

Executive Summary

The Yolo County Parks and Open Space Master Plan consists of six main parts (plus six appendices): (1) Introduction and Background; (2) Issues, Vision, Guiding Principles, and Goals; (3) Park and Open Space System Components; (3) Master Plan Recommendations; (5) Implementation and Financing, and (6) Policies and Actions.

1 Introduction & Background

Purpose of the Master Plan

This master plan is intended to provide information and guidance to staff, decision makers, and the public for the management, use, and future development of Yolo County parks and open space facilities, both individually and system-wide.

More specifically, the objectives of the plan are to:

- Provide baseline inventories and assessments of recreational uses, environmental resources, and County facilities and assets within each existing County park property;
- Provide system-wide classifications and design elements to help reinforce an overall identity and management consistency for County park properties;
- Provide support for innovative partnerships with other agencies, private landowners, and non-profit organizations to increase County-wide recreational opportunities.
- Guide appropriate expansions and acquisitions of County parks and open space properties;
- Assist the County in balancing the population-based demands for recreational opportunities, while minimizing adverse effects to private

property and valuable environmental resources; and

- Facilitate the County's efforts to obtain and allocate future grant funding for parks and open space areas, including related acquisition, improvements, and management.

Timeframe

The timeframe for this master plan is both near-term and long-term. A major focus of the plan is on near-term management and improvement of existing (2005) County parks and open space units. The master plan is also intended to be a long-range plan with a 20-year horizon.

During the life of this plan, the goals, policies, recommendations, and supporting information will be reviewed and renewed as appropriate on a 5-year interval to ensure that the plan continues to meet County needs.

Plan Development Process

The plan development process began in April of 2004. The process included:

- Background studies, resource assessments, and policy reviews by the planning team.
- Public workshop meetings.

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- A series of discussions with the County Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife Advisory Committee.
- Website information and open invitation for comments by email.
- An initial draft of the master plan.
- Additional meetings with rural landowners, the County Farm Bureau, and environmental groups.
- A second draft of the master plan.
- Public meetings on the plan by the Parks Advisory Committee and the Board of Supervisors.

Policy Foundation

The master plan was based on a foundation of existing policies and directives, including:

- The Agricultural Element of the County General Plan.
- The Open Space and Recreation Element of the County General Plan.
- Cache Creek Resources Management Plan.
- The County Code.

In addition, plan-making also considered the Capay Open Space Park Master Plan, the Grasslands Park Master Plan, the Putah Creek Discovery Corridor Vision, and the forthcoming Yolo County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan.

Parks & Open Space Master Plan

Overall, this master plan is intended to not conflict with applicable, adopted County policies and directives; nor is it intended to supersede or replace existing policies, promote additional government powers, or reduce the rights and responsibilities inherent in private property ownership.

Approval of the master plan and subsequent activities to implement the plan are subject to various reviews and approvals, including environmental reviews such as those required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Planning Background & Context

The planning context included:

- The County's geography and regional setting.
- State-wide and regional trends in parks and recreation,
- Population and demographic considerations.
- Growth projections.
- Regional considerations, including public outdoor recreation opportunities, general population characteristics, and larger-scale conservation biology.
- A model of ecological subregions.
- A population-access model.
- Existing public outdoor recreation areas within and near the County.

2 Issues, Vision, Guiding Principles & Goals

Discussion of Major Issues

A number of major, parks-related issues emerged during the plan-making process that were incorporated into the plan. These issues are summarized below.

Major Issue	Master Plan Approach
Current deferred-maintenance condition of County parks and open space areas	Projects aimed at resolving operation and maintenance concerns at the existing parks should be given a high priority in making future funding decisions. Each park unit should be considered a long-term public asset to be properly maintained and operated.
Acquisition of future parks and public open space	The County has a legitimate function in providing public parks, recreation, and open space resources. Acquisition of parks and open space areas for recreation, conservation, and open space amenities is reasonable and desirable in advance of expected growth and development.
Eminent domain	It is not the County's present intent under this plan to rely on eminent domain to obtain lands for the primary purpose of creating new parks or open space areas, nor is implementation of this plan dependent upon the use of eminent domain actions.
Trails, including the Blue Ridge Trail	The plan recognizes relevant policies in the County's adopted Open Space and Recreation Element. The plan also acknowledges existing trails, including the Blue Ridge Trail that exists on BLM and County property.
Agriculture and recreation	Agricultural land uses and heritage play important roles in Yolo County. Agricultural practices create visual open space. Private land stewardship often promotes conservation and may provide recreational opportunities not available on County lands. Potential incompatibility issues can arise between public outdoor recreation and active agricultural practices; however, the plan is not intended to create situations that cause conflicts with agricultural endeavors nor violate the County's right-to-farm ordinance.

