

Yolo County  
Parks and Open Space Master Plan

**Compiled Comments on Draft Plan –  
Issues by Category**

**5 April 2005**

1. Plan-Making and Overall Plan Development Process

- Commenter found plan difficult to read and envision (12:20).<sup>1</sup>
- Plan needs to be redone from the beginning (50:51).
- Commenter agrees with importance of having a master plan for the parks in Yolo County, one that evaluates the entire park system in considering the present and future needs of Yolo County residents (16:68).
- The County's planning team needs to work more closely with potentially affected landowners (16:68); County needs a partnership with the landowners (16:69).
- Public participation in this plan's development has been minimal (50:81).
- Plan should include the goals of the Yolo County parks program (12:20).
- Make the master plan a 10-year or at most 15-year plan, with benchmarks at three or four-year intervals (16:4).
- Draft seems more of a vision [statement] or concept paper; it is inadequate as a master plan (16:32; 16:68).
- Commenter believes in trying to find common ground and in adhering to the principle of serving a public good (16:33; 16:73).
- Commenter is concerned that the plan may be used in the future as an expression of public intent, recommends that the language must be clear to prevent misinterpretations, and recommends that the language must pass scrutiny in the public forum (18:68).
- Commenter states the opinion that plan will be used as a guiding document for future General Plans; it has grave potential to be misused as justification for the taking of land for public use (49:77).
- Commenter perceives bias in the development of the plan, and is concerned that data for background studies is biased, misleading, or otherwise flawed (50:45).
- The plan's view of a growing public need for more recreation is never qualified, most facilities are underutilized, and plan (inappropriately) concludes that Yolo County is not meeting some unknown regional fair share standard (49:77).

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<sup>1</sup> The source of the comment is identified by the first number; see attached list. The second number, following the colon, identifies the page number in the comment compilation document.

- Commenters perceive bias against property rights and agricultural interests in the composition of the Parks Advisory Committee (4:64).
- Urban planners do not take into consideration the negative effects of injecting an urban use (trails, staging areas, gateways) into rural, agricultural areas (28:78).
- Commenter perceives bias on the Parks Advisory Committee and states that County citizens need to trust that the final master plan is not driven by special interests but is rather the result of an objective, evenhanded, and deliberative process (16:72).
- Commenter recommends that the plan should stay away from state-wide data that does not include local trends, such as local hunting and fishing (50:53).
- Commenter recommends that a formal parks needs assessment be conducted (16:4, 16:32; 16:70-71).
- Commenter suggests removal of all dotted lines and circles on the System Map that represent parks or trails on private property; these lines may be added back after they are vetted through a described decision-making process (16:4).
- Parks plan should include policies of existing County General Plan that protect agricultural lands and farming (50:51).
- Planners should not view the rural landscape as theirs to shape as they please (50:81).
- Commenter suggests the formation of an ad hoc committee of landowners to advise the Planning and Public Works Department regarding this plan (16:6).

## 2. Vision and Guiding Principles

- The Vision Statement should be changed to a Mission Statement (33:50).
- Vision Statement and ten principles are in conflict with County General Plan policies that deal with protection, preservation, and conservation of agricultural land (49:77; 50:51).
- Commenter suggests changes in several guiding principles (18:38):
  - Principle 5. Remove phrase “that are currently landlocked.”
  - Principle 6. Add statement: “Where any change is made or proposed to the use of Park lands the County Zoning Ordinance must be followed.”
  - Principle 7. Remove words “farm trails” because it sounds like an endorsement of [foot]trails across private property.
- Commenter suggests that all discussion of access and acquisition should be removed from the Vision Statement, and that it should be much simpler and economically feasible (50:51)
- Commenter believes that support for bond measures should precede an expansion vision, not vice-versa (50:51).
- There is too much emphasis on accessing public lands in the plan vision; commenter perceives a sense of entitlement that all government lands should be accessible by the public, and states that this thinking is erroneous (16:71).
- Commenters request that the guiding principles mention “promotes wildlife” (39:66).

- Commenter expressed the opinion that vision statements in general planning documents (such as this plan) are the language of the greater eminent domain community, intended to support future resolutions of necessity that would allow taking of private property (50:82).

