

**May 26, 2011 Comments from Chrissy Howell, PhD on DRECP Draft Framework Conservation Strategy Report (version dated May 4, 2011)**

A general point: the authors have created a number of new maps in support of their work. These maps will be the basis for many current and future analyses and need to be well documented, transparent, and thoroughly justified. They should also be made publicly available and should follow conventions for documenting sources and other meta-data standards. All maps should provide information on how they handled multiple data sources, for example if one map listed an area as riparian and another as desert scrub, which one took precedence? Did information on agricultural areas from county plans take precedence over other sources? What was the resolution/minimum mapping unit of the data used to create the map (e.g. 1km grid cells or 50m grid cells) and how was the resolution of the resulting map decided (e.g. minimum of all inputs). In cases where the map is a vector file, but analyses were done that required rasterization (e.g. GAP analyses) what was the resolution (grid cell size) used for the analyses? Data sources should also be cited for every element that goes into these maps (e.g. "Imperial County agricultural data acquired from xxx source and were last updated in 2009" and "DoD data acquired from www.xxx and were downloaded on May 5, 2011"). This will also help with updating the "new" maps five and ten years from now.

II-34: Initial land cover map

What a lot of work to pull this all together! It would be great if they could provide a map the geographic extents of the sources of the veg/landcover data. I realize that the description in Table II-4 covers some of this, but I think it would be helpful to have it mapped out. If there were multiple sources of information for a given geography, which layers/data sets took precedence? Are there categories that some map sources overlook (e.g. riparian?). What is the source for the Urban data? There are a number of statewide and national sources that are particularly good for this info. For rural/urban they may want to look at the Upland data layer available from Jim Thorne at UC Davis.

II-45 What is the basis for these maps? Are these from the initial land cover map.

II-45 Scientific names for birds are missing. This is a recurring issue throughout this chapter.

II-63 Western Yellow-billed Cuckoos are also found in riparian habitat along the Colorado River. They are a state species of special concern and a candidate for federal listing.

"Small 1974" is cited too often. There are other more recent citations. Also the "Birds of N. America" species accounts should be consulted when discussing the preferences of individual species.

II-70 An additional reference is Howell, C. A. and W.D. Shuford 2008. Conservation Blueprint for Birds in the Imperial Valley. Report to Audubon California.

For the Shuford et al. 2000 reference to a report, they should also look at the Studies in Avian Biology monograph produced by Shuford in 2004 (that resulted from the 2000 report).

Maybe I missed it, but where are "desert wash" habitat and species covered?

## II-90 Land use

More meta-data are needed for this map. What source was used if there were multiple sources of information in a given area? Why didn't they use a standard/existing landcover map – especially for the sources bulleted in the middle of page II-88)? Or is that what they did, but then updated it? For Figure II-7: did this all come from one source or from the composite? Are the “unspecified lands” the same as privately owned? For rural/urban they may want to look at the Upland data layer available from Jim Thorne at UC Davis.

Figure II-9 and related text: explanation should be given for why they didn't use existing classification of Type 1-4 from existing data sources (national GAP). Also the introduction does not mention Type 4, but Table II-11 does. More background information on the national system used to determine Types 1-4 would be useful. I generally think a key attribute of Type 3 lands is that they permit “extraction” (logging/mining); the type classification by the national GAP program should be double-checked on this point. Also additional information on why they chose to classify some lands differently than the national Gap program. Putting all military reservations as Type 3 should be better justified (or revisited—some of these lands are not protected). I think it is important to do an analysis on how lands were classified using this system versus by the national GAP program (e.g. I think National GAP considers all military lands as Type 4, but I'm not sure) and then a justification/explanation of the choices. In listening to the Webex presentation on the land cover map, I got the impression that a lot of thought and effort had gone in to creating this product, but those extra details do not come through in the text.

III-1 bottom: What is the systematic approach that is being used? Please elaborate, especially in relation to more recent literature on the topic.

III-3 Bullet list (continues on to other pages): How does this list compare with the conservation reserve selection approaches touted by the folks cited on the bottom of page III-1? especially Moilanen?

III-6: More background on GAP analysis would be helpful (and a couple of citations). How well to the descriptions of Types 1-4 match with the preceding chapter (I think there are some differences)? Also note that some species/habitats could look okay in terms of the percent area covered from the GAP analysis, but if the areas come from multiple highly fragmented areas, then that could be a problem for some species. A metric of fragmentation could even be given for these different land types if area-sensitivity is an issue with some habitats/species.

Table III-8 and throughout: it might be worthwhile to add a column showing the ratio of protected (types 1-3) and unprotected (type 4).

I hope this helps!

Chrissy Howell, PhD  
*Sr. Conservation Scientist*  
PRBO Conservation Science  
3820 Cypress Drive, Suite 11, Petaluma, CA 94954  
707-781-2555 ext. 315  
chowell@prbo.org