Major Issue	Master Plan Approach
Public access	Acknowledging the issues, the plan generally supports the public's right to gain access to public lands, where allowed by law and consistent with adopted management programs. Public access and use should generally (i) be subject to appropriate, site-specific controls; (ii) strive to be compatible with uses on adjacent and nearby private properties; and (iii) be protective of environmental resources.
Conservation	Existing and future County parks and open space areas with significant environmental values play a role in the conservation of those resources on a County-wide and regional scale.
Financing and implementation	A broad range is suggested for possible financing and implementation methods. Cooperative partnerships are important between the County and other recreation-providers, including other government agencies, non-profit groups, private landowners, and others in the private sector.
Timing of plan implementation	The plan is in many ways a long-range planning guide. An implementation timeframe is difficult to predict. Not all elements in this plan may be implemented.

Vision Statement

The plan-making process included the creation of a broad, long-range vision for Yolo County's parks and open space system. This statement should be understood to be a creative exercise expressing an idealistic future.

The vision considers the possible parks, recreation, and open space needs of future generations of people who will reside in Yolo County in decades to come. The vision emphasizes:

- An *integrated system* of parks, open space areas, and linkages.

- *Respectful collaboration* between recreation and agriculture, between recreation and the environment, and among parties participating in providing recreational opportunities.
- *Tradition and innovation* that blends the old and the new, and the nearby with the remote.
- A *signature identity* for Yolo County that will help to promote tourism and system-wide consistency.
- A *legacy for the future* that we can pass on to new generations.

County's Roles

Related to the vision statement is a general statement of the County's roles as a provider of parklands and outdoor recreation opportunities. Under this plan, the County provides a variety of parks and recreation opportunities for Yolo County residents in three general ways, by:

- Directly providing facilities for outdoor recreation in primarily natural settings;
- Assisting unincorporated communities in meeting their recreational needs; and
- Providing support for private landowner initiatives and other private entrepreneurs, as consistent with County policies and values.

Guiding Principles

The plan also includes a set of ten "Guiding Principles," which are intended to reflect County values and desires with respect to parks, open space, and outdoor recreation within a broad context. In summary, these principles are as follows:

- Parks and open space areas are vital to the County residents' quality of life.
- County parks serve the public.
- Parklands are intended for all ages and groups.
- The County promotes and protects public health, safety & welfare.
- The County supports public access to public lands.
- County parks strive to adhere to the "good neighbor" policy.
- County parks and recreation contribute to the vitality of local economies.

- County parks help conserve valuable resources.
- Public participation is essential.
- Partnering with other agencies, landowners, and groups.

Goals

Goals in the Parks & Open Space Master Plan are general expressions of long-range intent that set direction toward an ideal future condition, including the following:

- A high-quality County-wide park system that meets local recreation demands.
- Best use of financial resources on a system-wide basis.
- Productive relationships with other park and recreation providers, with positive access results as experienced by the public.
- Parks, open space, and recreation near population centers and in more remote areas.
- Balance of public uses with private rights and concerns.
- Innovative public/private recreation opportunities.
- Increase in net parkland and open space available.
- Increase in the range & availability of outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Preservation of open space.
- Increased, resource-based tourism.
- Compatibility of parks and recreation facilities with surrounding uses.
- Maintenance of public assets.

3 System Components

This Parks & Open Space Master Plan is directed toward establishing a County-wide system of park and open space properties. The park system begins with the existing set of park units currently in County management and extends to possible future park and recreation concepts. Also addressed are park planning sub-areas, management classifications, and identity and design elements.

Existing Park & Open Space Properties

The current set of 13 parks, open space areas, and other assets, listed in the table at right, are a diverse collection of properties. There is a total of approximately 1,820 acres in the current (2005) inventory.

Recreation Resources

The existing County parks and open space areas in 2005 provide recreational opportunities such as stream and river fishing, boating, paddling, camping, picnicking and barbecues, swimming and wading, and other activities. Overall and compared with state-wide standards, however, the current set of County park areas provides for a somewhat limited range of active and passive recreation opportunities for its residents and visitors.

Environmental Resources

The environmental resource values of the existing County parks properties cover a wide range. Some larger, more natural parks possess substantial resource values, while other locations, including the more developed park sites, possess limited environmental value. In some locations, currently limited natural values can be expected to improve as a result of ongoing environmental restoration efforts.

