

Yolo County Parks Master Plan

Davis Public Meeting Workshop

MEETING SUMMARY

Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department

Thursday, 22 July 2004

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

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 32 people (27 names on the sign-in sheets) attended the public meeting workshop for the Yolo County Parks Master Plan held on July 22, 2004, in the City of Davis Alternative Recreation Building, 1111 Anderson Road, Davis, California. Based on information obtained on the sign-in form, meeting participants came from Davis, Woodland, Winters, Esparto, El Macero, 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: Andrew Fulks, Eric Natti, Mary Schiedt.

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.

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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 “Issues,” “Needs,” “Opportunities & Visions,” “Themes,” and “Questions.” 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 Davis meeting.

- *Partnerships are important in parks planning.*
- *The County should address regional park needs, as opposed to local recreation needs (which are more properly provided by cities).*
- *A hierarchy of needs should be considered in determining priorities.*
- *This plan is really about the quality of life in Yolo County.*
- *Improved public access to public lands is desired, while respecting private lands.*
- *Funding the plan initiatives is the biggest challenge.*

Scope of this Master Plan & the Planning Process

- *Does the old County comprehensive parks and recreation plan provide any basis for this effort?*
- *What is the scope of this plan?*
- *Which parks will be included in the plan? Where are they?*
- *Are only regional parks being addressed? Are sports complexes considered "parks"?*
- *Does the planning process include user surveys?*
- *Will the plan include the Conaway Ranch property?*
- *Are there other, exemplary master plans for parks?*

A number of questions and comments emerged during the meeting regarding the scope, expected content, and overall direction of the master plan. As Mr. Williams explained, the last time a comprehensive plan for County parks was approved was back in 1968. This previous plan provides little direction for the current effort, as most of what had been planned at that time has been realized or is no longer applicable.

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The Planning Team provided general information about the scope of the Parks Master Plan, and identified the locations of the park and open space properties. The plan will address the full set of existing County parks as listed on the County website. 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. Part of the pre-plan work includes reviewing other, exemplary comprehensive plans for parks and open space systems. A limited amount of user information for County parks has been collected by the County.

Issues, Concerns & Needs

The primary focus of the meeting was on obtaining comments on Yolo County's parks and open space. 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. Issues, concerns, and perceived needs raised at the Davis public meeting are summarized below.

General, Countywide issues

- Yolo County parks planning should be cognizant of movements in neighboring counties (e.g., Solano County, Napa County) toward possible regional park districts.
- The County needs to explore partnerships with incorporated cities and other communities. Could the County and the cities cooperate on a regional recreation facility?
- Cities have the resources to develop recreation areas, but smaller unincorporated communities in the County may not have the same opportunities for parks and recreation. Unincorporated areas (which lack organized Parks Departments or similar agencies) need help with development of parks, recreation areas, and sports fields.
- Partnerships between the County and user groups are important in County parks, such as private hobby clubs or local non-profit groups with interests in using or giving tours in the park properties.
- Alternative modes of transportation should be considered. For example, some people would enjoy going to a park by bicycle, camping out, and returning by bicycle, without using a car on the entire trip.
- Respect for private property must be considered and landowners' concerns must be met.
- Vegetation management is an issue at some parks (e.g., invasive species), part of a larger, ongoing challenge to keep up with maintenance needs.
- Areas should be set aside for activities such as paintball games and off-road vehicle use. Setting aside specific areas will help reduce potential, adverse impacts elsewhere.

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- There is a general lack of public awareness in the County regarding public parks and open space areas.
- Some people believe more public land is needed in the County; some do not.

Location-Specific Issues

- Parks in the cities (e.g., Davis) tend to be devoted to recreational uses. Where can residents go for experiences in natural areas?
- More parks and camping areas are needed near Davis and Woodland. The closest camping area is 40 miles away.
- More parks are needed near West Sacramento, such as a “nature park.”
- Cache Creek is one of the County’s best-kept secrets. Why? On the other hand, the Cache Creek area is the biggest tourist [recreational users] draw in the County – after the casino! What is the long-term potential for parks, recreation, and conservation along Cache Creek?
- Sufficient public access to the mountains (including Berryessa Peak) is generally lacking. A park location should be found between Winters and Esparto, backing up to Berryessa Peak.
- Grasslands Regional Park does not currently have a day-use fee.
- In the Esparto area, residents would welcome more play areas and a soccer field.
- “De facto parks” should be more formally identified, clarified, and maintained. These are places that receive substantial public use, but are not County-maintained areas. In addition to these places, there are also “de facto activities,” that may also need to be considered.
- The County dump station near Esparto – is this an opportunity for a future park?
- Could a soccer complex be developed near the Yolo County airport?

Access as a General Theme of Discussion

As one participant noted, access to public lands was one of the central themes in the meeting discussions. As noted in this summary, there were a number of comments concerning access, easements, and rights-of-way. Comments regarding access issues included the following.

