

Minutes
Tricolored Blackbird Working Group
Friday, December 7, 2007
10:30-3:30
CDFA Measurement Standards Field Office
Florin Perkins Road, Sacramento

I. Congratulations/Thank you

A big thank you went out to the entire group for 3½ years of persistence, hard work, valuable experience, and partnership that allowed us to complete the Conservation Plan and MOA. The Conservation Plan has already enabled significant, coordinated work to take place and has leveraged substantial funding. Membership and participation has been enthusiastic and steady over the years and everybody involved has played a huge, direct part in producing the Plan and MOA. The working group has never been more cohesive, organized and energized.

II. Funding

NFWF is launching a new funding initiative targeting the recovery of a handful of species in decline. Graham Chisholm and Mike Green discussed the possibility/likelihood of having Tricolored Blackbird named as one of the target species. Funding could be upward of \$1 million, distributed to a number of organizations. The group discussed feedback received from NFWF which could strengthen the case for selecting tricolor for funding. Their next board meeting is in late April.

Action: Susan will follow up with Graham to strategize ways to engage NFWF and strengthen the case for selecting the tricolor as a target species.

In 2007 Working Group members leveraged \$159,500 to pay for various activities including: a Working Group Coordinator, colony discovery and fate monitoring, and banding.

For 2008 the Department of Fish and Game was awarded a \$200,000 State Wildlife Grant (SWG). Grant requires 1:1 non-federal match, \$110,000 already raised, still need \$95,000. Match time period begins September 2007 and extends 2 years. A discussion about documenting in-kind matching donations followed.

SWG written to include 3 activities:

1. Contribute to Southern California genetic study
2. Identify potential habitat on DFG land
3. Pay for early season colony detection

Other funding for 2008 includes: more for Southern California genetics study, silage buyout and data base development.

Action: Rod Kelsey will follow up with John Gustafson and Dean Kwasny about documentation requirements for in-kind match.

See file titled: funding tracking sheet 12.07.07 for more information

A discussion followed about the usefulness of two studies, one to investigate management actions to maintain silage quality as it remains in the field past the harvest date. This was based upon a 2007 case where a farmer irrigated a field with a colony an additional time to prolong crop quality. Payment to farmer was \$4,500—much less than buying the field outright. Are there other techniques like this one that can be utilized in the future?

The group also discussed the usefulness of compiling quantitative and qualitative case studies for all previous silage buyouts.

Action: Susan will follow up both of these study ideas with Rod, Gerry and others to assess feasibility.

Dean and Graham discussed funding for 2008 silage buyouts. In 2008, LIP will contribute \$85,000 overall to silage buyouts. Audubon will provide the necessary \$10,000 match for the LIP funds, as well as other additional money.

Dean mentioned money leftover from unexecuted buyouts in 2007. A few options exist for how to spend these funds. Dean also reported on the status of LIP. A last minute effort to extend future program funding was unsuccessful. Currently there will be no new LIP funds in 2008. Funding already committed through long term contracts will continue through 2008 and 2009.

Action: Discuss potential uses for unspent 2007 silage buyout money with a smaller group directly involved with buyouts.

Other general funding sources mentioned include: State Wildlife Action Plan funding, Biodiversity Council, NOCA Grants

IV. Reports

Bob Meese gave a power point presentation on the 2007 field season. There was an almost complete reproductive failure. First year of banding was very successful.

Bob also described plans for the development of a data base and website to be coming on line in the next few months.

Rod Kelsey talked about the 2008 volunteer survey to take place April 25-27

Tom Paulek described colony monitoring efforts in Southern California, and Robert Mesta mentioned survey efforts in Baja California.

V. 2008 Priorities

Mike Green asked the group to consider adopting a new format for the implementation tables. The new format is visually easier to read, emphasizes task priority, funding duration, and if the project has been completed. Some wording has been edited for clarity but the activities remain unchanged.

Action: New tables will be sent to members. There will be an open comment period before making any changes.

A discussion about the importance of the coordinator position and ensuring there is adequate funding for the position followed. Various options were discussed. CVJV has some funding and even though tricolor is not named in their action plan, an application will be submitted.