Environmental issues related to park and open space management include:

Park or Open Space Area	Approx. Area (acres)
Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park	697
Camp Haswell Park	7.3
Capay Open Space Park	41
Clarksburg River Access Facility	4
Dunnigan Community Park	0.5
Elkhorn Regional Park	49
Esparto Community Park	1.1
Grasslands Regional Park	313
Helvetia Oak Grove	11.7
Knights Landing Day Use Area	3.5
Otis Ranch Open Space Park	587
Putah Creek Access Parks	87
Vernon A Nichols Park	21

- Special-status or sensitive species.
- Riparian areas, wetlands, vernal pools.
- Fisheries and fish habitat, including native species of anadromous or resident fish.
- Eradication of non-native, invasive species.
- Protection of cultural resource sites.
- Contributions to a regional conservation biology strategy, such as biological connectivity.

Creating a Park System

To facilitate the management of this system of existing and anticipated County park properties, this plan recommends several tools, as follows.

County Recreation Sub-Areas

Mapping and characterizing sub-areas of the County helps to provide context for assessing park and recreation needs and distribution according to each sub-area's population, geography, resources, and other attributes. This plan uses the following County sub-areas:

- Sacramento River Edge.
- Yolo Bypass Sub-Area.
- Central Yolo Flatlands, Creeks, & Urban Areas Sub-Area.
- Dunnigan Hills Sub-Area.
- Western Foothills Sub-Area.

Park Classifications

The master plan includes a set of Park Classification categories to identify types of parks, for both existing and future park units. The plan uses the following classifications:

- Open Space Areas.
- Regional Parks.
- County Parks.
- Gateway Parks.
- Park Resource Bank Sites.
- Community Parks.

Management Designations

The plan provides a set of Management Designations that may be applied in subsequent planning for each park property to promote consistency.

- *Recreation Area*: to be applied to areas within park units with developed facilities and that receive higher intensities of public use.
- *Natural Area*: to be applied to areas within park units largely in natural condition with lower intensities of use.
- *Protected Area*: to be applied to areas within park units where, because of identified or potential environmental values or other conditions, public outdoor recreational uses are limited, restricted, or prohibited.

System Identity and Design

To help foster the identity of a County-wide park system, this plan promotes the use of a collection of "identity elements." The following topics are addressed related to system identity and design.

A Sense of Where We Are

Yolo County parks and open space areas provide settings for appreciating the unique "landscape stories" of Yolo County.

Themes for Interpretation

Starting points for possible future interpretation may include: Native American and Euro-American history; early County communities; history, uses, wildlife, commerce, and floodway management along the Sacramento River; early transportation; various aspects of the County's agricultural heritage; surface mining and reclamation; and other ideas.

Comprehensible and Consistent County-wide Image.

One way to unify a divergent system is through the use of a County image or logo identity.

Context-Sensitive Development

Improvements at park units should be designed and located with respect to existing features and adapted to the site.

Multiple Use through Design

Park units may be designed to accommodate multiple, compatible uses.

Low Impact to the Environment

Design, operation, and management should be conducted in such ways as to have minimal impact on the environment including off-site effects.

Signage Concepts

The plan provides general guidelines for park signage, including ideas for content, location, and design.

General Guidance for Park Furnishings & Structures.

The built components are an important part of the overall character of a park system, and should promote consistency and improve consistency. A more detailed design and construction guide is recommended, generally following guidelines in the plan.

Native Plants for Landscaping & Restoration

The plan provides a list of recommended native plant materials for landscaping and restoration, as well as a list of undesirable plants that should be avoided.

4 Master Plan Recommendations

Building on What We Have

This plan supports actions to enhance and expand the existing County parks and open space areas, while also providing essential services. The plan addresses each existing park property individually, with a general recommendation followed by park-specific recommendations.

Many improvement projects – some of which stem from deferred maintenance, some of which are new proposals – are needed within the County’s parks and open space areas to provide essential public facilities, improve aesthetics, create shade by planting trees, protect and enhance environmental values, consolidate signage, and for many other purposes.

General considerations include:

- Maintenance and improvement.
- Providing essential services.
- Expansion of existing units.
- Universal access, including accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- Transition from temporary to permanent facilities (restrooms).

Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park

Cache Creek Regional Park has been called the crown jewel of the County park system. This plan promotes the continuation of this park as the County’s “Number One” park unit. Among the recommended actions are:

- Improvements to facilities and infrastructure.
- Continued management and oversight of concessionaire rafting parties, with better accommodation of general public uses.
- Investigation of ways to improve access across Cache Creek for year-round access to public land by several types of user groups.
- Consideration of relocating concessionaire uses away from sensitive streamside locations.
- Expanded camping opportunities.
- Possible trails linking the three parts of the park.
- Continued removal of invasive, non-native plant species.

Camp Haswell Park/Otis Ranch Open Space Area

The master plan treats these park units as an integrated facility that the County should manage for multiple uses.

