

Yolo County Parks Master Plan

Esparto Public Meeting Workshop

MEETING SUMMARY

Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department

Wednesday, 21 July 2004

6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 25 people (23 names on the sign-in sheets) attended the public meeting workshop for the Yolo County Parks Master Plan held on July 21, 2004, in the Esparto Community Hall, 17020 Yolo Avenue, Esparto, California. Based on information obtained on the sign-in form, meeting participants came from Esparto, Capay, Guinda, Winters, Brooks, Davis, Woodland, and Solano County. Many of the participants represented organizations or agencies having an interest in the outcome of the master plan.

In the weeks prior to the meeting, information about the project was posted on the County website and published in articles in local newspapers. County staff sent email messages and letters to more than 70 potentially interested stakeholders (agencies, advisory groups, non-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals). Following the initial contacts, the Planning Team also made telephone calls to stakeholders, providing information about the project and reiterating the invitation to attend.

The Parks Master plan is being prepared to address County-managed parks, open space areas, and other properties. This countywide plan will provide guidance for the management, uses, and future development at County park properties – individually and system-wide. The plan is being prepared under the direction of the Yolo County Parks and Resources Management Division staff; the Yolo County Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife Advisory Committee; and the County Board of Supervisors. Consultant assistance in this project is being provided by a team of consultants, led by The Dangermond Group and Roberts, Kemp & Associates LLC.

Advisory Committee Members Present: Gerald Hartwig, Eric Natti.

County Staff Present: Brett Williams, Parks and Resources Coordinator, Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department.

Consultant Staff Present: Brian Collett, Senior Associate, The Dangermond Group; Bruce Kemp, Senior Planner, Roberts, Kemp & Associates LLC; Rob Thayer, Bioregional Planner; Dale Flowers, Meeting Facilitator, Dale Flowers & Associates.

Agenda Summary: A copy of the meeting agenda is appended to this summary as Attachment 1. Generally, the meeting consisted of introductory remarks by the planning team, followed by open comments and facilitated discussion. The primary purpose of the meeting was to obtain comments from the public regarding:

- *Strengths and weaknesses in the existing County system of parks and open space areas.*
- *What do you think is needed? What changes would you recommend?*
- *Opportunities, dreams, and visions.*

Meeting Facilitator Dale Flowers opened the meeting at about 6:45 p.m. and welcomed the participants. Participants introduced themselves. To provide background and context for the discussion, brief presentations were made by Brett Williams, Rob Thayer, Bruce Kemp, and Brian Collett. References were made to the available supplemental materials for the meeting and the various means by which interested parties may submit comments to the planning team.

The main portion of the meeting was devoted to public comments and discussion, as summarized below. Main points of the discussion were recorded in writing and displayed on large sheets of paper; the comments were generally recorded at the meeting under headings such as "Questions," "Issues," "Needs," "Opportunities & Visions," etc. A transcription of the recorded comments is appended to this summary (Attachment 2).

Supplemental Materials

- Various maps of the County were displayed on the walls of the meeting room; these maps depicted the locations of the parks and open space properties throughout Yolo County and other related demographic, biological, and topographical information.
- The sign-in sheets provided a space for interested parties to provide their email addresses and to indicate whether they wished to receive notices of future meetings and plan-related updates.
- A comment form, which included several focus questions, was provided; participants were invited to complete these forms during the meeting or mail them in later.
- A handout was provided identifying the people involved in the planning process: the Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife Advisory Committee members; the County staff, and consultant staff.

PUBLIC COMMENTS & DISCUSSION

A wide variety of issues and concerns emerged throughout the meeting, some of the main themes are identified below. Following the themes, this summary is arranged thematically by major topic; the order of presentation in this summary does not necessarily follow the order of the speakers nor the order in which these topics were discussed at the meeting. What is presented below as a single item or bullet point may actually represent more than one speaker.

Main Themes of Public Comments

Based on comments expressed during the meeting as well as the summation toward the end, the following were some of the main themes of the Esparto meeting.

