



National HCP Coalition

2025 ANNUAL MEETING

Moving Forward Together

Presentation Abstracts & Biographies

OCTOBER 15-17, 2025

Welcome

Speaker	Heather Dyer
Affiliation	General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District/ Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan
Biography	<p>Ms. Heather Dyer is the Chief Executive Officer/General Manager at the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. Prior to becoming CEO in 2019, Ms. Dyer worked as the agency’s in-house endangered species biologist, with an expertise in fisheries and river ecosystems. Her priorities at the agency continue to be long-term water supply reliability by optimizing both local (Southern California) and Statewide water projects on behalf of future generations. Ms. Dyer holds a B.S. in Resource Biology and M.S. in Marine Biology. Ms. Dyer earned an Executive MBA at the Peter Drucker School of Management, Claremont Graduate University and continues trailblazing new paths for her agency, the Santa Ana River watershed, and the State of California.</p>



Session 1: Pollinators in Peril

What’s the Buzz? Introduction to Native Bees

The U.S. is home to 4,000 native bee species coming in many different sizes, shapes, and colors. Native bees are estimated to pollinate 80 percent of flowering plants around the world and are the primary insect pollinator of agricultural plants in most of the U.S. Native bees face a number of threats, including habitat loss and degradation, climate change, chemical pollution, and invasive plants and animals. Because of many of these threats, a handful of native bees have been listed as federally endangered: rusty patched bumble bee, Franklin’s bumble bee, Anthricinan yellow-faced bee, Assimulans yellow-faced bee, easy yellow-faced bee, Hilaris yellow-faced bee, and Hawaiian yellow-faced bee. This presentation will present a general overview of bees, listed species, and conservation concerns.

Speaker	Adrienne Lee
Affiliation	Managing Biologist - Environmental Science Associates (ESA)
Biography	<p>Adrienne is a senior biologist with a technical specialty in pollinators and serves as a project manager focusing on land and natural resource management. Adrienne earned her M.S. from the University of California San Diego where she studied plant-pollinator interactions within local coastal sage scrub and chaparral plant communities. She has since leveraged her scientific background to conduct focused pollinator identification surveys such as Crotch’s bumble bee from central California down to San Diego county, Quino checkerspot butterfly, and Harbison’s dun skipper. She also specializes in preserve and resource management planning through the development and implementation of resource management and monitoring plans for conserved lands throughout southern California. Adrienne works closely with her municipality clients overseeing over 24,000 acres of conserved lands in San Diego county to ensure compliance with associated Habitat Conservation Plans and Natural Communities Conservation Plans.</p>

Concurrent Development of Overlapping Regional Multiple Species HCPs

Beginning in the early 1990s, the County of San Diego (County) has been involved in regional, multiple species conservation planning efforts to conserve the unique biodiversity of the region. Since adoption of the County's South County Subarea Plan in 1997, a joint Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP), the County has been developing a North County Plan and East County Plan to provide the same benefits and species protections for the remaining portions of the unincorporated area. Additionally, due to the federal listing of the Quino checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quino*) in 1997, the County has also pursued protections for this species through an amendment to the South County Subarea Plan. Unfortunately, over the past 25 years there have been many delays in finalizing these plans to protect listed and sensitive species in the region that make San Diego County one of the biodiversity hot spots of the world. Today, the County is actively developing the North County Plan, which encompasses just over 600,000 acres in the northwestern unincorporated area of San Diego County to ensure long-term protection of 40 Covered Species, and the Regional Butterflies HCP, which encompasses approximately 1.6 million acres across the entire unincorporated area to mitigate for the impacts on four butterfly species. The development of a regional, multiple species HCP is a challenging undertaking on its own, while concurrent development of two HCPs that overlap in extent and implementing agencies adds further complexity. While these are seemingly separate plans with different species lists, they must be in sync to realize the permit streamlining benefits for development projects and avoid duplicative mitigation requirements while still meeting the needs for all Covered Species. Approach to coordination with the Wildlife Agencies also differs between the two Plans since invertebrates are not currently covered under the California ESA. Furthermore, stakeholder involvement brings other interests to the table such as reducing regulatory requirements for single-family homes and new agricultural operations. By leveraging the County's relationship with the local Wildlife Agencies offices and strong understanding of HCP implementation, the two Plans are making great strides towards adoption anticipated for 2026 to ensure these species are conserved while providing clear, transparent guidance for developers to streamline compliance with both the federal and California ESAs. In this presentation we will review the approach taken and lessons learned during development of two overlapping regional, multiple species HCPs.

Speaker	Stephanie Neal
Affiliation	Project Manager, County of San Diego
Biography	Stephanie Neal is a Project Manager in the Sustainability Planning Division within the County of San Diego's Department of Planning & Development Services. With a B.S. in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Ecology from the California State University of San Marcos, she applies her understanding of ecological systems to planning principles and land management to ensure the region's natural resources are protected for future generations. During her 8 years at the County, Stephanie has worked on a variety of projects including conservation programs to preserve farmland and natural resources within the San Diego region. She thrives when faced with challenging projects that require a comprehensive approach and strategic planning for the development of safe, enjoyable, healthy, and sustainable communities.

Island Revival: A Habitat Conservation Blueprint for Guam's Imperiled Species

Guam is at a tipping point. This small U.S. territory in the western Pacific Ocean harbors some of the planet's most endangered species and ecosystems—including critically imperiled limestone forests and endemic wildlife like Slevin's skink and Mariana eight-spot butterfly. Decades of habitat loss from development, invasive species, and fragmentation have pushed these species to the brink, and without urgent action, recovery may slip out of reach. While military projects proceed under federal ESA protections, urgently needed non-federal development remains stalled due to the lack of a legal ESA compliance pathway. The Guam Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) offers a bold, island-wide solution—providing a mechanism to fully offset development impacts while establishing long-term protections for native species and their habitats. The HCP aims to implement the island's largest coordinated habitat conservation effort to date in the form of an HCP Reserve Network preserved and managed for the protection of the covered species. Grounded in cultural context and backed by historical land use data, the Guam HCP is not just a permitting tool—it is a blueprint for saving species in decline and restoring resilience to one of the world's most unique island ecosystems.