At Camp Haswell, recommendations include reducing the dominance of the concessionaire rafting uses, and restoration of the old stone cabin, if feasible, to allow for its use, perhaps as an information center for the County park system.

On the Otis Ranch unit, the property should be retained in natural condition; a trail system should be developed, with volunteer participation and support from non-profit organizations.

Capay Open Space Park

The main recommendation of this master plan for this park unit is to fully implement the approved park-specific

master plan. Management should support enhancement of the site's day use functions and ecological values, as prescribed in the plan.

This park unit should be managed as one of a string of proposed recreation nodes along Cache Creek, as designated in the Cache Creek Resources Management Plan. Access to the creek for disabled persons should be provided as planned.

Clarksburg River Access & Boat Launch Facility

The Clarksburg Public Access Site receives a high level of use, and its location on the river makes it relatively easy access from eastern County population areas and the greater Sacramento area. An improved ethic of stewardship is needed at this site.

The plan recommends a patrolling park host and entry gates. Following these security measures, attention can be given to providing essential public services such as a potable water supply and permanent restrooms, as well as additional environmental restoration.

Dunnigan Community Park

The master plan recommends development of a long-term operations and maintenance arrangement; this may involve transferring some or all day-to-day management responsibilities to a local entity.

Elkhorn Regional Park

The master plan recognizes the values of this park include: river access use, day use, potential interpretation, and its significant environmental resources.

Recommendations for Elkhorn Regional Park promote appropriate and compatible

multiple uses: boating, birding, and preserving the legacy of a rich remnant of Sacramento River riparian forest. A non-intrusive trail is proposed.

Esparto Community Park

Esparto Community Park should continue to be an enjoyable place to celebrate community events. This park receives considerable, daily use and serves as a venue for functions that help to maintain community cohesiveness and identity; these community-building functions should be continued and enhanced.

In the longer term, this plan recommends the development of an operations and maintenance arrangement, which could involve transferring most management responsibilities to a local entity, such as a special district.

Grasslands Regional Park

A master plan for Grasslands Regional Park was approved in 2005. The plan generally provides a coordinated and comprehensive approach to management, recreational uses, habitat protection and enhancement, and unified design. It also recognizes the need to control exotic weeds, protect sensitive species, and help restructure agreements associated with leases for the specialty recreational activities that currently occupy portions of the site.

This master plan recommends implementation of the approved Grasslands Park plan. It also supports continued efforts to complete the acquisition of the adjacent federal land.

Helvetia Oak Grove

The plan recommends verifying the property boundaries and ingress-egress

easement. Habitat enhancement and some minimal site improvements are also recommended.

The management concept for this site is to establish a venue for supervised group activities under a reservation system, managed in partnership with appropriate non-profit organizations.

Knights Landing Day Use Area & Boat Launch

The master plan recommends that Knights Landing park unit be used for boating of various kinds, including non-motorized boats, with supporting day-use areas on shore. Permanent restroom facilities, a park host, improved picnic and shore fishing facilities, and a fish-cleaning station are recommended to enhance this park unit. Additional tree planting and possible expansion of the County area are also recommended.

Putah Creek Access Parks

The Putah Creek Access Parks are collectively an underused outdoor recreation resource in the County. Currently this group of park sites is classified as fishing access areas.

The management concept for these sites suggests incremental expansions to include other activities, such as day use and possibly camping. A study of parking infrastructure and access is recommended; highway right-of-way parking problems should be coordinated with Caltrans.

Vernon A. Nichols Park

Nichols Park offers an attractive setting on Cache Creek that holds potential for a variety of uses. This park should be re-created as an attractive destination for

day-use activities, with optimization of the site's intrinsic qualities, particularly access to the creek.

Areas should be created with tree canopy for day use areas; the park host campsite should be relocated to a less conspicuous location. The relationship between upland areas and the creek should be emphasized by site redesign and interpretation.

Future County Parks & Open Space Areas

In addition to improving and better maintaining the existing set of parks and open space properties, as discussed above, this plan supports planning for additional parks, open space areas, and outdoor recreation opportunities in the County. This master plan generally promotes increases in public parks, open space areas, and recreation opportunities through a variety of means, consistent with County policies and values. Conceptual new park units are considered on a County-wide basis and by sub-area.

County-wide Considerations

Consistent with existing County General Plan policies, this master plan promotes long-term planning to effect an overall increase in the *amount* of parkland and open space. This plan also promotes an increase in the *range* and *availability* of outdoor recreation opportunities. The County's projected population growth in future years is a compelling factor in such planning for future parks, open space, and recreation opportunities.