- *The importance of financial planning and types of funding for parks.*
- *In addition to recreation, public parklands are for education, conservation, and interpretation.*
- *How to best coordinate with other partners in park planning.*
- *Natural habitat conservation [as part of parks].*
- *Access, “connectivity,” and “linkages”– getting to and from public lands.*
- *Capturing development fees.*
- *Respect for private lands.*

Scope of this Master Plan & the Planning Process

- *What parks are included in the plan?*
- *Will the plan include the Esparto area?*
- *Does the Planning Team have any preconceived ideas about the plan or are there any foregone conclusions?*
- *Are planning alternatives available for review?*
- *How will priorities be established for potential projects?*
- *Will the plan address the Conaway Ranch property?*
- *What’s the schedule for the plan?*
- *How will the process involve Spanish-speaking people?*
- *Will information (including this meeting summary) be posted on the County website?*

At various points in the meeting, questions and comments emerged regarding the scope, expected content, and overall direction of the master plan. The Planning Team explained that, while they were required to complete a certain set of tasks under the

contractual scope of work for the project, they did not have preconceived notions or any preliminary conclusions regarding the policy content of the plan at this time. At this stage in the process, information (including public input) is still being collected, and work on the plan itself has not started. Eric Natti, a member of the County Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife Advisory Committee explained how his Committee has discussed their ideas and stated their interests for developing the master plan.

The Planning Team explained that, while the plan will include matters related to the Esparto/Capay Valley area, the intent is that this will be a countywide parks and open space plan. The Parks Master Plan will address the full set of existing County parks (as listed on the County website). While the plan is not likely to contain extensive analyses of “alternatives,” it will contain draft recommendations that will be subject to public review in the draft document.

The plan will incorporate input from stakeholders and interested parties. It is likely to include criteria for setting priorities, based on input from the Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife Advisory Committee (and, ultimately, the Board of Supervisors). The extent to which the plan may address the Conaway Ranch property is uncertain at this point because proceedings related to that property are currently ongoing.

The schedule is flexible, but generally calls for completion of the public draft plan in approximately October. The draft master plan will be addressed at a public meeting of the County Planning Commission; the final plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

The County and the Planning Team welcome input from all parties, including non-English-speaking people with interest in the parks system. Outreach for the plan includes contacts with representatives of Hispanic organizations; arrangements can be made for interpretation and translation services as needed. As new project-related information is produced, significant work products – including the public meeting summaries, Advisory Committee summaries, and a draft of the master plan – will be posted on the County website.

Issues, Concerns & Needs

The primary focus of the meeting was on obtaining comments on parks and open space, from both a countywide perspective, as well as more local perspectives. Commentors offered opinions on a wide range of issues and concerns related to what they believe is needed with respect to County parks, recreation, and open space.

Some of the comments made at the meeting, as one participant observed, fall under the category of “stewardship.” Public land stewardship involves enforcement, maintenance, and education (i.e., fostering appreciation of resource values).

The issues, concerns, and perceived needs raised at the Esparto meeting are summarized below in terms of Countywide issues, Western Yolo issues, and specific park issues.

Countywide Issues

- The County seems to be under-served in terms of park dollars and park space per capita.
- While there seems to be ample open space in the County, there seem to be relatively few (developed) recreational areas. Camping areas are insufficient.
- Some people approve of additional acquisition of private lands for public parks, recreation, and open space; some are opposed.
- Some private property owners (i.e., in the vicinity of parklands) are concerned about vandalism, trash dumping, trespassing, and off-road vehicles (as related to uses of public lands).
- The County needs to explore more public-private partnerships to preserve and/or allow access to open space locations.
- Recognizing the “graying of America,” parks and recreation planning in the County should consider the needs of older residents and visitors.
- How can parks and open spaces areas play a role in preserving agricultural viability and the working landscapes of Yolo County?
- There is a large demand for soccer in the County; the City of Woodland facilities are used by people from all around the area. Hispanic people also would welcome new places to play soccer. The County should consider a regional soccer facility. Such facilities can be money-makers (e.g., the Cherry Island complex, north Sacramento).
- Park planning should recognize various types of park properties and the plan should define these categories.
- Creating “brand recognition” for Yolo County park properties should be one of the objectives – for example, through the use of consistent signage.

Western Yolo County Issues

- People in the Esparto area want new parks and recreation facilities, such as a swimming pool facility, softball fields, and soccer fields.
- Development of community recreation facilities seems to be hampered by agricultural zoning restrictions; working within existing zoning has been an obstacle for some groups pursuing community recreational facilities.
- Some property owners adjacent to BLM lands on the Blue Ridge are opposed to allowing further access into this area, including the acquisition of easements for hiking or multi-use trails. Their concerns include trespassing, vandalism, poaching, effects to sensitive habitats, potential increased fire risk, lack of funding for police and emergency services in remote areas.

