

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES

January 8th, 2009
4:00 – 5:30 pm

Present:

Tim Aldrich
Mary Manning
Mike Hathaway
Jeff Stevens
Ethel MacDonald
Gerhard Knudsen
Ginny Fay, Park Board Rep (via Teleconf)

Absent:

Jim Gilligan
Karen Knudsen
Jed Little
Keith Lenard
Adam Liljeblad

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Pelah Hoyt (FVLT), Jim Brown (Audubon), Jim Habeck, and Carolyn Goren

Grass Valley and the Clark Fork Corridor IBA

Jim Brown, Gerhard Knudsen and Pelah Hoyt gave a joint presentation about the Grass Valley/Clark Fork River corridor IBA. The Audubon's Important Bird Area (IBA) designation is part of an international effort coordinated by Birdlife International to map and designate important bird habitat around the world. So far, over 178 countries have listed IBAs. Once an area is listed as an IBA, Audubon and other conservation groups prioritize it for protection. To qualify, the area must provide habitat for at least one bird "species of concern."

The powerpoint presentation included a map that showed that the CF River IBA is about 1/2 in and 1/2 out of the Open Space Plan CF River Cornerstone. Jim explained that riparian shrubs and the native black cottonwoods are essential to numerous bird species. The wetlands along rivers created by oxbows and other pools of water are also essential habitat. Cattail marshes are another important habitat, especially for Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Dead and dying cottonwoods are just as important for bird habitat as live trees. He also mentioned that the woody draws in the Grass Valley clay hills are critical for Long-eared Owl habitat. What makes the Grass Valley area so special is its diverse mixture of habitats, from the woody draws, to the numerous types of wetlands, in addition to the farmland that allows raptors to hunt for mice and voles.

Within the CF River-Grass Valley IBA, there are 6 different Bald Eagle territories. Peregrine Falcons reside amongst the rocks near Stone Container. There are 4 Great Blue Heron rookeries between Huson and the Reserve Street Bridge. Other species of note that reside in or frequent the CF River IBA are the Lewis's Woodpecker, the Red-naped Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Hooded Merganser, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bobolink, Willow Flycatcher, Calliope Hummingbird, Swainson's Hawk, and both Short and Long-eared Owls. Twenty-six species of raptors have been seen in the IBA.

IBA partners include Audubon, FVLT, and FWP. Stone Container has been good to work with too on preserving bird habitat on their Frenchtown property.

Mary asked if the IBA correlates with FWP's designated priority lands in their Habitat Conservation Plan. The answer is yes as the FWP Plan indicates that the entire Bitterroot/Frenchtown Valleys are a **Terrestrial Conservation Focus Areas in Greatest Need (Tier I)**. After describing the area

and species of concern, on page 45 of the Plan, it is interesting to note there is a chart listing Conservation Concerns and Strategies, which includes the following information:

Conservation Concerns:

Habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, especially as a result of human population growth and development of transportation infrastructure

Conservation Strategies:

Support strategic conservation easements by conservation organizations and public agencies;

Identify and prioritize key wildlife linkage areas, and work with other state and federal agencies, conservation groups, and landowners to restore wildlife connectivity;

Support state/federal tax incentives that discourage habitat fragmentation;

Promote further development of county ordinances that help guide future residential and commercial development.

Jim Habeck suggested that Jim Brown, Gerhard and Pelah give their presentation to the County Open Lands Committee. Gerhard said they intended to do that and also present it to OPG.

Jim also mentioned that Audubon is working to expand the IBA to include more of the clay hills area, since that habitat is so important to many species and tied to the other habitat types within the IBA.

Pelah acknowledged that while some habitat has been lost to development, significant habitat has also been protected within the IBA. She emphasized that it is not too late for the area and there are still wonderful opportunities to protect this special place.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm with the next meeting date scheduled for 4:00 – 5:30 on Thursday, February 12th at Currents.