The following considerations apply County-wide in planning for additional parks, open space, and recreation opportunities:

Work with Government Partners

Cooperative agreements between and among the County and other government entities may be appropriate for purposes related to parks, recreation, open space, and conservation.

Develop Appropriate "Gateway" Units

In conjunction with the above item, this plan supports the idea of creating "Gateway Parks" to facilitate access to existing public lands, where feasible and mutually agreeable to all parties.

Work with Private Landowners

This plan supports mutually beneficial partnerships with private landowners to provide additional recreation opportunities in Yolo County.

Work with Non-Governmental Organization Partners

The County should continue and enhance partnerships with watershed and conservation groups to accomplish recreation and open space objectives.

Bring a State Park to Yolo County

This plan recommends partnerships with the State Department of Parks and Recreation to investigate possible park creation opportunities in Yolo County, including a possible agricultural heritage park under the State's Great Central Valley initiative.

Consider Open Space Areas for Ecological Conservation

This plan supports efforts to use County parklands to help implement the objectives of regional conservation plans.

Consider an OHV Park

The plan recommends investigation of a possible off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreational use in the County, as a separate planning effort. An approved location for OHV use would likely reduce effects occurring elsewhere. Studies are recommended to ascertain public support, identify candidate sites, and consider related development and operation issues. Re-use of restored gravel mining areas or other disturbed area should be considered.

Concepts for Parks and Open Space Facilities by Planning Sub-Area

Sacramento River Edge Sub-Area

Recommendations for possible new parks, open space, and recreation opportunities in this sub-area include:

- Possible partnership opportunities with the City of West Sacramento and the Port of Sacramento.
- Park facilities that provide river access.
- Enhanced agri-tourism, ecotourism, and regional branding in the Clarksburg-Delta area.
- A possible Delta aquatic park, in partnership with other entities.

Yolo Bypass Sub-Area

Recommendations for possible new parks, open space, and recreation opportunities in this sub-area include:

- A possible gateway site for public access on the eastern side of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, in cooperation with the State Department of Fish and Game and other entities.
- Multiple-use rural recreation, open space, and conservation opportunities, compatible with agricultural activities and other existing uses.

Central Yolo Flatlands, Creeks, & Urban Areas Sub-Area

Recommendations for possible new parks, open space, and recreation opportunities in this sub-area include:

- Lower Cache Creek Corridor Parks, as recommended in the County's Cache Creek Resource Management Plan.
- A regional park in the general vicinity of Woodland, similar in function to Grasslands Regional Park.
- Various collaborative opportunities in the Putah Creek corridor.
- Community parks in unincorporated communities.

Dunnigan Hills Sub-Area

A County park or regional park in this location would serve a growing part of the County. One suggestion is for an open space area with limited public access focused on the conservation potential of native grassland habitats and sensitive species, with enhancement and interpretation.

Western Foothills Sub-Area.

Recommendations for possible new parks, open space, and recreation opportunities in this sub-area include:

- Partnerships with willing western foothills landowners, particularly landowner initiatives.
- As a longer term concept, a possible gateway facility that would provide controlled public access to the public lands in the western foothills, assuming conditions could be met with a willing seller and acceptable terms, assurances, and incentives could be reached.

Managing Parks & Open Space

The master plan offers a number of strategies for managing the County park system, including:

- Administrative strategies, including procedures for park project review and approval, and user fee rate-setting.
- Park management strategies, including integrated uses and adaptive management; interpretation and outreach; park hosts; and use of properties for commercial purposes.

- Resource management strategies for natural and cultural resources within existing and future park units.
- Use of land trusts to help protect open space, agriculture, habitat, and parklands.
- Land banking and surplus property disposition.
- Adaptive management.

5 Implementation & Financing

Existing Parks & Open Space Facilities

This plan recommends making maintenance and improvement of existing facilities a high priority for funding and implementation. Making the most of the County's existing assets is a prudent approach, both in the short-term as well as part of an overall, integrated strategy for addressing longer term needs.

County Budget Considerations

Like most local jurisdictions in California, Yolo County is under substantial fiscal pressure because of limits on property tax revenues and other constraints. This fiscal pressure affects all County departments and functions, including parks and natural resource management.

Future Parks & Recreation Opportunities

Future parks and recreation opportunities are expected to be needed in the face of expected growth and development. Acquisition and development, however, are expensive, and, as mentioned, the

County has limited financial resources available for large parks and recreation projects.

This plan anticipates the creation of new public parks and open space areas subject to the realities of the County budget, the availability of supplemental funding, and the positive resolution of site-specific ownership and land use issues.

New public areas and opportunities may be achieved in various ways. Future parks and recreation opportunities are considered in this plan to encompass:

- Improvements and expansions of existing parks,
- Acquisition of interests in real property (e.g., easements) when mutually beneficial,
- Acquisition in fee title from willing sellers, and
- Partnerships with agencies, landowners, organizations, and other entities.