Specific County Park Issues

- The playground at Esparto Community Park should be upgraded and adult seating should be provided.
- The Capay Open Space Area – where is it? (As Mr. Williams explained, the park is relatively new, not open yet, and some people may not be aware that it exists.)
- Camp Haswell is overused and too crowded, including the parking area. On some days, there are too many rafts and cars, which excludes “public” use (i.e., by those people who are not customers of the concessionaires).
- Road 87 at Cache Creek Bridge needs trash clean up.
- A softball field should be provided at Nichols Park.
- What’s the status of Helvetia Oak Grove? (Mr. Williams explained that there are currently access issues that hinder public use of this essentially landlocked parcel.)

Financial Components – An Essential Consideration

During the meeting there were a number of comments regarding funding sources, the use of County park in-lieu fees, and other, related financial aspects. Several commentors indicated that financial aspects of park and open space planning should be central considerations in the plan.

Several Esparto area residents commented regarding the money that developers in Yolo County are required to set aside for parklands. With all the new housing going in, they felt that the money accumulated by the County through development fees should be returned to the communities in the form of new parks. There should be a process whereby the creation of new amenities is matched to the development of new housing. The already high demand for additional recreational opportunities will be further increased by the additional residents coming into the new homes.

Mr. Williams indicated that the Parks Master Plan will generally address financing and other related matters, but at this phase in the process, participants should not allow possible funding matters to stifle creative ideas regarding the County’s parks and open space areas.

Comments related to funding and financial planning also included the following:

- The “teeth” of a master plan such of this is in the funding. Financial planning should be incorporated into this process.
- The money that the County is accumulating from developers’ in-lieu fees should be returned to the local communities in the form of new parks.
- Use of Prop 12 and Prop 40 moneys specifically should be considered.
- The plan could include a matrix of known funding sources.

- It may be possible to make money from OHV activities.
- Donations could be sought from tribal government.

“Access” & “Linkages”

A variety of comments were made regarding existing and potential connections both among County parklands and between County lands and other public areas. Access to creeks and rivers was an important issue for several speakers. Also important to some participants was improving access to public land along the Blue Ridge.

- Consider a Countywide trail system, for example connecting between rivers and creeks, or along the Blue Ridge.
- In developing trails and other increased access routes, landowner concerns (and, in some cases, opposition) must be respected; payment must be offered for access easements.
- Consider policies that would support the creation of a “dam-to-dam” trail along Putah Creek, i.e., from Monticello Dam to Lake Solano and Putah Diversion Dam.
- Several speakers wanted to see new bicycle paths developed, particularly separate Class 1 paths that would be safer to use than the heavily traveled roadways.
- The possible use of railroad rights-of-way as trails (e.g., “Rails-to-Trails”) was also suggested.
- Transportation modes, routes, and effects should be considered, including public transport, bicycles, and potential changes in traffic resulting from implementation of the Parks Plan.

Conservation Components of Parks Planning

Comments were also made regarding the conservation component of parks and open space. Comments and suggestions related to conservation and natural resources included:

- Emulate the vision that began in the 19th century that created nature parks in the United States. Parks are places for natural landscapes to exist undisturbed, places to preserve examples of biodiversity. In Yolo County, natural park places could be established to: represent landscapes that existed in the times of the Native People of this area; demonstrate what an undisturbed, natural soil profile looks like; or provide setting to interpret the diversity of a native grassland.
- While “connectivity” (as discussed above) applies to humans via trails, etc., it also applies to wildlife.
- Biodiversity in the County is at risk: save at-risk ecosystems, link ecological and historical past, present, and future.

- Parks and open space areas can provide places to protect rare, endangered, and other sensitive species. Recreation area development, however, may be constrained by the presence of sensitive species.

