

DOCKET**07-AFC-8**DATE JAN 08 2009RECD. JAN 09 2009

From: John Kessler
To: Docket Optical System
CC: Caryn Holmes; Michael Doughton; Robert Worl
Date: 1/8/2009 10:27 PM
Subject: Fwd: Draft Habitat Connectivity Plan

Dear Docket Staff:

Please docket this email to Carrizo (07-AFC-8) and include in the file name, "M Strobridge's comments on Wildlife Corridor Study".

Thank you,

John

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>>> Michael Strobridge <mike_76@live.com> 1/7/2009 2:06 PM >>>

Hi John,

I have consulted with a local Wildlife Biologist who is familiar with the Carrisa Plains. Here are some of our comments and concerns.

Sc Wildlands refer to Pronghorn as sheep. Even though Pronghorn are members of the Artiodactyl family Bovidae, they are not usually called "Sheep". I would like to see Pronghorn referred to as Antelope.

We are also concerned that only 3 focal species were selected for baseline connectivity evaluation. A more comprehensive connectivity plan could have included Giant Kangaroo rats and other endangered or threatened species as well as a number of DFG "Special Interest Species" that likely occur in the area. The proposed baseline conditions appear to include only rigorous quantitative analysis of those habitat features that are readily available from existing digital data sources and do not appear to include any features requiring direct, on-site measurements or assessments.

It is also surprising that there are no habitat layers reflecting (a) the presence and intensity/density of potential predatory and competing species, (b) the presence and intensity/density of potential prey species for Kit Fox, (c) the presence and duration of surface water sources, (d) the presence and intensity of various types of disturbances that could influence movement of focal species into and through a possible connecting wildlife linkage, etc.

Another concern is that the road density habitat layer only includes paved roads. Unpaved roads, fences, and other structures also could exert some degree of influence on landscape permeability and mortality, especially during low visibility conditions (night, dense fog, etc).

Having corridors that possess "live in" qualities would seem to be more likely to facilitate actual biological connectivity than corridors possessing only "move through" qualities. This is especially important because, "output from the proposed models does not identify barriers, mortality risks, dispersal limitations, or other biologically significant processes that could prevent a species from successfully reaching a core area".

The definition of a patch, as proposed for the study, is problematic because it does not include a time period for the habitat to support at least 1 male and 1 female. As defined, a patch might not be particularly appropriate for Tule Elk and Pronghorn Antelope because these species often aggregate in groups rather than in discrete pairs. A patch capable of supporting at least 1 male and 1 female might not be suitable for a group of 10-20 pronghorn does, fawns, and yearlings or a group of 20-40 Tule Elk cows, fawns, and yearlings. Furthermore, a patch for a Kit Fox pair raising a litter of pups would certainly require a larger prey base and presumably a larger parcel of contiguous habitat than that needed to support 1 male and 1 female.

The absence of a "protected" core area on the North side of the projects is also problematic because, according to the definition, core areas are supposed to be sufficient to sustain at least 50 individuals. This is further confounded because, like a patch, the period of time that the 50 individuals would be sustained in a core area is not specified.

Also annual, seasonal, and long term variability in both abiotic and biotic characteristics of the Carrizo Plain area further complicate the prediction of the actual biological value (time period and number of individuals that could be supported) for both core areas and patches as defined in the proposal.

I firmly believe that SC Wildlands needs to send personnel to the Carrisa Plains to preview the area before any corridor scenario is run.

Thank you for your time,
 Mike Strobridge