



**Comments from Open Space Protection Panel Meeting and CMAP Staff Responses**  
January 7, 2009

**Attendees**

Via web	Megquier, Robert	Openlands
	Werner, Patricia	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
	Anderson, Ders	Openlands
	Kimmel, Andrew	Lake County Forest Preserves
	Kramer, Karla	US Fish and Wildlife Service
	Prusila, Mike	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
	Donovan, John	Federal Highway Administration
	Haas, Peter	Center for Neighborhood Technology
	Clark, Lori	Northern Illinois University
	Miknaitis, Gajus	Center for Neighborhood Technology
	Trotter, Joanna	Metropolitan Planning Council
In person	Heltne, Paul	Center for Humans and Nature
	Rogner, John	US Fish and Wildlife Service
	Nickerson, Mel	Environmental Law and Policy Center
	Beyer-Clow, Lenore	Openlands
	Anderson, Ken	Kane County
	Danler, Ingrid	Fox Waterway Agency
	Walkenbach, Amy	Illinois EPA
	Dobbs, Kama	DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference
	Dooley, Martha	Village of Schaumburg
	Schuessler, Joe	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

**Comments and Responses**

- How is farmland preservation included in the open space protection sample program vis-à-vis the Green Infrastructure Vision?
  - In the scenario planning phase of GO TO 2040 plan development, CMAP is trying to build scenarios composed of compatible policy options. We elected to concentrate on farmland preservation in one scenario and open space protection in another.
  - However, several discussants at the panel meeting pointed out that agricultural preservation can complement conservation-oriented open space – this is actually a precept of the GIV – and Kane County in fact tries to target farmland protection partly to support open space acquisitions.

- Our proposed solution is to try to target farmland protection partly on the basis of supporting open space preservation.
- Why is acquisition the only means of land protection considered in the sample program?
  - It is true that forest preserves and land trusts utilize conservation easements, but it is difficult to say how much of this will or should happen. Consequently we are trying to identify priority open space protection areas in the region and assuming fee simple acquisition *simply as a starting point*. Conservation easements will lower the region's cost to protect open space, but it may come with additional conditions on the activities that can take place on the land.
  - We are not recommending making changes beyond noting in the text that easements could be used instead of acquisition depending on local conditions.
- It is not clear that the GIV acreage targets are appropriate. Discussants are unsure how the targets were developed and they result in less acreage being acquired than in the sample program.
  - CMAP staff is not yet sure how to use the targets. We will rerun the analysis to determine how they affect the outcome.
- Can the GIV boundaries be expanded to include additional sensitive areas?
  - This is possible and will be done based on the information we have currently, but CMAP needs to place a firm time limit, at least for GO TO 2040 development, after which the GIV boundaries cannot be updated.
- Can the layers and weights used in the "natural resource score" be changed?
  - We would prefer not to do so because significant effort by CW and NIPC was necessary to achieve agreement when the product was originally developed in 2002~2003.
- Unit costs of acquisition need to be updated.
  - Openlands and CMAP have now done this.
- Why are there such significant differences in unit operating costs between the different forest preserve and conservation districts?
  - The operating budgets for different districts that CMAP used may contain different cost items, so comparing them may not be valid. Since the panel meeting, Lake County Forest Preserves has very helpfully collected updated unit operating costs for different counties. CMAP staff feel it would be best to use one region-wide value for the expected operating cost rather than break costs out by county. Accordingly we are taking the average of the operating costs for the counties.

- Do the actual operating costs reflect what is truly needed to manage natural areas properly?
  - Probably not. We make a distinction between the cost of operating the forest preserves and the cost of actively restoring them to presettlement conditions, and stakeholders were in general agreement with this. Restoration costs will be treated separately. CMAP is collecting these costs from forest preserve districts.
- The GIV envisaged preservation of macrosites of 5,000 – 10,000 acres, whereas the sample program tends to produce linear corridors. How can the goal of preserving macrosites be considered in the sample program?
  - CMAP will try to develop a system to increase the weight of acquisition opportunities based on their size and adjacency to existing open space or other acquisition opportunities.
- How will CMAP account for the positive economic effects of open space acquisition?
  - We will try to project the long-term cost to local government units of using the land differently. If the land would be developed, a study might show that local governments have a higher cost of providing services than if the land is acquired and managed by a forest preserve district. We will also try to account for the expected increase in value that accrues to developable properties near open space.
- CMAP should try to measure the carbon sequestration benefit of the open space acquisitions.
  - In the absence of restoration activities that would change vegetative composition, the benefit of open space protection is in preventing urban activities that would have generated greenhouse gases. (If about the same total amount urban activity stays in the region but is reassigned elsewhere a result of land protection, there will be essentially no carbon reduction benefit from land protection *per se*). In addition, if farming ceases, land protection could reduce the amount of N<sub>2</sub>O (also a greenhouse gas) released to the atmosphere. Thus, restoration or ceasing farming may generate measurable carbon reduction benefits, but not land protection itself.
- Two potential implementation mechanisms: (1) the state provides matching grants for open space acquisition within the GIV target areas, requiring grant seekers to achieve regional priorities; (2) USFWS could target some of its acquisition activities within GIV.
  - CMAP encourages continued discussion of how to implement a truly regional open space protection program such as the sample program presented at the meeting on Jan 7.