Importance of Coordination

Parks, recreation, open space, and conservation are important to many groups, organizations, and agencies in Yolo County; there are also cross-connections among several, ongoing County planning efforts and programs. How the County may coordinate now and in the future with these entities and programs – and how management of future parkland and open space areas may tie in with other public lands and conservation areas – are potentially important issues to address in this process. Suggestions related to coordination included:

- Integrate the Parks Master Plan with the Yolo County General Plan Update.
- Coordinate park planning with the Yolo Land Trust and similar organizations.
- Integrate the Parks Master Plan with habitat conservation plans (HCP and NCCP).
- Coordinate with the Yolo RCD.
- The plan should contain policies that would encourage more public-private partnerships.
- The County should make the most of Joint Powers Agreements with other public agencies (e.g., Solano County). Creation (or renewal) of a JPA is an opportunity to identify mutual benefits.
- The County should take advantage of opportunities in partnerships with other watershed groups, such as the Putah Creek Discovery Corridor Cooperative, Cache Creek Conservancy, etc.
- UC Davis is a great resource and potential partner. For example, students could help with aerial photo interpretation to identify priority areas for conservation.
- Parks, recreational facilities, and schools seem to go together (e.g., a park seems compatible with a swimming pool or rec center). Coordinate with school district lands for joint use.

Opportunities & Visions for the Future

In planning for the future, the County should take advantages of the many opportunities inherent in the diversity of landscapes, people, organizations, and future markets. Visions for the future included:

- The County should think about having park and recreation areas that are destinations in themselves.
- Think about bringing a state park to this area, creating a state park in Yolo County.

- The parks plan is an opportunity to create parks that represent various conservation landscapes and places where people can learn about the natural history of Yolo County. Tell the “landscape story” of Yolo County in terms of agriculture and biodiversity.
- The County could institute an “Adopt-a-Park” program, similar to Caltrans’ “Adopt-a-Highway” program. This has been done elsewhere and helps promote pride in the community.
- The County should consider programs to help compensate farmers for providing open space amenities and protecting habitat, such as retaining heritage trees. This has worked in Great Britain with hedgerows.
- The Parks Master Plan should address agri-tourism as a new opportunity for tourism. The County Economic Development Department is already working on farm tours. There also could be eco-tours connecting and interpreting ecological sub-regions and habitat types.
- Consider Conaway Ranch as a potential site for regional parks, habitats.
- Develop new facilities for “new people;” respond to the Hispanic demand for accessible parks.
- Provide a system of inter-connected trails – creeks, farms, levees, and ridgelines.
- Parks are for education, interpretation, and conservation.
- Parks are for fun.

How to Ensure that the Outcome of the Process is Meaningful

The Planning Team sought input from the participants on the question of how to make the outcome of the parks planning process as meaningful as possible. Many responses were related to the importance of communication. Suggestions included:

- Post information (including these summaries) on the County website.
- Provide information in Spanish and initiate outreach into Spanish-speaking communities.
- Use visual aids, graphics, maps.
- Get “buy-in” from County residents on one higher profile, initial project; put up a sign that explains the purpose, funding, and agencies behind the project.
- Identify specific areas for future parks (could be in General Plan Update).
- Link this countywide parks planning process to future educational outreach; create docent programs for parks and continue to participate in related efforts by watershed groups such as the Putah Creek Discovery Corridor Cooperative.



JOHN BENCOMO
DIRECTOR

County of Yolo

PLANNING AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

292 West Beamer Street Woodland, CA 95695-2598 530-666-8775

FAX (530) 666-8728
www.yolocounty.org

Yolo County Parks Master Plan

PUBLIC WORKSHOP AGENDA

Esparto Community Hall

Wednesday, 21 July 2004

6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

- 6:45 Welcome – Dale Flowers, *Meeting Facilitator*, Dale Flowers & Associates
- 7:00 Yolo County Parks Master Plan: Project History, Goals, & Purpose – Brett Williams, *Parks and Resources Coordinator*, Yolo County Planning & Public Works Department, and Rob Thayer, *Bioregional Planner*
- 7:15 The Parks Master Plan Planning Process – Bruce Kemp, *Senior Planner*, Roberts, Kemp & Associates LLC
- 7:30 Objectives of This Workshop – Brian Collett, *Senior Associate*, The Dangermond Group
- 7:45 Participant Comments and Group Discussion
- Strengths & weaknesses in the existing County system of parks and open space areas
 - What do you think is needed? What changes would you recommend?
 - Opportunities, dreams, and visions
- 8:45 Group Discussion

Conclusion: How can we make the outcome of this public input process as meaningful as possible?

If you are interested in receiving information regarding the project please add your contact information to the sign-up sheets located on the sign-in table near the entry. Comments may be submitted to the planning team at parksplan@yolo.com. Information and updates are posted on the County website at http://www.yolocounty.org/prm/master_plan.htm.