Action: Susan will put together a proposal requesting funds for Coordinator activities to Central Valley Joint Venture.

The conversation then turned to implementing projects on public and private land. Dennis Woolington is organizing a conference in March 2008—Wetland, Marsh Management Workshop—a cooperative effort between DFG and FWS. This is a good opportunity to identify future projects, reach out to public land managers and highlight our work.

Action: Susan will follow up with Dennis and identify opportunities.

Dave Hardt's work on Toledo Pit and the idea of Custom Farming silage in Kern County was discussed briefly. WCBs ERAL could be suitable funding for this.

Action: Organize a conference call with Dave Hardt and others to discuss these projects and other issues related to silage buyouts in 2008.

There will be an Audubon led project on Roosevelt Ranch in Yolo County. The project design will be modified to encourage tricolor nesting.

Bob Meese: stressed the importance of focusing resources on creating secure nesting substrate in Kern and Tulare Counties which is the most important area in the state for nesting tricolors.

The Department of Fish and Game's Rancho Jamul in San Diego County is another place well suited for a habitat improvement projects with a highly vulnerable population. It is state owned land and a candidate for receiving SWG funds.

Bob Meese expressed concern about multiple people making contact with a single landowner. Somehow it needs to be documented if a person initiates contact with a landowner regarding tricolors. Only that person should make subsequent contact. Multiple people visiting the same landowner undermines individual relationships and trust.

Action: Mike Green will convene a conference call in January with Tom Gardali, Bob Meese, Rod Kelsey, Julie Yee, and John Gustafson to discuss setting population targets

Action: Rod will be discussing data collection methods with others in preparation for the 2008 survey.

The group discussed the possibility of writing a management guidance document for creating/improving habitat. A larger document could be modified and scaled down to fit various scenarios and uses with public and private landowners. This work would build on two previous efforts. (Peters and Woolington and another written by Mike Green and others)

V. Business

The idea of formalizing the Working Group's structure through a written agreement was discussed. It was agreed the group functions effectively and efficiently without formal structure and making a change would be distracting and not necessarily productive.

Our next meeting is Friday February 22 from 9:00 – 12:30

Tricolored Blackbird Working Group
Friday, December 7, 2007
10:30-3:30
CDFG Plant Lab
Meadowview Road, Sacramento
(916) 262-1100 main phone

Meeting Objectives

- ❖ Celebrate completion of Conservation Plan and MOA
 - ❖ Identify sources of matching funds and new potential funding sources
 - ❖ Share information about 2007 accomplishments & 2008 plans
 - ❖ Short list 2008 high priority projects
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| I. Introductions and Agenda Review | 10:30-10:40 |
| II. Congratulations/Celebration | 10:40-11:20 |
| Completing the Plan and MOA, where we've been – Susan | |
| FWS Focal Species Action Plan, future funding opportunity – Mike | |
| III. Funding | 11:20-11:50 |
| Review and discuss 2007 & 2008 tracking sheet | |
| Grant match requirements | |
| Status of LIP | |
| NFWF | |
| Other potential funding? | |
| IV. Reports (with a break for lunch) | 11:50-2:00 |
| 2007 Field season report – Bob | |
| 2008 Data base and website development plans - Mike, Bob | |
| 2008 Volunteer Survey - Rod Kelsey | |
| 2007 Southern California field report – Tom Paulek | |
| Other? | |
| V. 2008 Priorities | 2:00 – 3:00 |
| Review implementation table and discuss proposed revisions | |
| On-the-ground projects -Toledo Pit, Custom Farming (Dave Hardt), Yolo Bypass (Mike Green), Hay Road Landfill (Susan) | |
| Group Discussion - What activities/projects are high priority for 2008? | |
| Management Guidelines – resurrecting Peters & Woolington? | |
| Winter surveys and relocation of banded birds? | |
| Other? | |
| Potential funding for 2008 projects | |
| IV. Business | 3:00 – 3:30 |
| Formalize TRBL Working Group structure? CVJV handout – Susan | |
| Another meeting in Feb or March? | |