

## Presentation #8 – Assessment and Planning Support for Conservation of Key Remaining Vernal Pool Landscapes in California’s Great Valley and Modoc Plateau Regions

Thursday, November 19, 2020 – 9:45 a.m.-10:15 a.m. PST

### PRESENTERS

- Jean Okuye, East Merced Resource Conservation District
- John Vollmar, Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting, Inc.

### ABSTRACT

Our project will identify, characterize, and develop a conservation strategy framework for 2-4 large, remaining vernal pool habitat blocks in each of eight designated Vernal Pool Ecoregions within California’s Great Valley and Modoc Plateau regions. The project builds on a recent WPDG-funded project completed by the same team. Habitat blocks will be selected that offer the best opportunities for achieving landscape-scale conservation and preserving each ecoregion’s unique biodiversity elements. It is intended that the blocks will become focal points for ongoing conservation and restoration efforts. Given continuing habitat losses and limited conservation funding, the project results will support ongoing, well-represented conservation of vernal pool ecosystems and associated special-status species throughout the project ecoregions. Our project also supports the current interest by resource agencies and conservation groups in voluntary, ‘grassroots’ conservation approaches, as represented by CDFW’s new Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS) program. Our final outputs will be a technical report, geodatabase, and presentation. The report and geodatabase will be provided to agencies, conservation groups, mitigation interests, and others involved in conservation and restoration work in the project area. The geodatabase will be uploaded to public websites related to wetland and species conservation.

### BIOS



**John Vollmar** is Founder and President of Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting, Inc. He is a senior vegetation ecologist, botanist, and aquatic wildlife biologist with over 25 years of professional experience. In recent years, his work has focused on the establishment and management of conservation and mitigation lands, regional conservation planning, conservation research, and restoration projects often involving large-scale, multi-disciplinary biological studies, landscape-level habitat analyses, expert scientific review, and public outreach. Mr. Vollmar has directed more than 450 projects for a broad range of private, non-profit, government entities. He has worked with numerous landowners to establish conservation and mitigation easements, obtain easement funding, and develop and implement long-term resource management

and monitoring plans on easement lands. He has worked with numerous conservation groups including The Nature Conservancy, Center for Natural Lands Management, The California Rangeland Trust, and various local land trusts. Through his work, he has helped establish more than 80,000 acres (32,000 hectares) of conservation lands.

As an ecologist, Mr. Vollmar specializes in the distributional relationships between environmental parameters and vegetation, plants and wildlife. As an example, in 2001, he directed a study of a 150,000-acre (60,000-hectare) region supporting grasslands and vernal pools (specialized seasonal wetlands) in California's eastern Merced County correlating 40+ wildlife and rare plant species distributions with topography, geology, hydrology and other parameters. More recently, he directed a study on predictive habitat mapping for four rare species associated with vernal pools throughout Placer, Sacramento and Merced Counties, California and is the co-director of a project involving regional habitat modeling and re-introduction of the critically endangered large-flowered fiddleneck (*Amsinckia grandiflora*) within its historic range in eastern Contra Costa and western San Joaquin counties, California.

### **VNLC Relationship to Project Lead**

East Merced Resource Conservation District (EMRCD) is the project lead/sponsor for the WPDG-funded project. VNLC works as a subcontractor to EMRCD, conducting the technical work of the study and preparing all deliverables. EMRCD serves as the administrative lead overseeing invoicing and contractual aspects with USEPA and providing guidance as needed to VNLC.