

Yolo County Parks Master Plan
County Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife
Advisory Committee Meeting # 2

Meeting Summary

Yolo County Planning and Public Works Department
Cache Creek Conference Room
292 West Beamer Street
Woodland, CA 95695

July 12, 2004
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Advisory Committee Members Present: Sally Barrett, Diane Colborn, Andrew Fulks (Chair), Gerald Hartwig, Eric Natti, Mary Schiedt.

County Staff Present: Brett Williams, Parks and Resources Coordinator.

Others Present: Beth Gabor, Deputy to Supervisor Helen Thomson.

Consultant Staff Present: Brian Collett, The Dangermond Group; and Bruce Kemp, Roberts, Kemp & Associates LLC.

Agenda Item: "Discussion of Countywide Park Master Plan Process."

Supplemental Materials: County staff provided consultants with a copy of an email message from Committee member Don Morrill, who was unable to attend the meeting. In the message, Mr. Morrill stated his thoughts regarding a number of points related to the Parks Master process and focus points (a copy of the message is attached to this summary). Consultants provided copies of a suggested draft agenda for the two upcoming public meetings / workshops, and circulated two in-progress, interpretive maps depicting vegetation and biophysical classifications within the County.

Parks Master Plan

The Committee was asked to address three items:

- (1) Review of the meeting summary for the Committee's meeting on May 10;
- (2) The agenda for the two upcoming public meetings in Davis and Esparto; and
- (3) Comments on specific matters pertaining to individual park properties (compared to the previous meeting, where the focus was more on the parks and open space system as a whole).

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Committee members commented in turn, with some intervening discussions. This summary generally follows the order in which the comments were made.

Ms. Colborn indicated that, while the County parks overall possess a lot of potential, there could be improvement in access and overall coordination. Park properties, she said, serve two needs: (1) they enhance the lives of Yolo County residents and (2) they provide economic benefits. Ms. Colborn commented that the plan should include a summary of all resources, existing recreation activities, conservation issues, and natural inventories. She noted that there is a need for better signage at County park properties. Access for handicapped persons is also important.

Ms. Colborn further suggested that the plans for the American River Parkway and the Consumnes River are exemplary plans. For the Parks Master Plan, rivers and creeks are important, and treatment in the plan regarding the Sacramento River, Putah Creek, and Cache Creek should be coordinated. She related a recent experience in Maine, where she visited a County park, formed around a heath bog; this park was well-equipped with signs and a self-guided trail, which she offered as a good model for future Yolo County park development. Ms. Colborn would like to see more self-guided trails and bike paths and suggested that the County should provide additional information to the public in the form of maps and brochures to promote them.

Ms. Colborn then commented on several specific park properties. Helvetia Oaks, which, as characterized in a previous Committee meeting, has “context problems,” should get more use, in her opinion; she suggested that there be a mechanism for providing limited access, possibly by reservation, but she was not in favor of developing the property. Ms. Colborn commented on recent developments regarding the possible acquisition of Conaway Ranch by the County, and how this property would be a great public asset. She expressed the desirability of having the County Master Plan compliment the Yolo Bypass Wildlife area. Mr. Collett noted that the Pacific Flyway Center, adjacent to the Bypass, was now in its planning and design phase, and will have an observation tower. Ms. Colborn also indicated that the use of levees for trails was an intriguing idea.

Mr. Natti commented that the meeting summary captured what he said at the May 10 Committee meeting. He generally agreed with Ms. Colborn’s comments. He went on to emphasize the importance of trail linkages and suggested that the planning team confer with BLM concerning connections with those public lands. Trail connections, he said, are important for all manner of uses, including equestrian, hiking, and biking.

Mr. Fulks offered a clarification to the May 10 Committee meeting summary, regarding a possible link in the Cache Creek basin from Road 53 to BLM lands; he wanted to make it clear that at this location there is an intervening private property. He agreed with previous speakers that providing trails and linkages was important; the County leverages its own resources by linking County park properties with other public lands. Mr. Fulks would also like to see more West Sacramento input.

Mr. Natti commented on the importance of identifying projects in the master plan that “score well” in terms of grant programs, such as the Land and Water Conservation

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Fund program (administered by the National Park Service). It was noted that combinations of grant funding sources (necessitating multiple applications) might be required, such as combining Land and Water Conservations Fund with State Prop 40 (Roberti-Z'Berg-Harris Grant Program) funds.

Ms. Barrett agreed that linkages are important in terms of countywide park and open space planning. She commented on the difficulty of developing park projects in the southeast part of the County, including the Clarksburg area, and suggested the establishment of a satellite County parks facility – possibly with a resident host or County employee – in that area. Mr. Hartwig commented that satellite County yards had been tried in the past but were not successful. Mr. Williams commented that among the challenges for park hosts in the Clarksburg area would be the boat ramp's high rate of vandalism.