- Better access is needed to existing public land where public access is currently unavailable or restricted. Rights-of-way, easements, other forms of access are needed to help public obtain access to public lands.
- It is important to allay the concerns of private landowners who might be adversely affected by increased public uses.
- “Access” can also mean visual access to open space, as another speaker pointed out. Daily views of open areas, sunsets, working landscapes enhance our quality

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of life in Yolo County. How to keep such areas open for the benefit of future generations is a challenge.

- There may be opportunities in the future to connect park properties and provide connections to other public lands by using existing improvements such as levees.

Financial Components – An Essential Consideration

During the meeting there were a number of comments regarding funding sources and other, related financial aspects. Comments related to funding and financial planning also included the following:

- How much Prop 40 money is available? Mr. Williams explained that about \$2.1 million is or will be available in Prop 40 money; these funds, however, are primarily for acquisition and development, not maintenance.
- Maintenance in County parks is an ongoing challenge. Parks need operation and maintenance funding, in addition to staff resources.
- At least six County park properties are located in close proximity to other counties, suggesting some potential to share resources and maintenance costs.
- Money for parks can be generated through day-use fees. To the extent possible these should be consistent throughout the system.
- Open space can be kept simple with few improvements and thus require low maintenance.
- Long-term funding sources are necessary and should be identified. A parcel tax could be instituted after a vote. This approach argues that urban dwellers should share the overall costs of regional facilities.
- As another suggestion, the County should tap into the “philanthropic impulse” for funding and land donations.
- User fees should be considered – i.e., fees to use campgrounds and group areas; fees for vehicles and boats.

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:

- A parks and open space system provides opportunities for natural heritage appreciation and conservation (e.g., wildlife habitat).
- Parks should be large enough to serve multiple needs, for both humans as well as wildlife.
- Contiguous corridors are needed for habitat – for example, in riparian areas along creeks.

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- Parks and open space areas provide places to protect rare, endangered, and other sensitive species.
- Habitat conservation is important to protect biodiversity.
- Management of parks and open space areas should be conducted without impacting wildlife. Strive for compatibility between human and wildlife uses. Wildlife appreciation is important.
- Education (e.g., natural history and environmental) and interpretation components should be built into the plan.
- Riparian lands are among the scarcest and most environmentally valuable lands in the County. If the trend toward large exclusive housing continues in these areas, public land use will be excluded (this is also a problem in mountain areas). Protection for riparian habitat is needed.
- Use “green design” standards in facility development, both as educational demonstrations as well as for the resulting economic benefits.
- Wildlife-viewing (e.g., wildlife seen from a raft trip) is a non-consumptive use that people really respond to.
- Sloughs in the County may provide places for trail development.
- With a record salmon run in Putah Creek last year, there should be place to go to observe the fish.
- Old-growth cottonwoods and oaks should be preserved.

Importance of Partnerships & 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:

- The County should make the most of Joint Powers Agreements (JPAs) with other public agencies – e.g., Solano County.
- Regional districts may be able to pool resources, come up with more funding, and cooperatively meet the needs of a wider region. 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.
- Cities are having problems with growth, and regional sports complexes are increasingly in demand. Regional sports facilities should be considered; cities may cooperate to develop a sports complex in the County. Such facilities would

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likely need to be addressed in the General Plan; zoning adjustments may also be needed.

- Non-profit groups can provide educational and other programs in County parks (e.g., groups working on Putah Creek issues).
- County should work with schools to develop playgrounds, soccer fields.

Opportunities & Visions for the Future

Visions for the future included:

- The County could cooperate with the cities and in possible regional park districts.
- More information about the County park and open space system should be available on the County website.
- Educational programs and tours at County parks can be provided through partnerships with local non-profit groups, such as Cache Creek Conservancy, Audubon, and Putah Creek groups.
- There could be a local “Friends of Yolo Parks” group.
- There could be property tax rebates that make significant natural areas available.
- Consider a County-wide trail system.
- This effort to plan for parks and open space areas is really all about quality of life in Yolo County.
- Use adaptive management.
- Make good use of partnerships.

Additional Advice for the Preparing the Plan

As one of the participants observed, there was an abundant amount of experience and expertise present at this meeting, in terms of people who had considerable professional and personal experience with parks, recreation, open space, and conservation in Yolo County. Among the suggestions made for preparing the master plan were the following.

- This plan should be intended for both:
 - residents of the County, and our quality of life; and
 - visitors to the County, and the economic benefits of tourism.
- Educational and interpretive components should be built into the plan.
- Consider different kinds of “parks” (for management purposes). Subdivide this term and define categories of parks (e.g., natural conservation areas versus community parks versus regional parks).

