

Virtual Public Workshops

County Butterflies Habitat Conservation Plan

Tuesday July 11, 2023 & Wednesday July 19, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Zoom

Introduction

As part of the public involvement process for the **County Butterflies Habitat Conservation Plan** (Butterflies HCP), the County of San Diego (County) is conducting intentional engagement at regular intervals to incorporate feedback as components of the plan are being developed.

On Tuesday July 11, 2023, and Wednesday July 19, 2023, County staff and consultant team held a virtual public workshop to discuss an overview and background of the Butterflies HCP, the draft Covered Species list, and the Study Area, as well as provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions and provide their thoughts on these topics. In advance of the meeting, staff promoted the event through GovDelivery e-blasts, social media posts, attending stakeholder meetings, and direct emails to relevant and interested stakeholders. During the events, 37 participants joined representing environmental, economic, research and community organizations as well as environmental consultants, land managers, and individuals. This summary documents meeting objectives and format, how input was solicited, and what was learned from the participants.

Objectives

The meeting was organized and conducted to accomplish the following objectives:

- Create a comfortable, engaging environment where all participants have an opportunity to provide meaningful input and share concerns.
- Introduce the purpose and need for the Butterflies HCP, and explain how the Butterflies HCP will localize and expedite compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act, create a large-scale conservation program, and relate to other regional habitat conservation efforts.
- Share information and obtain input on the anticipated benefits of the Butterflies HCP and the draft covered species list and study area to help develop a balanced and successful plan.

Format

At the virtual meetings, community members participated in a staff and consultant-led presentation and interactive questions, along with a staff facilitated Q&A session at the end of the workshop. Throughout the workshop, participants were invited to share their perspectives through the interactive questions and Q&A feature. At the end of the workshops, any remaining questions in the Q&A were answered live and members of the public had an opportunity to engage in an open discussion with staff.

Simultaneous interpretation was available for attendees whose primary language is Spanish. Registrants could also request the presentation be interpreted in the other 9 threshold languages prior to the workshops. The meeting materials were also offered in Spanish on the project website and made available to attendees by providing a link in the chat.

Major Themes

Major themes common to all the input received from participants are listed below. The ordering does not reflect importance or frequency.

- Protection of butterfly species and their habitat
- Learning how organizations and individuals can help educate and support butterflies
- Understanding the permitting process and tools available
- What area the plan will cover
- How it relates to the MSCP

Interactive Question Responses

Staff asked 7 questions throughout each of the workshops, and a total of 34 workshop participants responded.

For the first question, staff asked participants to share why they decided to join the workshop and to explain their interest in the Butterflies HCP. Participants were able to type in responses, as shown below.

What brought you here today? Please explain your interest in the Butterflies HCP.	<i>Total responses</i>	24
	<i>Unique participants</i>	20

Responses:

Mapping tool for Quino and Hermes habitat
Revised guidelines for Hermes butterflies
I am current Chapter President of the San Diego Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. I am interested in sharing the program with our membership as well as share dialogue on any portions of the HCP that may be difficult to implement.
I teach garden at elementary schools, and I'm interested in creating more habitats that would work around children.
I've been trying to plant more milkweed for monarchs in San Diego for the last few years.
Land manager with San Diego River Park Foundation. We are promoting pollinators.
I am curious of the current approach to HCP and which species will be covered. What portions of the County will be part of the planning area.
This will affect development of property that is already covered by the MSCP

Status of Quino in MSCP

I work with the RCD of Greater San Diego County, and we manage the San Diego Pollinator Alliance. We host programs to get more habitat on working lands, as well as supporting backyard enthusiasts.

Getting involved with land stewardship issues

I'm a Preserve Manager in Escondido and would like to know how our organization can help the butterfly populations.

I've been researching several butterfly species in SD Co over the last 20 years.

Species and habitat conservation in MSCP context

I run the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) annual count for San Diego.

Guidelines as they apply to DPW projects

I'm a wildlife biologist for the Cleveland National Forest and am interested in butterfly conservation and their habitat. 😊

How the HCP might provide technical support for SD County Indian tribes.

Would like to better understand the permitting process for impacts to QCB.

Love insects. Want to support butterflies. Volunteer with several local non profits who are land managers and land owners.

For the second question, staff asked participants if the protection of butterflies is important to them in a multiple-choice style activity.

Is the protection of butterflies important to you?

Total responses 30
Unique participants 30

Options & Responses:

	<i>Count</i>
Yes	29
No	0
Unsure	1

The third and fourth questions were related. Staff asked participants whether they have ever tried to obtain an incidental take permit for a butterfly with a follow-up question for those who answered “yes” to share what that experience was like.

Have you ever tried to obtain an incidental take permit for a butterfly?

Total responses 28
Unique participants 28

Options & Responses:

	<i>Count</i>
Yes	1
No	27

If you answered yes, please briefly explain your experience.

Total responses 3
Unique participants 3

Responses:

Count

I have been unable to obtain a take permit because in the 20 years since the south county MSCP was approved the Quino plan was never approved	1
No experience but would like to learn the permitting process for Quino	1
I have obtained permission for moths through San Diego National Wildlife Refuge.	1
Several decades of permitted Quino surveys and 18 years of Hermes copper surveys.	1

The fifth and sixth questions were related. Staff presented a list of anticipated community, economic, and environmental benefits of developing the Butterflies HCP. An interactive question was then presented to better understand which of the benefits listed is most important to the workshop participants. A follow-up question allowed participants to share other potential benefits not included in the list.

Of the anticipated benefits listed, which one matters to you most? *Total responses* 29
Unique participants 29

Options & Responses:	Count
Community Benefits	3
Simplifies Federal compliance for projects and local landowners by transferring decision making to the local level	
Preserves open space	
Provides passive recreational opportunities while protecting sensitive resources	
Economic Benefits	4
Reduces project processing and approval timelines	
Provides federal regulatory assurances	
Simplifies CEQA and NEPA compliance for biological resources	
Environmental Benefits	22
Protects and enhances species' habitat	
Protects landscape connectivity	
Provides comprehensive and consistent long-term management and monitoring	

Are there any benefits you can think of that are not captured in the previous list? *Total responses* 7
Unique participants 6

Responses:	Count
Improves biodiversity	
As mentioned, conservation and protection of species	
I Further a major component of the proposed MSCP plans for wildlife corridors and connectivity. These plans really need to be implemented.	

Streamlining processes and communication amongst agencies and stakeholders

Monitoring species

Future generations will see them

We can see more butterflies!!!

For the seventh, and final question, staff asked participants to share which of the covered species they are most concerned about.

Which of the covered species are you most concerned about?	<i>Total responses</i>	22
	<i>Unique participants</i>	22

Options & Responses:	<i>Count</i>
Harbison's dun skipper	1
Hermes copper butterfly	11
Laguna Mountains skipper	2
Quino checkerspot butterfly	8

At the end of the presentation, staff allowed participants to share Q&A/Comments/Input to vocalize any further questions or concerns that may have come up during the presentation.