Feasibility & Priorities

Maintaining and improving the existing parks and open space areas should be a high priority for the parks and open space system. Another high priority should be the creation of new community parks and facilities as part of new development projects within and adjacent to the County's unincorporated communities.

Priorities for the County system should be determined by the Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife Advisory Committee and County staff with input from the public. Many factors including needs, financing, land availability, and approvals are not entirely predictable. Further evaluation will be needed for each implementation project, in terms of feasibility, costs and benefits, potential impacts, and funding.

Anticipated Park System Funding Needs

Five primary funding category needs, which are typical to most park and open space systems, are identified as:

- Operations and maintenance.
- Improvement of existing facilities.
- Serving the existing population.
- Serving the growing population.
- Deferred maintenance.

Funding Sources & Mechanisms

A creative approach to funding is needed in the long run to effect positive changes in Yolo County's County-wide park system. A variety of funding sources should be considered – both longer range funding mechanisms, as well more immediate approaches.

Accordingly, this plan identifies a number of funding sources and mechanisms,

including user fees, state grants, developer exactions, and district-level approaches. Also important are contributions that save the County money, such as in-lieu services through partnerships with other agencies and non-profit groups, volunteer efforts, and landowner initiatives.

The following funding strategies are proposed as possible options in the plan:

- County General Fund revenues, which are limited but essential, particularly for staff resources.
- State and federal grants for parks, trails, open space, wildlife habitat, and conservation.
- User fees to recover a portion of maintenance and operation costs.
- Development exactions and impact fees, whereby park creation or funding is part of the residential development process, a particularly useful mechanism for the County's unincorporated areas.
- Community Facilities Districts, funded by Mello-Roos fees.
- Agreements with commercial operators, when commercial uses complement and do not obstruct public uses.
- A County-wide assessment district, which would require a two-thirds majority vote.
- A multi-purpose farmland, open space, habitat, and recreation district, which would be funded by a minimal sales tax over a set period of time and be dedicated to preservation of farmland, open space, natural resources, and outdoor recreation.
- A future inter-agency regional parks district, involving collaborations with

other local governments, including cities, counties, and tribes.

Matching Financial Needs with Potential Funding Sources

The plan sorts the categories of major funding needs and, to the extent possible, compares these categories against a range of funding options.

Project Funding Clusters

The master plan also organizes project funding categories by a “project cluster” approach, which involves a number of categories of project areas – based on geographic similarities and supplemental funding sources. Successful projects within these clusters that can help lay the foundation for gaining approval of significant, additional funding support in the longer term, possibly through a County-wide assessment bond.

The following funding clusters are identified:

- ***The Sacramento River Area Cluster.*** A cluster of projects associated with the Sacramento River, including a focus on habitat and water access activities and improvements.
- ***The River/Stream Corridor Cluster.*** These projects would include existing and potential future County resources along both the Putah Creek and Cache Creek corridors, such as: upgrading existing facilities, new acquisitions, habitat restoration projects, invasive plant species removal, linear trail corridor acquisition and development, and gateway facilities to adjoining public lands.
- ***The Partnership Cluster.*** This is a set of projects involving formalized, collaborative relationships with other

entities as a means of combining available resources for common goals. Two options are identified: one focused on the incorporated cities of Yolo County, the other partnership option related to the other joint-powers configurations.

- ***The Unincorporated Communities Cluster.*** These projects involve funds set aside for parks in or near unincorporated communities through the use of developer impact fees, required under an adopted impact fee ordinance.
- ***The Volunteer & Service Organization Cluster.*** This cluster is structured around various non-profit organizations, community service groups, and volunteer citizen organizations.

Assuming successfully funded projects within these project funding clusters, the County would then be in a potential position to initiate a longer range funding mechanism in the form of a County-wide assessment bond. Such an approach, however, would require a two-thirds majority vote to pass.

Cooperation & Partnerships

Partnerships and other forms of cooperative arrangements are potentially important strategies for leveraging funding for potential parks and recreation opportunities.

While partnerships with other entities are not automatic remedies to limited funds or resources, they can greatly expand implementation potential, if properly structured. Possible partnerships need to be evaluated carefully to ensure that the County will receive value for its commitment.

The plan addresses the following types of collaborative arrangements:

- *Intergovernmental partnerships*, which involve opportunities with other public agencies or jurisdictions, including federal, tribal, state, and local entities.

- *Public-private partnerships*, including partnerships with private landowners, concessionaires, and volunteers and community non-profit organizations and “friends” groups.

