

Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2008 10:36 PM

Subject: Update: DR/GR Planning Workshops

Today's DR/GR planning workshop went very well. There were around 75-100 people there including residents, environmental groups and agencies, county staff, engineering & planning firms, and consultants, general public, etc. Attendees were divided randomly into 10 groups. Each group was given a large map of the DR/GR and tasked with placing colored stickers on the map. Each sticker color represented one of three different land-uses: mining, conservation, and higher density residential. Each group was given different percentages of the three colors - some groups were more heavily weighted toward mining, and some toward conservation. At the end of the exercise, a spokesperson from each group presented the map and highlighted the ideas and solutions that the group considered.

The results showed surprising similarities between the 10 different tables even though each group worked on the exercise independently. Specifically, there was common line of thinking in terms of conserving connections & corridors between important habitats and between surface water flow-ways. Although not unanimous, there was also considerable agreement on the notion of restricting mining activities to the established Alico mining corridor, and encouraging expansion of existing mining developments as opposed to distributing new mining activities in new areas throughout the DR/GR. There was also general agreement on the idea of transferring allowable residential density from inside the DR/GR to areas outside areas that need the higher density development such as Bonita, Lehigh, etc.

The results were encouraging, but this is only the first step in a long process that will go on through the summer. The planning consultant Dover, Kohl & Partners will host an open house at Harborside on Tuesday, Apr 22nd at 5:00 PM to discuss their summary of today's planning exercise with the public. Then, on Thursday Apr 24th at 6:00 they'll give a "Work-in-Progress" presentation to the County Commissioners. I hope you can attend one or both of these.

Thanks to all who were able to take time off to participate today.

Kevin Hill