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- Include provisions for joint planning efforts, such as regional parks districts, JPAs, plans for partnering.
- Differentiate between long-term uses and day-uses.
- Consider under-served and low-income communities.
- Address the needs of the non-English-speaking people.
- Be careful about incorporating mitigation programs into parks planning. In other areas where this has been done, the communities are impacted by housing development at higher levels, allowed through the density bonus provided in exchange for the parks.
- This master plan for parks and open space should be flexible, open, and creative. It should be a new kind of plan, with built-in creativity and room for all ideas, reflecting the wishes of the people.
- Plan big: when you plant an acorn, you may not be around to see it fully grown, but a magnificent oak will someday be there for future your grandchildren.
- Think creatively in terms of “nearby parks, nearby nature.”
- People want nearby nature, special places, campgrounds, trails, wildlife areas, etc. We have a pretty good understanding of this demand. Think of concentric circles around population centers, note what they have or do not have, and incorporate this into the plan in terms of spheres of use.
- In planning for parks, recreation, and open space consider a community’s “hierarchy of needs.” (Take care of basic needs first, then expand into new territory.)



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PUBLIC WORKSHOP AGENDA

Davis Alternative Recreation Building

Thursday, 22 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

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THEMES

- Partnerships
- Work with the “regional context” – as distinct from the local context
- “A hierarchy of needs”
- Quality of life in Yolo County
- Public access to public lands
- Funding

QUESTIONS

- Does the last Parks Master Plan provide support for this plan?
- What is scope of plan process?
- Which parks are included?
- Where are the parks?
- How does county interface with cities?
- What is the Proposition 40 fund amount for Yolo County?
- Does the planning process include user surveys?
- Pursue private partnerships?
- Will there be an inventory of properties?
- Does County parks include sports complexes?

ISSUES

- Conflicting uses (e.g., paint ball & OHV users)
- Access issues: “getting there” and Rights of Way; access to existing public lands that are currently inaccessible
- Vegetation management & maintenance
- Cities have parks & recreation facilities, but smaller communities don’t
- Funding for maintenance
- Disparity between available camping areas and population centers – [typically] more than 40 miles distance and best facilities outside County!

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- How to compare difference needs and facilities (e.g., bike corridor versus soccer fields)
- Why is Cache Creek the County's best-kept secret?
- Private land owner issues (e.g., trespass, property damage)
- Better cooperation with other park services
- Need for better funding sources
- Natural heritage appreciation
- Lack of public awareness about resources
- Preservation of wildlife habitat
- Who is the audience / which users – local or regional? Does the County focus on its own population or does it serve regional populations?
- Putah Creek area: Yolo County's facilities deferred maintenance and lack of policing
- Insufficient camp facilities
- Small communities are underserved by County
- Parks need to be defined [categorically]
- Cities unable to provide full spectrum of recreation services more facilities needed
- Trespass on "de facto" parks indicates demand; they need to be managed!

NEEDS

- Open space for the sake of open space – i.e., as a visual resource
- Parks need to be large enough to have multiple uses and accommodate wildlife
- [More] contiguous lands for habitat and management
- Compatibility between recreational uses and habitat
- Better web orientation for information
- More day uses areas
- Broader outreach! But how to accomplish?
- Allaying fears of private land owners adjacent to parks & public access points
- Access fees
- Partnering cooperation between difference management entities
- More camp sites? With high resource value
- Need public access along Putah and Cache Creeks that can accommodate population centers

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- Identify activities occurring at de facto use areas
- Education for youths is vital
- Address underserved low-income populations
- Website linkage to cities and other park providers link with schools
- Address need of non-English-speaking people
- Green technology (economical long term benefits)
- Incentive for gaining cooperation of private land owners next to public lands
- County dump site potential?
- Need counterpart to Cold Canyon site: e.g., public access to mountains
- Riparian lands development is excluding public access
- Many of County's facilities are on the periphery. Share costs & resources with adjoining jurisdictions?
- Comprehensive inventory of potential parks & open space opportunity areas, especially creeks
- Need to address basic community need (e.g., soccer equity!)
- Sloughs in county as possible trail locations
- Recreational user service fees
- Simple development: low-key to minimize maintenance
- More wildlife viewing opportunities
- Places to see sunsets! (Just natural areas)
- More wild places for "nearby nature" (e.g., between Davis & Woodland)
- Need citizen groups to lobby for funds
- Property tax rebates to people who enable better access

OPPORTUNITIES & VISIONS

- [Integrated] education and interpretation components from start
- Look at larger regional context for funding strategies (e.g., Solano JPA)
- Connecting existing corridors – use of levees for access/recreation potential
- Countywide trail system
- Look at airport for additional park uses?
- Esparto library as partnership for parks & recreation facilities

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- Greater utilization of conservation easement
- Partnership with community organizations for education and other support
- Part of mitigation strategy should be the creative use of endowments for other park needs (e.g., Riverside County model)
- Preserve old growth oaks and cottonwoods
- Look at creeks & riparian corridors for use and protection
- More places to observe wildlife; an observation area for salmon run on Putah Creek?
- Look at partnership with NCCP and JPAs

ADVICE

- Engage knowledgeable people
- Master Plan needs to be a flexible model
- Make this a new type of master plan with built-in creativity
- Emphasize future legacy idea: think big and with the long term in mind, rather than within narrower set limits