRPD "Wildland Management Policies and Guidelines" (WMPG) draft revisions, participated in the public comment process of the year-long EBRPD Grazing Review Task Force (GRTF), and on numerous other occasions expressed deep interest in EBRPD native plant and native habitat issues. Our communication has reached various departments and personnel in the EBRPD through a number of methods including public comment, committee participation, volunteer field work, and private meetings.

Due to a number of circumstances, the Chapter believes it is now timely for it to engage with the Park District in an extended period of information exchanges regarding the District's grasslands management goals and progress. EBCNPS envisions that this process will eventually lead to a grasslands stewardship plan (GSP) that will involve more sensitive planning resulting in an increase in native grassland cover and a reduction in non-native grassland invasives, among other goals.

The Chapter notes that it has been six years since the District completed the GRTF review and began implementing changes based on the task force's recommendations. Changes included revision of the WMPG, revised / shifted staff assignments, initiation of grassland studies, and hiring new staff to replace retirees.

All of these actions have been welcomed by the Chapter, and have collectively raised the Chapter's hopes and expectations that District grasslands will become the subject of an aggressive period of improvements and restorations to much more native-like grassland habitats.

In the next few years, EBRPD will be writing and updating GUMPs at least three parks dominated by grassland ecosystems – Vargas Plateau, Briones Park, and Sunol Park. The GUMPs for these parks provide reasonable avenue to explore how we can work toward better achieving goals promulgated in the Park District's WMPG. The chapter's perception is that the current state of these grasslands, which constitute over 50% of the EBRPD's landscapes, is mostly in a severely-impacted, non-native condition due to a variety of historical reasons.

The Chapter wishes to initiate this period of discussions on the matter by submitting to the Park District a copy of the District's 2001-revised WMPG, annotated with CNPS Chapter comments.

It is our hope that our comments will highlight issues which the Chapter believes may be sources of ambiguity, misunderstanding, and/or substantive differences of opinion and goals between the District and the Chapter.

We hope that by providing the District with our comments in the context of this defining document (the WMPG), we can engage the District in an ensuing dialog to understand real differences and to seek to increase mutually-acceptable and desirable goals for improving District grasslands with respect to their native plant species and habitat types. Those discussions would be based on a firm initial base of written documentation (the EBRPD WMPG) and commentary on that document (by EBCNPS), which should facilitate more productive discussions and actions.

With that intention, attached is the annotated WMPG document (in MS Word 2003 document format).

EBCNPS looks forward to the opportunity to discuss its concerns for improving EBRPD grasslands with Board members and EBRPD staff. We look forward to contacting you soon to arrange for a meeting to initiate discussion of the WMPG, and grassland stewardship. Please indicate the appropriate contact(s) for CNPS to initiate this process of review.

For EBCNPS Conservation Committee and the Chapter Board,

Sincerely,

Peter Rauch

510-526-8155
105 Ardmore Road
Kensington, CA 94707

Attachments:

EBRPD WMPG CommentsByCNPS.doc
First Principles regarding CNPS EBRPD Grasslands Management

Cc:

Board of Directors,
Assistant General Manager for Planning and Stewardship, Mike Anderson
Chief of Planning and Stewardship, Brian Wiese
Wildland Vegetation Program Manager, David Amme