6 Goals, Policies, & Actions

The final part of the master plan rolls up the recommendations and strategies discussed throughout the document into a summary section organized by general categories of policies, and actions.

Management & Operations (M&O) Policies & Actions

M&O Policies

Management and operations policies are directed toward guiding decisions on County-wide park system management. These policies, which are intended as guides to decision-making, include:

- County roles in providing and facilitating parks, open space, and recreation.
- High priority to existing park maintenance and infrastructure.
- Compatible recreation and agricultural interface.
- Equality in public access to public park facilities.
- Public health, safety, and welfare a high priority.
- Multiple functions through parks and open space.
- Research at County parks.
- Commercial activities.

M&O Actions

Recommended actions related to system management and operations include:

- Developing an identity program for marketing and other purposes.
- Developing signage and design guides.
- Developing a park system structures and furnishings guide.
- Encouraging volunteer support in parks.
- Improving the park host program.
- Conducting land surveys, resource inventories, and user surveys.
- Using land trusts.
- Procedures for mitigating risks associated with controlled burns and flooding events.
- Procedures for inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources.

Administration & Finance (A&F) Policies & Actions

A&F Policies

Administration and finance policies are aimed at guiding decisions related to administrative and financial functions. These policies include:

- Ensuring adequate staff for parks and recreation to the extent possible within the constraints of the County budget.
- Improving cooperative relationships with other agencies that provide parks, open space, and recreation facilities.
- Promoting partnerships with non-government organizations.
- Promoting partnerships with landowners and the private sector.
- Supporting constructive interaction between agriculture and recreation.
- Supporting volunteer programs.
- Developing a mutually constructive relationship with the Rumsey Tribe.

A&F Actions

Recommended actions related to administration and finance include:

- Conducting period review and updates of the master plan.
- Considering a multi-functional County-wide agriculture, open space, recreation, and conservation district.
- Considering a regional parks and open space district or authority.
- Fostering partnerships with private landowners, and providing administrative assistance.
- Developing better cooperation with adjacent jurisdictions and other resource stewards.
- Implementing a park impact fees (Quimby Act) program.
- Considering the creation of special districts in substantial residential subdivision developments.
- Establishing and updating park user fees.

Future Park and Open Space Expansion & Development (E&D) Policies & Actions

E&D Policies

Expansion and development policies include the following:

- Ensuring meaningful public participation in new proposals.
- Providing essential public-serving facilities and infrastructure.
- Providing “nearby-nature” opportunities near population centers.
- Assist unincorporated communities meet recreation needs.
- Supporting public access to public lands.
- Supporting landowner-based and non-profit initiatives.
- Promote respect for private lands while enabling greater public opportunities.
- Promoting compatible agriculture-related recreation.
- Following and encouraging a good neighbor policy.
- Ensuring environmental protection.
- Promoting context-sensitive design.
- Committing to work with willing participants.
- Avoiding conversion of designated agricultural lands.

E&D Actions

Recommended expansion and development actions include the following:

- Developing public access in the lower Cache Creek vicinity.

- Considering a multi-use regional park in the Woodland vicinity.
- Encouraging greater public access in the Yolo Bypass vicinity.
- Enhancing access in the Putah Creek resource area.
- Pursuing park opportunities along the Sacramento River Corridor.
- Considering additional opportunities in the western foothills.
- Pursuing opportunities to partner with the California Department of Parks and Recreation.
- Investigating the potential for an off-highway vehicle recreation area.
- Considering a Delta area aquatic park.
- Investigating potential for a Capay Valley bike trail.
- Pursuing greater cooperation with the Rumsey Band of Wintun Indians.
- Conducting geotechnical studies and soils investigations as needed.

Resources Management & Interpretation (RMI) Policies & Actions

RMI Policies

Resource management and interpretation policies include the following:

- Emphasizing low-impact threshold uses on the environment.
- Promoting the role of County as a conservation steward.
- Ensuring the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Using native, locally derived vegetation.
- Ensuring protection of water quality.

- Promoting interpretation in parks and where lands are restored for habitat.
- Using County park units for public project mitigation purposes.
- Using appropriate scientific information for resources planning and interpretation.
- Coordinating parks conservation efforts with the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP).
- Ensuring consultation with Native American organizations regarding parks and open space planning.

RMI Actions

Resource management and interpretation actions include the following:

- Increasing cooperative efforts with non-profit organizations and landowners.
- Developing interpretive brochures.
- Conducting reconnaissance-level surveys and inventories for all new components of park system.
- Conducting cultural resource inventories.
- Conducting site-specific field surveys and evaluations.
- Supporting regional conservation planning.
- Establishing a procedure for ensuring environmental review and compliance.
- Focusing on high biodiversity areas, including riparian corridors and mountain open space.