Ms. Schiedt commented on the reduction in wildlife, including migratory birds, in natural areas such as wood duck wetlands when those areas become used for active recreation, such as biking and paintball games. Regarding the preliminary planning zones introduced in a previous meeting, she commented that Zones 2 and 3 need most work in terms of planning for parks and open space areas. She suggest that the County's Agricultural heritage be emphasized with signs, and that native plantings and hedgerows be encouraged. Ms. Schiedt also encouraged the use of easements.

Mr. Hartwig commented that there was a lot of material in the previous May 10 meeting summary, some of which should be expected to survive public review and some not. He was in favor of a full inventory of County parks and open space assets, and suggested that the plan identify how existing parks are being used. He recommended that the plan be framed to utilize the assets the County currently has before moving on to additional areas and acquisitions. He also noted that the plan should identify existing and potential linkages.

Ms. Schiedt commented that the plan should include consideration of easements, such as those for agricultural lands and conservation areas.

Mr. Natti said that he had spoken with Supervisor Helen Thomson regarding parks and open space standards – in particular, standards for the number of parkland acres per 1000 residents. He suggested that the County needs to stay ahead of the demand. Standards (e.g., acres of recreational lands per capita) have been promulgated by the National Recreation and Parks Association; he also referred to regional standards. He is of the opinion that park and open space standards should be sufficient to keep up with projected growth in the County in order to maintain our quality of life. Discussion ensued in which the members considered how park and open space standards depend on the types of park or open space assets.

Mr. Hartwig commented that in Zone 1 (western Yolo County) some citizens are likely to be opposed to policies promoting new park and open space acquisitions. He believes that public access (i.e., by acquiring property or creating easements) is likely to be a hard sell for people who do not wish to “give up” what they have. Mr. Hartwig also commented that “willing sellers” do not just exist; they are made. He also

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commented on the spill-over effect on private property from people using public lands. Long-term resident landowners who own large parcels of land do not want more people trespassing on their properties.

Ms. Barrett expressed her dislike for what she termed “a pent-up need for destructive recreation.” She said she did not wish to see destruction of natural values, particularly along Putah Creek. She suggested there is a need for off road vehicle recreation. Ms Barret also suggested park acres per capita may not be an accurate way to gauge the County’s recreational needs. She suggested that “usable acres” along with miles of trails could be used.

The Committee and the consultants discussed the upcoming public meetings, including where the meetings would be held, the materials that would be made available, the draft agenda, and the variety of methods that people could use to submit comments. As a “homework assignment,” Mr. Williams suggested that members compile any further comments that they may have that remained unaddressed in this meeting, particularly any further comments regarding specific County park properties in the context of the Parks Master Plan.

Attachment 1

-----Original Message-----

From: Don Morrill
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2004 2:38 PM
To: Brett Williams
Subject: PRWAC meeting/comments

Howdy, Brett. Sorry I can't make it. Here are my main thoughts.

OVERALL

In terms of priority, we, of course, should start by strengthening what we have—increased visibility, interpretation, signage, amenities and access. We ought to work “outward” from existing parks to determine possible additions. I don't believe we should try to satisfy all demands, particularly those we haven't gotten response/feedback from. For instance, equestrian access/trails are needed, as are biking trails.

It's important to reach out to all recreation groups proactively and consider input. However, those we don't get, we shouldn't spend time/money on—i.e. off road vehicles. It doesn't make sense to plan extensively for groups that we don't hear.

Also, we should look at areas near Woodland (Cache Creek Settling Basin/Conaway Ranch) and West Sacramento (Deep Water Channel-& Yolo Bypass Wildlife area—elsewhere?) for access & trails.

Those landscapes underrepresented in county parks—blue oak woodland, etc. should be prioritized and identified.

ZONE 1

The Cache Creek parks ought to be seen as gateways to hiking and access to a proposed wilderness area. Of course they need improvements for overnight camping as well. The more, though, we highlight access to BLM lands, the more we'll disperse use.

Putah Creek is an area which we should also look to strengthen in terms of visibility and access. I'd like us to encourage long term planning for stream hiking and access in conjunction w/ landowners all along the creek. Of course, this would involve working with land owners and the Putah Creek Council. “Wild” riparian habitat w/o access is fine.

ZONE 2

The most interesting to me is potential for recreation in conjunction w/ off-creek water storage and Arbuckle Road for Trail bike use

ZONE 3

I agree that something near Woodland is important here. Along Cache Creek is a good idea, but may be tough.

ZONE 4

Conaway (mostly in Zone 4 is something to look at near Woodland, though the process has just begun.)

Near Fremont Weir State Wildlife Area makes much sense.

ZONE 5

Important, but hard to identify. Would be good to work with Meri Stratton-Phelps and the City to get sense of it.

Again, while it's addressed in our Open Space Element, it's important to keep in mind a non-profit adjunct to the County Parks to help facilitate acquisition and access.