



## **SACOG Board of Directors**

**Item #08-10-9  
Workshop**

October 16, 2008

### **Corp of Engineers Enhanced Funding for Natural Resources Data Development and Planning**

Stacey McKinley is part of SACOG's core consultant/staff team for the Rural Urban Connections Strategy project. Her focus so far has been on regulatory reform issues related to the federal resource agencies. In that capacity she is assisting SACOG with our NEPA streamlining initiative, the Memoranda of Understanding we committed in the MTP EIR to negotiate with US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the Placer Parkway and El Dorado-Elk Grove Connector, and various aspects of the Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) that several of our members have in progress. About 10 days ago we learned of a rare opportunity for possible substantial funding for the District Army Corps of Engineers to support high quality data collection efforts for the HCPs. We addressed the question of whether SACOG should pursue and support this funding opportunity for the region through an emergency agenda item at the Housing and Land Use Committee meeting and then at an emergency meeting of the Board's Strategic Planning Committee. Both groups unanimously recommended that SACOG authorize Ms. McKinley to work with the Honorable John Paul Woodley, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works (head of the Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, D.C.) to attempt to take advantage of this opportunity. Both groups made unanimous affirmative recommendations, and on that basis Chair Tom Cosgrove and I authorized her to meet with Secretary Woodley last Friday on SACOG's behalf. She will brief the Board on the results of her discussion, as well as the results of meetings with Chip Smith, Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Tribal and Regulatory Affairs, who will be in the Sacramento region all day Thursday, October 23 for meetings on related matters.

Approved by:

**Mike McKeever**  
Executive Director

MM:rt



October 8, 2008

Mr. John Paul Woodley, Jr.  
Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works  
108 Army Pentagon  
Room 3E446  
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Woodley:

Over the course of the last four years, Rancho Cordova Mayor and SACOG Board Member Linda Budge and I have had the opportunity to brief you on our land use and transportation growth strategy, the Blueprint. As you know, the Blueprint was a ground-up, community based effort that involved thousands of citizens and has been nationally recognized as a model for regional planning that increases housing and transportation choices through promoting more compact and mixed use development patterns. The growth strategy also promotes natural resources protection by reducing the overall urban footprint needed for growth by over 300 square miles. You have rightly challenged SACOG to pursue strategies that provide certainty for protecting the natural resource lands.

On January 18<sup>th</sup> of this year, the SACOG Board, under the leadership of Chair Tom Cosgrove (City of Lincoln Council Member), took on not only your challenge, but also the broader goal of assessing the region's growth and sustainability objectives from a rural perspective. What had long been talked about in concept as a "Greenprint" was branded the Rural Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS), and work began.

Subsequent to the SACOG Board's action in January, Stacey McKinley, Consultant to SACOG, and I have had the opportunity to brief both you and your staff at the HQ and District levels on the RUCS project. It is SACOG's strong intent to weave into the RUCS project the regulatory reform and environmentally superior alternatives we have had the good fortune to discuss with you. It is critical that we move away from the current "permit-at-a-time" process. To that end, we at SACOG are doing our part to begin assessing our rural landscape; we have made a significant investment in procuring the best possible data on the crops our region supports, the economics of different farming and grazing practices, and inventorying the status of several on-going habitat and conservation planning efforts in our region. We have also begun to more actively assist some of those efforts to move towards successful completion, when requested by our member agencies. We respectfully ask that the Corps strongly consider partnering with us in an investment in better understanding our watershed and our vernal pool resources.

In considering your early and earnest offers to assist from both a policy and funding perspective, we submit the following funding request, and further request that you and your HQ level staff work through the Corps' chain of command and with policy makers throughout this process to identify the most important data needed to support their efforts to bring resource planning initiatives to a successful conclusion:

Auburn  
Citrus Heights  
Colfax  
Davis  
El Dorado County  
Elk Grove  
Folsom  
Galt  
Isleton  
Lincoln  
Live Oak  
Loomis  
Marysville  
Placer County  
Placerville  
Rancho Cordova  
Rocklin  
Roseville  
Sacramento  
Sacramento County  
Sutter County  
West Sacramento  
Wheatland  
Winters  
Woodland  
Yolo County  
Yuba City  
Yuba County

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- Funding relative to precedent to support a full assessment of the watershed and vernal pool resources within the footprint of the Six County SACOG region. (Estimates based on precedent and data currently in hand: \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000).
  - SAMP level assessment of waters and vernal pool resources which have not currently been assessed within the 6-county region to a level of certainty.
  - Assessment of overall watershed
  - Assessment of irrigated and prior converted cropland

SACOG strongly believes that the robust library of data currently held in the region coupled with an investment of this nature will allow for greater certainty to be woven into the discussion of how we can preserve the best of our resources and still allow for the inevitable growth this region will embrace. SACOG relies heavily on high quality data to drive its policy making. We have demonstrated that broad-based political consensus among governments and with stakeholders can be created when you allow the facts to lead you to decisions about how best to improve the quality of life for citizens. You of all people understand the visual, political and economic payload that can accompany the drawing of lines on a map. If it were not for the strong foundation of the best possible data, it is fair to say that the Blueprint never would have survived the inevitable trials that a project of its magnitude must endure. It is our goal to have the Rural Urban Connections Strategy meet the toughest of tests; first and foremost to ensure that the end product leads to true regulatory streamlining and changes not only the way we do business in the 6 county SACOG region but sets a replicable model for the nation. We are proud of the impact the Blueprint is having nationally, including inspiring a new groundbreaking regional planning and climate change law in California (SB 375). We have every intention that your investment in this region will also have national impact and be a fitting part of your legacy.

On behalf SACOG, I would like to thank you for the strong leadership you have shown, not only in your work with the Corps' regulatory program but the civil works program, as well. This morning the Board's Strategic Committee held an emergency meeting on this topic and directed me and Stacey McKinley to work with you on this critical topic. We sincerely hope that over the coming weeks we will have the opportunity to engage with you and your staff through the chain of command to formalize the parameters for a strong partnership to move forward. We take this opportunity you have presented to us very seriously and look forward to any questions or concerns you and your staff might have.

Sincerely,



Mike McKeever  
Executive Director

MM:ef

cc: Michael Jewell, Chief, Regulatory Branch  
Charles (Chip) Smith, Assistant for Environment,  
Tribal and Regulatory Affairs