### 3. County's Role as provider of parks, recreation, and open space

- Maintenance and enhancement of community parks should be priority over acquisitions for passive recreation (24:13).
- Most residents most of the time prefer picnic areas, playgrounds, turf, boating, and ballfields (24:14).
- Draft plan represented a misdirection of priorities that emphasized "big ticket" land acquisition over maintaining and enhancing community park facilities; the apparent shift from being a parks provider to a steward of open space is at odds with the expectations and desires of County residents; County's primary role should be basic (developed) parks, picnic areas, boating facilities, playgrounds, etc. (24:13-16).
- County should not try to duplicate the existing role of federal or state land management agencies or private conservators of open space (24:16).
- Commenter does not believe that Yolo County has as great a responsibility to the surrounding region [in providing parks and outdoor recreation] as suggested (12:21).
- Highest priority should be given to improvements and acquisitions that will benefit the most residents (5:35).
- The rapid and steady loss of land through development in neighboring Counties has drawn attention to Yolo County's open space inventory (50:83).

### 4. Existing Parks and Recreation Resources

- Yolo County already has excellent access to public lands, including areas outside County (50:1).
- Plan fails to take into account more than 300,000 acres of public land that are available within and adjacent to the general region, including within the Berryessa Blue Ridge Natural Area; exceptional recreational opportunities available in such lands were not acknowledged as part of the inventory (52:42; 49:77; 50:45; 50:82).
- Agriculture is the steward of a large percentage of open space in the County (28:79).
- Maintenance and enhancement of existing parks should be given higher priority over initiatives to acquire new public parks and open space areas (24:15).
- Maintenance is very much deferred throughout County park system; before adding more real estate, County should set aside funds to care for existing properties (33:50); condition of park reflects poor stewardship (49:77).
- Many people enjoy hunting and shooting sports, in partnership with rural landowners, yet these are not considered in the plan (50:46; 50:82).

### ***Specific existing park-related matters***

- Any new bridge over Cache Creek should be for pedestrians only, not equestrians; if low-water bridge is flooded, trails should be considered too wet for horses. Rather than build a new bridge, the existing low-water bridge should be rebuilt and made slightly higher (5:35).
- Plan should be more specific concerning stewardship and environmental restoration in Clarksburg (5:36).
- Existing public access points on Putah Creek are closed and overgrown – this is an example of the conditions that no private property owner would want to deal with (49:77-78).
- Consider trail between Otis Ranch and the low-water bridge at Cache Creek Canyon Park (5:36).
- Statements about ADA at Historical Museum should be deleted unless funds are definite; also could have impacts to historical structure (5:36).
- Park in vicinity of Woodland / Willow Slough good because high population served (5:36).
- Improvements associated with the Scout cabin [at Camp Haswell] should be cost-effective and consider the location in the floodplain (33:50).
- Restoration projects in the Putah Creek corridor could provide nesting habitat for obligate riparian nesting birds, and in the creek itself for salmon spawning habitat; projects could include salmon-viewing opportunities (30:97).

## 5. Parkland Expansion & Acquisition

- County should move to acquire property only if plan goals cannot be achieved by other means (16:5).
- County should approach potential sellers with a range of options, including first option, life estate, three-way exchange, conservation easement, incentives (16:5-6).
- Commenter requests that the plan not include the State Parks Central Valley Vision concept for Dunnigan Hills (3:22).
- Commenters indicate general support for parkland acquisition and increased access (25:27, 2:28, 9:28, 19:29, 11:29, 22:31, 1:39).
- Commenters endorse the proposal to seek State Park status for a park in the Dunnigan Hills area (39:66).
- Commenter supports open space acquisition along creeks and in mountains (45:23).
- All acquisition discussions should be in separate section of plan devoted to longer term aspects (50:51).
- Public already has access to great majority of useful public lands on the Blue Ridge (5:35).
- Commenter wants plan to prohibit acquisition for the purpose of recreation at the County level (18:39).
- Plan should not allow or encourage easements for access because they erode private property rights (18:59).

- There is a need for a feasibility study regarding the proposed parks and open space acquisitions (16:69).