Speaker	Jeff Quitugua, Lily Sweikert, Ph.D, MEdSc.
Affiliation	Senior Conservation Project Manager
Biography	Dr. Lily A. Sweikert is a Senior Conservation Project Manager in ICF's Habitat Conservation Planning and Implementation Practice. She is a biodiversity conservation expert with 18 years of international and domestic experience developing and implementing conservation plans, programs, and policies for government agencies, private companies, non-profits, and academic institutions. At ICF, Lily leads efforts for the Guam Habitat Conservation Plan, western Oregon's Forest Management Plan, and the Edwards Aquifer Permit Renewal. She also serves as ICF's International Biodiversity Conservation Practice Lead. Her expertise is shaped by an international upbringing, five years of fieldwork as a wildlife biologist, and advanced degrees in human dimensions—the application of social science to understand human behavior and inform biodiversity conservation policy and management.

Session 2: Integrating Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act Compliance: Streamlined Conservation and Regulatory Efficiency

Integrating HCPs and CWA Compliance: Streamlined Conservation and Regulatory Efficiency

The intersection of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 10 Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404/401 compliance presents a critical opportunity to align species conservation with aquatic resource protection while developing long-lasting partnerships with state and federal agencies. The integration of HCPs and Section 404/401 permitting not only improves regulatory efficiency but also fosters more resilient ecosystems by aligning conservation investments across terrestrial and aquatic habitats. This presentation explores strategies for integrating these regulatory frameworks to enhance ecological outcomes while reducing permitting complexity for project proponents. The presentation will begin with an overview of the overlap between Section 10 and Section 404/401 permitting and mitigation, including mitigation bank and In-Lieu Fee (ILF) program Credits. It will then examine two to three case studies including the following.

Laura Coley Eisenberg, with Mission Rancho Viejo, will present on the Orange County Southern Subregion HCP and the San Juan Creek/Western San Mateo Creek Watersheds Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). The SAMP was developed with the U.S. Corps of Engineers as a companion regulatory and conservation program to the HCP addressing Section 404 permitting, compensatory mitigation and long-term management of aquatic resources.

Gregg Mackenzie, with the Placer County Conservation Program (PCCP), will share how the PCCP aligned ESA and CWA requirements through concurrent development of the County Aquatic Resources Program (CARP) and the HCP. The CARP includes both streamlined permitting through an RGP and mitigation through ILF program. Notably, both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries are signatories to the ILF, reinforcing interagency coordination and regulatory certainty.

Moderator	Kathryn Gaffney
Panelist	Laura Coley Eisenberg
Affiliation	Senior Vice President, Regulatory Compliance & Open Space Management, Rancho Mission Viejo
Biography	Ms. Eisenberg has been with Rancho Mission Viejo since 2000. Ms. Eisenberg is responsible for the approval and implementation of three large scale habitat protection programs in cooperation with federal and state resource and regulatory agencies. Combined these programs provide for the perpetual conservation and management of 32 sensitive species (7 listed species) and 10 associated habitat types in a 20,868 acre habitat reserve, while permitting development of residential and commercial uses, associated infrastructure and ongoing ranch operations, including cattle grazing. Ms. Eisenberg received her Bachelor of Arts in Geography with an emphasis in Urban Planning from California State University, Fullerton.
Panelist	Jeremy Sutter
Affiliation	PCCP Real Estate Manager, Placer Conservation Authority
Biography	Jeremy Sutter is the Real Services Manager for the Placer Conservation Authority a California Joint Powers Authority tasked with implementing the conservation and mitigation actions of the Placer County Conservation Program, a multi-species federal Habitat Conservation Plan and California Natural Community Conservation Plan covering more than 269,000 acres in Western Placer County. The PCCP integrates state and federal endangered species act permitting with programmatic permitting and mitigation for wetlands and other waters of the U.S., State, and County under one comprehensive program.
Panelist	Michelle Mattson
Affiliation	Ecologist, Compensatory Mitigation SME, USACE Institute for Water Resources (IWR)
Biography	Michelle Mattson is an ecologist with 25 years of professional experience in ecosystem restoration, site assessment, and regulatory compliance as a consultant in southern California and as a Corps' regulator. At the Corps' Institute for Water Resources (IWR), Michelle is considered a compensatory mitigation subject matter expert (SME) and leads developing mitigation trainings, supports policy development, and works with other programs such as the Sustainable Rivers Program (SRP) and IWR's New Horizons Program. Michelle has always enjoyed her work on interagency efforts looking for creative solutions to complex restoration and mitigation problems. She sadly misses her time in the field working hands-on with technical teams to design, install and monitor restoration projects, as well as developing mitigation banks and in-lieu fee programs from the ground up. Michelle has a B.S. in Ecology from UC San Diego.

Session 3: Time to Power Up: Energy Sector HCPs

TC Energy/Columbia's Multi-Species HCP -10 Years of Implementation

In 2014, after 10 years of collaboration, USFWS issued NiSource, now TC Energy/Columbia (TC), a 50-year incidental take permit and Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, applicable along its facilities in 14 states. Since then, over the past 11 years, TC has implemented the MSHCP, which addresses 43 species, on routine construction, operations and maintenance projects. We'd like to take the opportunity to share our lessons learned of implementing such a large-scale MSHCP - what works well and what should be considered for improvement - for future MSHCPs. (I will also work with my colleagues at USFWS that support TC on implementation to see if they would like to join the discussion).