Park-Specific Actions

The following actions are recommended for the existing County parks and open space areas.

Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park

The following recommended actions are suggested for Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park:

- Investigate a possible all-season, light-duty bridge for access to County and BLM lands.
- Review and improve rafting concessions management and arrangements.
- Establish a better defined trailhead area at the Lower Site.
- Strengthen BLM partnership.
- Continue to improve the primary campground area.
- Implement invasive vegetation removal.
- Protect and enhance important habitat areas.

Camp Haswell Park / Otis Ranch Open Space Area

The following recommended actions are suggested for combined management of Camp Haswell Park and Otis Ranch Open Space Area:

- Develop a site-specific park management plan covering both units.
- Investigate re-use of stone cabin at Camp Haswell; if feasible, consider use as an information facility or self-service kiosk for the County park system.
- Clearly designate public and concessionaire use areas at Camp Haswell with signage, landscaping,

and furnishings; better control the concessionaire parking.

- Implement selective restoration of disturbed areas.
- With support from non-profit organizations, develop minimal trailhead improvements, benches, and hiking trails.

Capay Open Space Park

The main suggestion for Capay Open Space Park is to implement the park master plan. As specified in the approved plan:

- Provide accommodations for an on-site park host.
- Provide an ADA-compatible trail to the creek.
- Establish connections with other recreation areas.
- Implement non-native vegetation removal.

Clarksburg Public Access Site & Boat Launch

The following recommended actions are suggested for Clarksburg Public Access Site and Boat Launch:

- Appoint a park host to regularly patrol the area, interact with the public, and conduct routine maintenance.
- For improved public safety and to help reduce vandalism, control access, require day-use fee.
- Implement selective site improvements.
- Investigate possible expansion and expand public uses, if feasible.
- Continue to restore riparian habitat where feasible.

Dunnigan Community Park

The main suggestion for Dunnigan Community Park is to define an appropriate approach for long-term operations and maintenance, which may include turning the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the community park over to a local entity.

Elkhorn Regional Park

The following recommended actions are suggested for Elkhorn Regional Park:

- While retaining the boat ramp function, improve day use functions including picnicking and birdwatching through carefully designed improvements; provide educational and interpretive features.
- Protect important habitat areas.
- Investigate the feasibility of developing a minimally intrusive nature trail loop.
- Improve signage and traffic safety.
- Formalize the agreement with train concession.
- Explore a potential bike trail link.

Esparto Community Park

The main suggestion for Esparto Community Park is to define an appropriate approach for long-term operations and maintenance, which may include turning the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the community park over to a local entity. Also recommended is continued support for using the park for community functions, including the farmers' market and almond festival.

Grasslands Regional Park

The main suggestion for Grasslands Regional Park is to implement the

approved park master plan. Also recommended are:

- Continued efforts to complete the annexation of the adjacent federal land area.
- Consolidation and improvement of onsite signage.
- Protection and interpretation of vernal pools and other identified important resource areas.

Helvetia Oak Grove

The following recommended actions are suggested for Helvetia Oak Grove:

- Verify and establish onsite property boundaries and the ingress-egress easement.
- Conduct habitat improvement, including invasive weed removal.
- Develop minimal site improvements and furnishings to establish a venue for supervised group activities by reservation, including overnight camping and picnics.
- Establish a group event reservation system, in partnerships with non-profit or quasi-public organizations.

Knights Landing Boat Launch

The main recommendation for Knights Landing River Access and Boat Launch is to develop a site-specific plan that defines a desired mix of possible day-use improvements, including picnic and shore fishing facilities and a possible fish-cleaning station. The following actions are also recommended:

- Investigate the potential of expanding this park unit in area, to accommodate more day use and/or habitat conservation.
- Provide additional tree planting.

- Incorporate a storm water runoff management system.

Putah Creek Access Parks

The following recommended actions are suggested for Putah Creek Access Parks:

- Develop a site-specific park management plan.
- Improve usability of lower sites through an incremental approach that may involve trails, shade tree planting, day-use areas, and possible overnight camping in upland areas.
- Improve appearance, including signs.
- With Caltrans, investigate options for the future disposition or use of paved onsite areas and possible solutions for on-highway parking.
- Protect and enhance the riparian corridor.
- Maintain and improve cooperation with other agencies and non-government organizations.

Vernon A. Nichols Park

The main recommendation for Nichols Park is to develop a site-specific plan that re-creates this park unit as an attractive destination for day-use activities.

The plan should consider creation of additional shade tree canopy and relocation of the park host campsite. Other suggested actions include:

- Ensuring stream bank and riparian habitat protection.
- Implementing non-native vegetation removal.