***Eminent domain***

- Commenters note that plan never mentions eminent domain, but it seems to clearly anticipate County forcing landowners to sell property or access rights for the creation of parks and trails (4:62).
- Yolo County’s reputation and willingness to use its eminent domain powers to acquire private land under questionable circumstances is a violation of public trust and makes the County an untrustworthy partner in the creation of new parks (43:18;14:19).
- Commenter states that taking Conaway Ranch by eminent domain is an abuse of authority and inappropriate for purposes of parkland and open space (16:14, 16:16).
- Plan seems to involve planned eminent domain actions (50:45; 4:62).
- The most that the County should encourage are voluntary arrangements with landowners (4:62).
- Commenter expresses opposition to taking of public right-of-way on investment group property near County Road 78 and Highway 16 (27:39).
- It would be appropriate to state clearly and emphatically that this plan does not envision the taking of any private property (28:80).
- No re-classification of private lands should occur; lands should be left in present zoning and landowners should be free to apply for changes in land use designations without the limitations of land value that could result if lands were targeted for future recreational use (28:80).
- Commenter expresses the view that condemnation of land and private property rights can be delegated to JPAs (50:81).
- Commenter expresses the view that partnerships formed with other government authorities gives those agencies the green light for taking of private property, as supported by a vision statement (50:81).

***Wild and Scenic designation***

- Commenter sees a connection between Wild and Scenic designation and parks plan (33:41).
- Commenter believes W&S designation will impede summertime flows in Cache Creek (33:49).
- Commenter expresses concerns about mercury contamination in Cache Creek and states that fish must be discouraged from entering the creek because it is an Impaired Waterway (33:49).

**6. Recreation–Agriculture Interface/Public Access–Private Property**

- The draft plan did not sufficiently emphasize private property rights (33:49).
- Commenters perceive in the draft plan a bias against agriculture. Parks and trail uses are not compatible with surrounding agricultural uses. The draft plan conflicts with adopted right-to-farm ordinance (4:63).

- The omission of statements to protect existing, surrounding agricultural uses is conspicuous in the draft plan (28:879).
- Plan appears to favor regional urban dwellers at the expense of rural landowners, farms, ranches (50:45).
- Folks from urban areas typically have their own local parks program (50:51); City folks should rely on their own park systems (50:55).
- Park plan must not be allow to impose the public into rural backyards and businesses (33:40).
- Those who desire access to lands that are now private need to get to know the growers and landowners; access and public use needs to be by invitation (50:51).
- Commenter wants plan to include statements that County park system respects and does not conflict with agricultural endeavors nor violate right to farm (50:55).
- Commenter describes landowners' concerns and requirements as having three main themes: control – landowner retains ultimate say on use of property; safeguards – landowner must be provided with protections related to liability, damage, and theft; and incentives – the County or the users will need to pay for privileges (16:3).
- Opening up property to the public invariably results in degradation of the land through trash, pollution, habitat disturbance, fires, and unsavory members of the public (16:73).
- Commenter has problems with people who trespass on their property, discard trash, and otherwise do not respect private property (46:57-58).
- With increased public access in agricultural areas, farmers will be forced to curtail operations such as livestock or spraying (4:63; 28:79).
- With a public trail comes theft, vandalism, trash, and noise; the ability to call law enforcement and file a report is not adequate mitigation (28:79).
- County will not be able to ensure that public access will not adversely affect private lands (43:18; 14:19).
- Opening lands to the public inevitably results in degradation (16:33).
- With public trail use comes urbanites who do not understand the realities of farming; farming in an increasingly urbanized county is difficult enough without injecting more uncontrolled urban-farm interface (28:80).
- Plan must not impose public into rural landowner backyards (40).
- Plan should define “good-neighbor policy” (33:49).
- Access to private property should be by invitation (50:46).
- Commenter enjoys his private “park;” the land is managed under the principle that the land comes first, not visitors (12:20).
- Commenter states belief that pristine lands are beautiful and rich and wildlife, and County should not allow what is a privilege to some become a right for all (12:20).
- Commenter wants private property to be excluded from inclusion in park plans (33:50).

- Plan should be modified to indicate that protection of surrounding agriculture is a Guiding Principle, a Management and Operations Policy and Action, and a Resource Management and Interpretation Policy and Action (28:80).
- Regarding the Blue Ridge Trail proposal, landowners adjacent to non-contiguous BLM parcels remain opposed to this concept because of trespassing, vandalism, poaching, encroachment on sensitive habitat, fire danger, lack of funding for services for this remote and rugged area, lack of funding to police the area, and increased difficulty in conducting controlled burns (8:87-89; 44:105).

## 7. Future Park System / Meeting Future Demand

- County should take this opportunity to create a robust, interconnected network of public lands to enhance the quality of life for County residents (20:8).
- The time to designate future parklands is now before increasing costs and development limit options (25:27).
- Focus on hiking, access, and acquisition should be reduced to a much lower level to better reflect the actual needs of the recreating public (18:60).
- Focus of plan should be on future improvements of current sites with long-term goal of fully utilizing park system resources (18:61).
- Not all government lands should be considered publicly owned; commenter specifically mentions the BLM lands that have private leases (such as the communication sites on Berryessa Peak) (16:72).