Speaker	Jennifer Cannon
Affiliation	Environmental Specialist, TC Energy
Biography	I've worked in the natural gas industry for almost 25 years – first as an environmental consultant and later for TC Energy (formerly Columbia Pipeline Group/NiSource) where I am an environmental planner. I graduated from West Virginia University with degrees in Biology and Foreign Languages (Spanish), then pursued an M.S. in Environmental Science at Marshall University Graduate College. At TC Energy, I mostly work on the environmental planning and permitting of large growth projects. I'm also the internal coordinator for TC Energy's (formerly NiSource) Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan. I live in Charleston, West Virginia with my husband and 12-year old son where we enjoy the great outdoors.

Implementation of the CPS Energy HCP

CPS Energy is the nation's largest municipally owned energy utility supplying both natural gas and electrical services to an area spanning approximately 1,514 square miles across seven Texas counties, including the City of San Antonio (Service Area). CPS Energy also operates and maintains electric and gas transmission lines that extend outside of the Service Area. The area that CPS Energy currently serves or may expand into in the coming decades contains habitat for several species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This HCP addresses CPS Energy activities that involve its electric and gas operations, excluding generation. Some of the CPS Energy Activities have the potential to impact some federally listed species in ways that may require authorization from the USFWS to stay in compliance with the ESA. This HCP describes a programmatic approach over a 30-year period from the date of Incidental Take Permit (ITP) issuance (ITP Term) for achieving ESA compliance for 9 federally endangered species that occur in the Plan Area (Covered Species) related to certain CPS Energy Activities that CPS Energy elects to enroll in the HCP (Covered Activities). The primary bird species covered under the HCP is the Golden Cheek Warbler along with eleven karst invertebrates: two ground beetles, one mold beetle, one harvestman, and four spiders.

Speaker	Juan Sandoval
Affiliation	Manager of Water Quality and Planning Section, CPS Energy
Biography	Juan Sandoval is a Professional Geoscientist licensed in the State of Texas and is the Manager of the Water Quality and Planning Section at CPS Energy. He has over 30 years of diverse Environmental experience to include 19 years at CPS Energy and 12 years with environmental consultants. At CPS Energy, he has supported multiple environmental projects across the organization including routing & siting of new transmission lines and substations. He coordinated the development and implementation of the CPS Energy Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for the incidental take of federally listed threatened and endangered species resulting from the otherwise lawful act of constructing and maintaining utility services.

Session 4: Voluntary Conservation Agreements: Conservation Benefit Agreements, CCAAs, and SHAs

Section 10 Agreements: Insights from Monarch and Bumble Bee Initiatives

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides multiple tools under Section 10 to engage landowners and industry partners in voluntary conservation while ensuring regulatory certainty. While Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) remain the most widely recognized mechanism, alternatives such as Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) and Conservation Benefit Agreements (CBAs) offer flexible pathways to advancing species recovery across working landscapes. The Nationwide Candidate Conservation Agreement for Monarch Butterfly on Energy and Transportation Lands (Monarch CCAA) is a landmark example of how a voluntary, multi-sector agreement can deliver large-scale habitat benefits while meeting the needs of regulated entities. Developed by the University of Illinois Chicago, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and more than 40 energy and transportation organizations, the Monarch CCAA has enrolled over 80 participants since 2020, with commitments covering more than 1.2 million acres, providing regulatory assurances and operational flexibility should the monarch butterfly be listed under the ESA. Building on this success, UIC and partners are developing a Conservation Benefit Agreement (CBA) for at-risk bumble bees, designed to extend the voluntary, landscape-scale conservation model to multiple species. Expected to be finalized by late 2025, the Bumble Bee CBA offers opportunities to streamline enrollment, reduce administrative burden, and ensure measurable conservation outcomes. This presentation will compare the Monarch CCAA and Bumble Bee CBA as case studies in applying Section 10 alternatives to rights-of-way and other working lands, with attention to agreement design, species coverage, monitoring requirements, regulatory assurances, and lessons learned for scaling collaborative conservation. Together, these examples highlight the growing potential of Section 10 tools to provide both ecological benefits and operational certainty.

Speaker	Megan Petraitis
Affiliation	Senior Program Manager of Conservation Agreements, Energy Resources Center University of Illinois Chicago
Biography	Megan oversees the creation and establishment of conservation agreements including the nationwide Monarch Candidate Conservation Agreement and Bumble Bee Conservation Benefit Agreement. Megan has over 10 years of experience working in program implementation and conservation. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health with a minor in Biology from Illinois State University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Illinois Chicago.

Section 10(a)(1)(A) Enhancement of Survival Permits and Conservation Benefit Agreements: A Brief History and a Comparison with HCPs

Section 10 of the ESA provides two types of permits that provide exceptions to otherwise prohibited activities: incidental take permits under Section 10(a)(1)(B) and enhancement of survival permits under Section 10(a)(1)(A). A habitat conservation plan (HCP) is prepared as an application for an incidental take permit whereas a conservation benefit agreement—formerly known as a safe harbor agreement or candidate conservation agreement with assurances—is prepared as an application for an enhancement of survival permit. An incidental take permit authorizes take that is incidental to otherwise lawful activities whereas the enhancement of survival permit authorizes take of covered species, above the baseline condition, when the primary purpose of the associated conservation agreement is to implement beneficial actions that address threats to the covered species, establish new populations, or otherwise benefit the covered species long-term. This presentation will briefly review the regulatory history of enhancement of survival permits; explore the evolution of conservation benefit agreements; and, by way of recent examples, discuss the variety of activity types and species covered by conservation benefit agreements and how those compare to the activity types and species covered by HCPs.

Speaker	Rebecca Sloan
Affiliation	Senior Conservation Biologist with Merjent
Biography	She has 18 years of Section 10 permitting experience and has served as a technical author and project manager for over 20 habitat conservation plans and a safe harbor agreement, a candidate conservation agreement with assurances, and a conservation benefit agreement in multiple states across the US. She has assisted state and regional agencies and private industry with ESA and NEPA compliance in USFWS Regions 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8. In addition, she has assisted multiple entities with enrollment in the Nationwide Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for Monarch Butterfly on Energy and Transportation Lands. Rebecca holds a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science from Eckerd College and a Master of Science in Environmental Studies from San Jose State University.

