

Memo

To: SCC Board
From: Sam Schuchat, EO
CC: Oversight Members
Date: March 29, 2006
Re: Strategic Plan: 3rd Report

This is the third annual report on the progress we have made toward fulfilling the goals and objectives in the Conservancy's strategic plan. Attached to this memo on three 8 ½" x 17" pages is the actual report in three tables. This is the same format we used in the first report.

Summary of the data

Three years into our five-year plan, we are at or ahead almost all of our goals. The bar graph attached illustrates this by showing how far we have come with each goal relative to the 60% mark. Of course, given the nature of our business we have never expected steady, 20% per annum progress, and this is clearly reflected in the data as well. In some cases we have wildly exceeded our most optimistic possible projections, and in a few instances we are still lagging.

In the area of access and trails we are at or ahead all of our goals with the exception of putting our brand new trail marker on signs and right of way acquisition, construction, and improvement. Our recently signed MOU with State parks and the Conservation Corps should enable us to make a great deal of headway here in the next year. We have constructed or improved just over 41.74 miles of coastal trail, about 11 miles since last year. We have acquired 41 miles of new right-of-way for the coastal trail and greatly exceeded our goal for new right-of-way for regional connecting trails. We are way ahead of ourselves on accepting offers to dedicate (OTDs) and on track as far as opening inaccessible places. Our strategic plan called for 38 OTDs accepted, and we have accepted or caused others to accept 65. Similarly, we have opened 26 formerly inaccessible areas out of a planned 35, or 40%.

We are generally way ahead of our goals in the area land acquisition and restoration. The Hearst Ranch transaction, not foreseen at the time we wrote the plan, by itself caused us to greatly exceed 4A, "acquire 67,000 acres of scenic/agricultural/habitat lands" and 7A, "acquire 18,000 acres of agricultural interests." This is ironic; since that time we wrote the plan there was some concern on our staff that we would not be able to meet our goals. We seem to have the opposite sort of problem.

Our progress toward our Bay Program goals is pretty much like our progress coast wide. I am happy to report that we continue to be on track on the Bay Trail and the Bay Ridge Trail projects. These areas were lagging in our first report. We have met our wetland acquisition goal, but continue to lag as far as acquiring uplands go. We believe there are two reasons for this. First, we significantly underestimated the cost and difficulty of acquisition in the Bay Area, particularly upland acquisition. Secondly, we have continued to focus a great deal of staff time an energy on our wetland projects. Hamilton/Bel marin Keys, the South Bay Salt

Ponds, and the Dutch Slough, and the Napa Sonoma Marsh together consume about a third of the Bay program staff time, not including supervisors and project consultants. We have two more years left to meet the acquisition goals, and we expect that the Upland Goals Project will help.

What Next

In our first report I commented on the number of things we learned to do differently in the next strategic plan. The only one that is worth repeating here (for those Conservancy board members who were not present a year ago) is the one concerning goals with multiple components. In other words, in the strategic plan we had a goal that read "construct/improve 140 miles of new coastal trail". Is this goal accomplished when we construct, or when we improve? A number of goals had similar issues; for reporting purposes, we have dealt with this by splitting them into two goals with the same number. When we prepare a new strategic plan we will need to grapple with the issue of separating planning activities from implementing activities and achieving the appropriate mix of the two.

This year's report marked the first time we attempted to use our project database to prepare this report. As is often the case when new software is used for the first time, it was less than smooth sailing.¹ Before we rely completely on these figures, we need to go back and manually double check them. In addition, some the places where we have exceeded our goals have to do with double counting, e.g. a project that acquires acres of habitat and coastal trail right of way at the same time. We need to take a careful look at these cases and make some decisions about which objectives to count for which projects.

Once we clean up this data a bit, staff's recommendation for updating the strategic plan for its final two years include the following suggestions:

- The Ocean Protection Council is currently preparing a strategic plan. When that is complete, the portions of the OPC plan which need to be accomplished by the SCC should be adopted as elements of SCC's plan.
- Once we are satisfied with the data, we should take a look at the some the goals we have greatly exceeded and consider whether or not we should reallocate our remaining resources.
- We should also consider, in those cases where we are grossly over our objectives, whether or not we want to increase the target numbers in the plan.
- Finally, we should take careful stock of exactly how much funding we have left from prior bonds and make some decisions about how long we need to make these funds last. At this time it is difficult to say what exactly will emerge from the discussions between the Legislature and the Administration regarding bonds (although there is no lack of opinions!), but this funding picture should become clearer as the year progresses.

¹ This is why this report came out a day before the board meeting, rather than a week before.