ROBERTS, KEMP & ASSOCIATES LLC

APPLIED ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING SOLUTIONS

Yolo County Parks Master Plan
PUBLIC INPUT – ESPARTO
21 July 2004

THEMES

- Funding
- Interpretation / Education
- Coordination
- Natural habitat conservation [as part of parks]
- Specific needs in recreation development
- Connectivity
- [Capturing] development fees
- [Focus on] access, including trails
- Nature-history relationship
- Respect for private lands
- Private-public partnerships
- Parks as tools for teaching

QUESTIONS

- Which parks are included in plan?
- Urban/community parks?
- Process for reviewing options?
- Foregone decisions?
- What is open space? Function?
- Financial strategies? How are they part of process?
- Esparto development and park cost implications.
- Plan completion schedule?
- Will info from tonight be posted on website?
- Translate process to Spanish – How to make this process as meaningful as possible?
- Should there be a specific plan process for Esparto?
- How specific is plan going to be?

Yolo County Parks Master Plan
PUBLIC INPUT – ESPARTO

21 July 2004

ISSUES

- Balance between environmental issues and people
- What to do with Conaway Ranch – is it on the table?
- Lots of open space, but lack of recreation facilities
- Esparto Community – no park site identified
- Financial basis
- Access to creeks (e.g., Cache Creek)
- People trashing park, creek
- Vandalism to private/public lands
- Ways of making money for park
- Planning for the future – parks as destinations
- Upgrading Esparto playground (older people also)
- Need new facilities for new development (countywide)
- Access to Blue Ridge Hills
- Look at what is available (e.g., Cache Creek)
- Use of other public facilities (e.g., schools)
- Want parks in agricultural land areas; how to get there – i.e., zoning /ownership issues
- Over-use of facilities (i.e., Haswell Park for rafting activities)
- Acknowledge landowner concerns (e.g., access impacts)
- Reaching out to Hispanic and other communities

NEEDS

- Need access to Helvetia Park
- Need swimming pool recreation center in Esparto vicinity & need site
- Need to meet demand for soccer facilities
- Stewardship: maintenance, enforcement, education
- Better transportation to resources / public transit or other
- Coordination with other entities (e.g., Putah Creek Council)
- Include criteria for prioritizing needs
- Need better measuring sticks for determining levels of service

Yolo County Parks Master Plan
PUBLIC INPUT – ESPARTO

21 July 2004

- Garner greater appreciation of resources
- Need guidelines for decision makers for enabling parks to happen with development
- Need good consistency with County General Plan
- Better signage [system to reinforce] identity
- Signage for farm uses also
- Putah Creek Discovery Corridor coordination
- Better allocation system for development fees
- Need to preserve working landscapes make more viable and visible
- More multi-cultural and age-groups focus
- Utilize joint powers agreements with like-minded agencies (e.g., Solano County Parks) for resource-focused efforts
- Parks for the sake of nature! Human benefits from capture of remnant of original landscape conditions
- Better linkage with the County's HCP process
- Want [more] "Class 1" bike trails
- Need to focus on ecological hot spots
- Be able to tell the whole story – relationships between farm and natural resources

OPPORTUNITIES & VISIONS

- Create trail connection between reservoirs (Berryessa to Solano Lake)
- Idea of farmland giving back percentage of land to naturalize like hedgerows, etc.
- Availability of good educational resources/data (UC Davis) for better site selection
- Agri-tourism potential
- System of trails throughout County, including farm trails
- Railway conversion to trails
- Putah Creek Corridor between reservoirs trails for public access
- Bring a state park to Yolo County
- (Promote) public stewardship for care for parks (e.g., Adopt-a-Park idea)
- Regional soccer complex (like Cherry Island, Sacramento)
- Urban walking areas
- Look at more public-private partnerships

Yolo County Parks Master Plan
PUBLIC INPUT – ESPARTO

21 July 2004

- Create a Countywide trail system
- Garner better relationships with Cache Creek interests

ADVICE

- Meaningful to whom? [Consider whom the plan is for]
- [Work on]communication
- [Determine] how to reach majority of public
- Use email for outreach
- Tap schools for outreach
- Conduct survey as part of process (bilingual)
- [Provide] better visualization to process [using] maps/photos
- Focus [initially] on achieving *one* major accomplishment!
- Better coordination with other County services for getting parks implemented