Session 5: Panel Discussion: Just Like Splash Mountain: Developing and Implementing Aquatic HCPs

Challenges with Aquatic HCPs

All HCPs are unique and different. The species included, the activities covered and the mitigation provided all vary from plan to plan, with no cookie cutter recipe to receive an ITP. However, the concept of creating habitat or using mitigation banks to achieve the required offset is common in terrestrial HCPs. Creating and maintaining habitat within aquatic ecosystems is much more complicated, the outcomes uncertain and the panel participants are unaware of any aquatic mitigation banks that provide a durable solution. This highlights just one difference between terrestrial and aquatic HCPs, which are becoming more common as water supply challenges increase throughout the entire nation. The panel participants will discuss challenges with planning and implementing aquatic HCPs, using their experiences and respective HCPs as case studies.

Speaker	Nathan Pence
Affiliation	Executive Manager of Environmental Science, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Tx
Biography	Nathan Pence leads the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's environmental department and science programs, which include water quality and watershed protection plan initiatives, applied research programs, species work, and the GBRA environmental lab. Pence leads the ongoing development of a comprehensive Habitat Conservation Plan for the Guadalupe River basin and the administration of the Clean Rivers Program for the Guadalupe River and Lavaca-Guadalupe Coastal basins in partnership with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. He is a founding board member for the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition and current Treasurer, serves as Vice Chair of the Guadalupe Basin Coalition, is on the steering committee of the Greater Springs Project, a leader in the New Braunfels One Water collaboration, and is a member of the Texas Water Conservation Association Endangered Species Committee. Pence also represents GBRA as a member of the US Water Alliance One Water Council, the City of New Braunfels Natural Resource Committee, and the New Braunfels Utility Headwaters Center Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Pence has more than 25 years in watershed management and planning with an accomplished record of collaborating with local officials and stakeholders. Prior to working at the GBRA, Mr. Pence served as the Threatened and Endangered Species Executive Director for the Edwards Aquifer Authority in San Antonio, where he facilitated and managed the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan. He also worked for the City of New Braunfels, collaborating with local tourism officials and environmentalists on economic development projects while protecting the integrity of natural resources. Mr. Pence has a bachelor's and master's degree in Aquatic Biology from Texas State University.
Speaker	Heather Dyer
Affiliation	General Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District/ Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan
Biography	Ms. Heather Dyer is the Chief Executive Officer/General Manager at the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. Prior to becoming CEO in 2019, Ms. Dyer worked as the agency's in-house endangered species biologist, with an expertise in fisheries and river ecosystems. Her priorities at the agency continue to be long-term water supply reliability by optimizing both local (Southern California) and Statewide water projects on behalf of future generations. Ms. Dyer holds a B.S. in Resource Biology and M.S. in Marine Biology. Ms. Dyer earned an Executive MBA at the Peter Drucker School of Management, Claremont Graduate University and continues trailblazing new paths for her agency, the Santa Ana River watershed, and the State of California.
Speaker	Kristin Rowles
Affiliation	Facilitator and Director, Policy Works LLC
Biography	Kristin Rowles is a water policy consultant with over 30 years of experience in coordinating and facilitating water resources planning, outreach, and research efforts. She has worked with many different public and private entities including the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Stakeholders, the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, American Rivers, AECOM, and Hazen and Sawyer. Her current projects focus on the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Basin, the Floridan Aquifer, the Occoquan Reservoir, and regional water planning in Georgia. At this conference, she is talking about her work on the Flint Region Habitat Conservation Plan, which she has worked on for several years for the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center at Albany State University in Georgia.

Session 6: A Collaborative Workshop - Communicating Success and Compliance in Long-Term HCPs—Annual Reporting as a Strategic Tool

Communicating Success and Compliance in Long-Term HCPs—Annual Reporting as a Strategic Tool

Annual reporting under Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) is more than a regulatory obligation—it is a strategic opportunity to demonstrate permit compliance, communicate conservation success, and inform adaptive management across the lifespan of a permit, which may span 30 to 50 years. This workshop will explore how annual reports can be structured to meet compliance requirements while also serving as compelling narratives for diverse stakeholder audiences, including regulatory agencies, elected officials, and the public. Participants will learn how to identify and present key metrics that reflect biological effectiveness, implementation progress, and conservation outcomes. We will discuss techniques for tailoring communications to different audiences, from technical staff to policymakers, and how to use reporting to build trust and transparency. The session will also highlight how annual reports can support adaptive management by documenting lessons learned, tracking changes, and guiding future decisions. Our workshop goal is to examine your annual reporting process and identify ways it can be adapted to inform the long-term success of your HCP.

Speaker	Terah Donovan
Affiliation	Southern California Biological Resources and Land Management Director, ESA
Biography	For more than 20 years, Terah has been a leading expert in integrated natural resources management, particularly focused on rare and endangered species and ecosystems in California. Joining ESA in 2019, Terah brings a wealth of experience adeptly managing contracts for both public and private agencies. Her technical expertise in habitat conservation strategy and development results in projects with better ecological and financial outcomes that meet regulatory requirements. Terah’s commitment to her field is evidenced by her active involvement as a Director of the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition which aims to promote large-scale Habitat Conservation Plans to boost economic development and protect endangered species and their habitats locally. She has earned a Master of Science in Environmental Management focusing on Conservation Science and Policy at Duke University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Science at Northwestern University. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia.

Session 7: A Collaborative Workshop - Improving Conservation Outcomes: Developing Input for USFWS on the Section 6 Funding Opportunity Documents

Session Chair	Josh Renner
Session Chair	Kolo Rathburn

Session 8: Wildlife Corridors and Connectivity

Incorporating Regional Wildlife Corridors and Connectivity Within Florida’s Phosphate-Mining District

The Mosaic Company is the world’s leading integrated producer of concentrated phosphate and potassium—two of the three most important nutrients in agriculture. Mosaic’s holdings in Florida comprise 368,000 acres across four counties. Surface mining is required to extract phosphate ore, and Florida requires that every acre of mined land be reclaimed, while counties may require additional performance measures for habitat and plant diversity. In 1992, the state defined a conceptual “Integrated Habitat Network” (IHN) that promotes landscape-scale reclamation to restore hydrologic functions, optimize post-mining land uses, and provide quality wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors. In 2013 the IHN was incorporated into the Florida Ecological Greenways Network, the basis for a statewide Florida Wildlife Corridor. Mosaic has successfully implemented land reclamation on a permit-by-permit basis thus far, but increasing challenges and uncertainties with long-term ESA compliance led Mosaic to explore a programmatic HCP. The goals for a Mosaic HCP are 1) bundling ESA compliance for current and future projects into one long-term plan; 2) obtaining “No Surprises” assurances; 3) providing strategic planning, flexibility for mitigation implementation, and economies of scale for mitigation costs; and 4) incorporating local and regional wildlife connectivity guided by the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Speaker	Dr. Raoul Boughton
Affiliation	Senior Manager, Ecology and Wildlife, The Mosaic Company
Biography	Dr. Boughton specializes in reclamation processes, wildlife regulations and permitting, and research. He has a wide breadth of experience working with Conservation NGOs, Universities, Government Agencies and Private Industry. He coordinates extensively with Federal and State agencies during the development and amendment of Section 7 biological opinions, Section 10 habitat conservation plans, and State imperiled species regulations, to mitigate for protected species adversely affected by mining. Over the last 20 years as the Director of Disease Ecology at Archbold Biological Station and Rangeland Wildlife Scientist at the University of Florida, Dr Boughton has published over 100 peer reviewed scientific papers and strongly promotes the scientific process to develop conservation strategies for listed species. He continues to publish and lead research tied to species mitigation, including projects on Eastern indigo snakes, Florida burrowing owls, and Florida scrub-jays. In addition, he formally reviews and comments for The Mosaic Company on developing Federal and State wildlife regulations and guidelines.

A Balancing Act: Conservation of Texas Wild-rice and Co-occurring Imperiled Species with Distinct Habitat Needs

The endangered Texas Wild-rice, *Zizania texana*, is a perennial, aquatic grass endemic to the upper San Marcos River, Texas, and is a covered species managed by the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP). Texas Wild-rice (TWR) enhancement has been highly successful through the EAHCP-managed reaches, and this has led to supplementary expansion efforts of the species further downstream into its historic range. TWR is a competitive, pioneer species that can quickly colonize bare substrate and dominate macrophyte stands when suitable conditions occur. In a dynamic river system TWR creates a conservation challenge when managing multiple endangered species with competing habitat needs. This presentation will discuss limitations to suitable habitat for TWR colonization and expansion, and considerations for balancing adequately large TWR seeding stands with a diverse multi-species aquatic macrophyte community and sufficient areas of bare coarse bedload. These different habit needs benefit the endangered fountain darter, *Etheostoma fonticola*, and San Marcos salamander, *Eurycea nana*. Low-flow conditions associated with drought and heavy river recreation reduce available habitat for all three covered species as well as other species of interest. As such, these factors must be considered and managed to effectively balance conservation needs to sustain a diverse, resilient aquatic ecosystem, while at the same time allowing for the continuance of covered activities of the EAHCP incidental take permit.

Speaker	Emily Lorkovic
Affiliation	Fish & Wildlife Biologist, Texas State University - the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment
Biography	Emily Lorkovic is a fish and wildlife biologist at The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, where she leads aquatic habitat restoration efforts in the San Marcos River under the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP). She earned both her B.S. and M.S. in Aquatic Resources from Texas State University, where she focused on invasive species, including mollusks and macrophytes. Currently, Emily oversees a team of technicians conducting hands-on restoration work and coordinating community engagement efforts, such as litter cleanups and non-native plant removal. Her work blends ecological restoration with public stewardship and education. In addition to her restoration work, Emily conducts research on invasive suckermouth armored catfish and endangered Texas wild-rice. More recently, her interests have expanded to include stream connectivity and barrier mitigation through her involvement with the Texas Aquatic Connectivity Team, which works to restore river continuity and passage of aquatic organisms in Central Texas rivers.

Speaker	Kimberly Meitzen, Ph.D.
Affiliation	Professor, Texas State University, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Biography	Dr. Kimberly Meitzen is a Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Texas State University. Dr. Meitzen completed her B.S. at the University of Texas at Austin and received her M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina at Columbia. She was a postdoctoral fellow at Duke University and the Nature Conservancy in North Carolina. Dr. Meitzen teaches courses on river processes, river basin management, water resources, environmental management, and biogeography. She serves as the Texas State University representative and chair of the Stakeholder Committee of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan, public interest representative for the Guadalupe Regional Flood Planning Group, co-chair of the Texas Aquatic Connectivity Team, and advisor to the Ecological Research Group at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment.

Session 9: Out of Sight, Not Out of Danger: Managing Listed Species in Cryptic Habitats

Fresh Water for Freshwater Mussels

The Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin has been a focus of conflict over water resource management and allocation for decades. Within this system, in the Lower Flint River Basin, water availability for federally listed freshwater mussels has been a longstanding conservation concern. The Lower Flint Region HCP was developed to address longstanding concerns over water availability for farmers and federally listed freshwater mussels. It provides a long-term and comprehensive approach to water resources management that seeks to meet all water needs in the region for the next 30 years. This HCP is built on a foundation of stakeholder support and engagement as well as investments by the state and stakeholders in water planning, water resource models, pilot projects, and stakeholder-led regional water planning. This HCP is currently in review. Presenters from the HCP development team and the USFWS will discuss the successes, challenges, and lessons learned in development of this HCP.

Speaker	Kristin Rowles
Affiliation	Facilitator and Director, Policy Works LLC
Biography	Kristin Rowles is a water policy consultant with over 30 years of experience in coordinating and facilitating water resources planning, outreach, and research efforts. She has worked with many different public and private entities including the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Stakeholders, the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, American Rivers, AECOM, and Hazen and Sawyer. Her current projects focus on the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Basin, the Floridan Aquifer, the Occoquan Reservoir, and regional water planning in Georgia. At this conference, she is talking about her work on the Flint Region Habitat Conservation Plan, which she has worked on for several years for the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center at Albany State University in Georgia.

HCPs, Endemics, and Cryptic Habitats - Williamson County RHCP

Managing rare, endemic, cryptic species presents unique challenges, especially when their habitats are hidden from view and difficult to access. This presentation shares lessons learned over 17 years of managing two federally listed karst invertebrates—the Bone Cave harvestman (*Texella reyesi*) and the Coffin Cave mold beetle (*Batrisodes texanus*)—and highlights the complexities of monitoring, mitigation, and regulatory compliance in subterranean environments. The second half of the talk explores how these experiences are shaping the amendment of the Williamson County RHCP in Texas to incorporate six additional cryptic species, including the tricolored bat, three spring-dwelling salamanders, and two cave-adapted arthropods. By applying adaptive management strategies and lessons learned, we aim to improve conservation outcomes for these vulnerable species and provide a template for managing biodiversity in cryptic habitats.

Speaker	Josh Renner
Affiliation	Environmental Program Director, Williamson County, Texas
Biography	Josh Renner is the Environmental Program Director with Williamson County implementing the County's regional habitat conservation plan. Josh works at the forefront of Endangered Species Act compliance for a rapidly urbanizing area and works to bring sustainable relationships between conservation and land use planning through outreach and adaptive management.

Session 10: From the Ashes: Understanding Wildfire and Its Impact on Ecosystems

Wildfire and its Impact on Ecosystems

The threat of wildfire has been increasing in recent years. This phenomenon used to be a “California problem.” However, more recently, large wildfires have taken people by surprise all over the US, including in traditionally “low risk” areas like Hawaii. In addition, modern fires are larger than historic fires, and many burn at higher severity. This increasing fire risk has a multitude of causes from past fire suppression/ overly dense forests, climate change, and groundwater drawdown. While wildfire presents a very real danger to people by destroying homes and infrastructure, increasing erosion risk, and smoke, impacts in ecosystems are more variable. The immediate effect of fire is often very compelling, with substantial disruption of plant and animal species. Vegetation is removed, and animal species are killed or flee. Over longer periods of time, some species and ecosystems experience long-term impacts and take decades or longer to recover. Other species and ecosystems will decline without fire at regular intervals to maintain healthy populations and conditions on the ground. We will discuss how to assess fire as part of the natural ecosystem function and provide some examples of different ecological mechanisms that result in these different impact scenarios, and how to consider the impact of fire from an ecological perspective.

Speaker	Tamara Klug
Affiliation	Principal – Biology, Environmental Science Associates (ESA)
Biography	Tamara Klug is a Principal Biologist at Environmental Science Associates (ESA) with more than 30 years of experience in ecology, permitting, and wildfire litigation support. She is recognized for her expertise in analyzing and testifying on wildfire damages and has served as an expert witness in high-profile cases involving vegetation losses and impacts to species due to human-caused wildfires on private and public lands throughout the Western U.S. Her deep understanding of the site conditions prior to fires, damages to ecosystems caused by fires, and post-fire recovery, provides context and understanding to questions concerning the impacts of wildfires. Beyond litigation support work, Tamara has led permitting and compliance projects for large-scale projects across the western United States under major environmental laws.

How Wildfire Fuels Management Will Be Covered through the UC Santa Cruz HCP

The University of California, Santa Cruz campus is in a heavily forested area of coastal California with very high wildfire danger. The campus was evacuated and threatened with destruction from the massive CZU Lightning Complex fires of 2020, and is sure to experience similar situations in the future. To address this threat, the University is proactively developing a Wildfire Vegetation Management Plan (WVMP) covering the campus, coincident with their development of a comprehensive HCP covering future development and operations and maintenance of the approximately 3,000-acre property. Covered species include the Ohlone tiger beetle, California red-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, and monarch butterfly. The HCP will include Incidental Take coverage for the wide range of fuels management proposed through the WVMP and is incorporating detailed planning and species habitat models to identify potential impacts and appropriate avoidance and minimization measures. For the Ohlone tiger beetle, fuels management even has the potential to benefit the species by increasing bare earth areas that the species relies on for burrowing and hunting. This presentation will describe how potential effects of WVMP implementation are being evaluated in the HCP, and highlight the ways that fuels management of forested areas can be part of an effective Conservation Strategy.

Speaker	Michael Henry
Affiliation	Associate Practice Director, Dudek
Biography	Mike has 25 years’ experience involving management and analysis for a variety of biological resource projects, including regional and project-level HCPs; planning and permitting for marine and coastal projects; and a range of complex project- and program-level documents in compliance with state and federal environmental laws. He provides leadership for Dudek’s team of more than 90 biologists. He served as the contract manager and senior ecologist for the South Sacramento HCP/ARP and currently assists in implementing that plan, and is managing preparation of HCPs for the California Department of Water Resources and University of California Santa Cruz. He is also the reluctant webmaster for the Coalition and serves on the Government Relations Committee. In his free time he enjoys mountain biking and restoring his vintage sports car, and coaching or cheering on his two teens in basketball, soccer, baseball, track, and equestrian events.

Fire in the Santa Clara Valley: Managing for Wildfire Resilience and Habitat Benefit

Though increasingly frequent and high severity wildfires have had devastating impacts on natural and human communities in recent years, many ecosystems in California evolved alongside fire and require a particular fire regime to persist and regenerate. The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan recognizes the threat of high severity wildfire as well as the habitat enhancement opportunities presented by low and moderate intensity fire when applied under appropriate conditions. The Habitat Plan stipulates that Habitat Agency Reserve Unit management plans include a fire management section to address fuel-load management needs and desired site-specific wildfire suppression tactics and lays out several prescribed fire-related conservation and monitoring actions in its conservation strategy. The 2019 Malech Fire, which burned 210 acres within Máyyan ‘Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve, offered a chance to put into practice concepts laid out in the Habitat Plan. With funding from the Local Assistance Grant Program of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Habitat Agency hired contractors to develop a fire management plan for the Preserve and monitor the effects of the fire and of wildfire suppression techniques on the serpentine bunchgrass grassland and associated covered species occurrences found within the burn footprint. With the post-fire vegetation monitoring report in hand and in alignment with statewide efforts, the Habitat Agency is now working to expand its use of beneficial fire as a land management tool to achieve the biological goals and objectives of the Habitat Plan and to build landscape-level resilience to wildfire.

Speaker [Samantha Faul](#)

Affiliation Senior Land Management and Monitoring Specialist, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency

Biography Samantha Faul is a Senior Land Management and Monitoring Specialist with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, where she focuses on wildfire fuel management and building landscape-level resilience to wildfire. She also coordinates the Habitat Agency’s invasive plant management efforts and monitors the effects of habitat enhancement efforts on the species covered by the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan and on ecosystem health. Since joining the Habitat Agency, she has worked to scale up use of beneficial fire within the Habitat Agency Reserve System and to foster regional collaboration with other local land managers, non-profit organizations, and tribes. She also volunteers on community-led prescribed burns in the north San Francisco Bay Area and California Central Coast regions.

Session 11: Highlighted HCPs

The Charlotte County HCP: A County-Wide Approach to Scrub-jay Conservation

The Charlotte County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) was developed in an effort to resolve conflicts between development and conservation of the federally and state threatened Scrub-jay. Having a comprehensive and county-wide HCP reduces the need, time, and cost associated with the development of individual HCP’s for parcels on a project by project basis while ensuring the persistence of Scrub jays throughout Charlotte County. This presentation will expand on how our plan was implemented and provide details on how it works...challenges and all!

Speaker [Jamie Scudera](#)

Affiliation Projects Manager -Charlotte County Parks & Natural Resources

Biography Jamie Scudera is a lifelong resident of Charlotte County, Florida, with more than 19 years of dedicated service to the community. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies from Florida Gulf Coast University and began her career with Charlotte County as an Environmental Specialist, where she focused on reviewing development permits. She later advanced to her current role as Projects Manager within the Parks & Natural Resources Department. In her role, Jamie oversees multiple protected species management plans and leads a team responsible for coastal and marine species monitoring. Her work reflects a strong commitment to conservation, environmental stewardship, and the protection of Florida’s natural resources. Outside of her professional responsibilities, Jamie enjoys spending time outdoors and cherishing moments with her two daughters.

30 Years of Conservation in Action: The Sebastian HCP as a Model for Urban Habitat Protection

Approaching its 30th year, the Sebastian Area-wide Florida Scrub-jay Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is a benchmark for conservation success. The early adoption of the HCP, paired with Indian River County's Conservation Lands Program, established a framework for protecting and managing critical urban habitat for a declining Scrub-jay population whose genetic diversity might otherwise have been lost. Community engagement, public education, and strong regional partnerships have been central to its implementation. Today, the County's efforts are reflected in a stable Scrub-jay population that regularly disperses into the neighboring state park exactly as the HCP's authors envisioned. Beyond its local impact, the Sebastian HCP stands as a model of how proactive planning, community commitment, and ecological protection can safeguard threatened species through successful HCP implementation.

Speaker

Beth Powell, CPRE

Affiliation

Indian River County Parks, Recreation & Conservation Director, Indian River County, Florida

Biography

With over 25 years of conservation leadership in Indian River County, Beth has been a driving force behind the County's Conservation Lands Program since 2000. She has guided the protection and management of more than 2,500 acres of environmentally sensitive lands, ensuring long-term preservation while expanding opportunities for passive recreation and nature-based education. Beth has also led the Sebastian Area-wide Florida Scrub-jay Habitat Conservation Plan for more than two decades, overseeing habitat restoration, implementing color-banding for more than 95% of the urban population, and conducting long-term monitoring of this threatened species in a complex urban-wildland setting. Her work blends land management, scientific research, and public engagement to sustain Florida Scrub-jays while balancing conservation with community needs. Today, Beth serves as Director of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation for Indian River County, where she continues to advance stewardship, access, and habitat protection for future generations.

Session 12: Protecting the Nest: Habitat Planning for Protected Birds

Balancing Recreation and Piping Plover Conservation on Long Island, New York

Beaches in Suffolk County, New York, are a popular destination because of their relatively pristine natural beauty and a wide variety of allowable recreation types, including off-road vehicle access and camping. Seventeen parks in the county have some potential to provide piping plover nesting habitat, a threatened species at both the federal and state levels. As the piping plover population has grown, the extent of beach closures to avoid impacts to plovers, and the duration of closures, has also grown. Increased beach closures have resulted in a rise in citizen concerns about access to public parks. One major park is the only public beach within 20 miles of Mastic Beach, an underserved and low-income community. An HCP is being developed to better balance recreation and piping plover conservation on Suffolk County Parks beaches by improving recreational access where recreational pressure is high, addressing location-specific threats to piping plover (e.g., predation), and enhancing and restoring nesting habitat.

Speaker	Nicholas Gibbons
Affiliation	Suffolk County Parks
Biography	Nick began working at Suffolk County Parks in 1996 as a seasonal Plover Steward, monitoring nesting threatened and endangered shorebirds on Long Island, New York. Over the past 30 years, the program has evolved and expanded, becoming the Environmental Stewardship Division. In addition to the shorebird program, the Division oversees the environmental programs of approximately 60,000 acres of Parklands throughout Suffolk County. Such programs include invasive species response, land acquisition, management plans, outdoor recreational access development and improvements, scientific research and environmental cleanups.

Notes from the Texas Hill Country: Habitat Management for the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-Capped Vireo

This presentation explores habitat management strategies for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and the delisted Black-capped Vireo within the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP), a regional Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in central Texas, jointly implemented by the City of Austin and Travis County for nearly 30 years. It will highlight how permit requirements under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) shape stewardship activities such as woodland restoration, prescribed fire, and invasive species control across a complex urban preserve network. Recent bird survey data will be shared, illustrating trends in population dynamics and breeding success. The talk will also address emerging challenges and opportunities tied to the BCCP's ongoing permit renewal process, including shifts in federal regulatory guidance, climate stressors, and attempts to delist the Golden-cheeked Warbler. As conservation goals are renegotiated at both the ecological and policy levels, this session offers lessons in adaptive management, interagency coordination, and the evolving role of HCPs in species recovery.

Speaker	Kimberlee Harvey
Affiliation	BCCP Officer, City of Austin & Travis County, Texas
Biography	Kimberlee Harvey serves as the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) Officer, which is a jointly funded position by the City of Austin and Travis County, who have been co-permittees of the BCCP Permit since 1996. The BCCP Habitat Conservation Plan protects habitat for endangered species in Central Texas. With over 25 years of experience in GIS, conservation policy, and land management, Kimberlee works at the intersection of science, regulation, and community partnership to ensure long-term protection for the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve. Her current work focuses on safeguarding habitat for rare songbirds and other karst species while guiding the BCCP through its Endangered Species Act permit renewal.

Session 13: Landscape-Scale Lessons Learned Through HCP Implementation

Habitat Conservation Plans Under the Endangered Species Act: A Comprehensive Three-Decade Analysis

Development can pose a substantial threat to imperiled species listed under the US Endangered Species Act (ESA), particularly as two-thirds of these species rely on private lands. Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) outlined in Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA have emerged as crucial instruments for harmonizing conservation and development needs. Yet, despite being established for over 30 years, the HCP program's impact remains inadequately understood. Consequently, we evaluated 629 HCPs—covering 38 states and territories, and 748 species—to assess the program's transparency, organization, and impact by examining three key factors: (1) the presence of required documents, (2) the adequacy of monitoring, and (3) the consistency of conservation measures. Our findings indicate that enhancements are needed to modernize data management, increase transparency, strengthen oversight to improve the monitoring and evaluation of both individual HCPs and the program overall, and establish or update species conservation standards. These changes could significantly improve program functionality, streamline development and implementation processes, and offer greater opportunities to gauge success in the program.

Speaker	Lucas Bare
Affiliation	Managing Director, Habitat Conservation Planning and Implementation
Biography	Lucas Bare is a Senior Conservation Planner with ICF with 16 years of experience in environmental planning, natural resources management, and conservation biology. Lucas specializes in advising clients on Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance and permitting options, habitat conservation planning, and impact analysis at the landscape or regional scale. He oversees the development of habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and preparation of environmental impact statements and environmental assessments under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Lucas has extensive experience developing regional HCPs across multiple states in the energy, utility, and water sectors.

The Promise and Practice of an HCP

Presentation of the permitting and conservation successes of the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan after 12 years of implementation. The focus will be on the streamlined permitting process for a few recent housing development projects in California to meet growing demand at a time when many are calling for more efficiency in their government processes.

Speaker	Edmund Sullivan
Affiliation	Executive Officer - SCVHA
Biography	For over 30 years Edmund Sullivan's professional and academic focus has been on natural resource management, wildlife conservation, brownfield redevelopment, and sustainable economic development. Mr. Sullivan graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Madison with a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1985 and a master's degree in environmental planning & policy in 1998. He is the Executive Officer of the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency and sits on the board of the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition and the California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition.

Habitat Conservation Planning and Implementation in Southern California: A Personal Perspective from the Last 30 Years

In reflecting upon the science and conservation dedicated to sustaining native ecosystems and the rich biological diversity inherent to the southern California region over the last several decades, we can take pause and appreciate the strength of habitat conservation planning as well as recognize the need to become more involved in the direct management of the natural resources we are entrusted to protect and recover. Over the arc of thirty years, we have seen information shared from regional habitat and species conservation assessments inform the work of landscape-scale conservation planning and the birth of multi-species habitat conservation plans. Through the field of conservation science, we have challenged academics and federal scientists to answer whether we got it right and have conserved enough. Implementing individual plans, we have created monitoring programs to document baseline conditions and argued over the best means for identifying the status and trends of our most sensitive resources. We have partnered with state agencies and have seen conservation initiatives become more comprehensive and take a renewed focus on the protection and restoration of key ecological processes. As of late, we have taken real strides in creating regional monitoring programs that span multiple habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and are now positioned to begin to answer some of the fundamental questions identified in recovery plans. Going forward, although we are without complete knowledge, we are reminded to be bold and act; lean into the flexibility provided by HCPs; embrace uncertainty and the need for adaptive management; and remember the value of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and potential that comes with co-stewardship of our lands. Looking back, we are excited by the growth of our field and the work that has been accomplished. Looking forward, we know the public and species for which we work have an expectation of tireless activity and unparalleled creativity when it comes to the management of our native ecosystems.

Speaker	Milan Mitrovich
Affiliation	Land Resources Manager, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District
Biography	Milan Mitrovich joined the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District as the Land Resources Manager in February 2022. Milan’s professional background is in conservation science with an emphasis in landscape and wildlife ecology. Over the last 25+ years, Milan has served in research and advisory roles for several public and private sector organizations addressing conservation and biological resource management across much of southern California. Milan has published peer-reviewed science articles on animal behaviour, biological monitoring, landscape ecology, recreation ecology, and habitat conservation. When not working, Milan enjoys spending time with his family, cooking dinners, talking to his kids about their classwork and college studies, visiting museums, and traveling across the American Southwest.