### **Trails**

- Commenter believes it would be valuable to establish and promote local hiking opportunities, including trails from the cities to nearby natural areas (20:8).
- Commenters support the idea of a bike path through Capay Valley in Esparto/Capay/Guinda areas (41:99; 48:26; 48:99) or a bike, foot, rollerblade trail from one end of Capay Valley to the other (7:106).
- Commenter is opposed to hiking trail on Rocky Ridge and states that the line showing this trail on the park system map must be removed (18:61).
- Commenters support more public hiking trails in existing public lands (36:11; 40:11; 35:91; 13:92).
- Commenters support more access to public land in mountain areas, such as Blue Ridge (36:11; 31:100; 17:102); support for additional access to public land while respecting private ownership (45:23); access to public land on Blue Ridge that currently have no public access (21:25).
- Until actual needs can be determined by an in-depth study, plan should put a stop to all new trail construction (18:59).
- Commenter supports the Dam-to-Dam connector multi-use trail from Monticello Dam, connecting all five Putah Creek access points, to the Youth Area Campground (10:109).

### ***Future, potential recreational resources***

- Plan should provide for connection between Grasslands Park and Putah Creek (20:17).
- Connect Dunnigan Hill park to Cache Creek (20:7).
- Connect Conaway area to Cache Creek (20:7).
- Commenters are strongly opposed to Western Foothills Gateway and Dunnigan Park to the extent that private lands would be affected (43:18; 14:219).
- Conservation linkages to Yolo Bypass area would help create conservation core (20:7).
- Commenter is opposed to park proposals in the Dunnigan Hills area (12:20).
- Conaway Ranch as a regional park is significant departure from previous representations by the County (24:14).

### ***ATV / Off-road vehicles areas***

- Commenter approves of reuse of former gravel mining areas for recreation and wildlife habitat (50:55).
- Commenter is opposed to “the proposed State ORV park” (12:20).
- Not addressing motor bikes and all terrain vehicles in the plan is an oversight in this plan (17:24; 5:35 and 5:85).
- Use of motorized vehicles in Cache Creek causes adverse effects, including erosion, damage to vegetation, and noise; motorized vehicles should be kept away from the creek (17:23).
- Plan needs to provide strategic planning for an ORV park; use of former gravel mining areas is a great opportunity (5:35 and 5:36; 5:86).

## **8. Financing and Implementation**

- County’s General Fund cannot accommodate the acquisition initiatives in the draft plan (24:14).
- County cannot afford the draft plan (4:63).
- Commenters believe that property owners in the County are not likely to vote in favor of increasing property taxes to support park development, especially when their property rights may be adversely affected (4:63).
- Developer fees cannot be relied upon as a significant source of parks funding in unincorporated areas (24:15).
- County should direct all revenue streams toward basic rather than strategic recreation (24:15).
- Commenter is strongly opposed to a local tax increase (12:21).
- Concessionaires should be financially beneficial to the County (5:37).
- Draft plan is a high-cost plan with future service cost provided through forced bond measures (50:45).
- Casino impact mitigation funds should not be used for parks (33:50).

## 9. Natural Resources Conservation

- Commenter offers opinion that integration of conservation biology ideas and focus on connectivity are positive elements of the plan (20:7).
- Opening up property to the public invariably results in degradation; many Yolo County ranchers and farmers are good stewards of the land and use progressive conservation practices (16:73).
- “Hands-off” approach not always good for grasslands and woodlands; active management is needed (12:21).
- Parks provide opportunities to enhance connectivity of the remnant natural portions of the Yolo County landscape (20:8).
- Commenter would love to see two accessible riparian corridors along Putah Creek and Cache Creek stretching across the County (32:44).
- Commenter favors designation of parklands that serve multiple functions such as wildlife habitat and water quality protection; also favors protection of stream corridors (25:27).
- The description of species in Grasslands Park should include burrowing owls (39:66).
- Commenter states appreciation for the plan’s stress on environmental and resource protection (16:68).
- Commenter expresses the opinion that the greatest amount of biodiversity is often found on private property (44:104).
- Conservation values – in existing parks and potential new areas – must be coupled with recreation (6:111).

## 10. Creative Solutions

### ***Public-Private Partnerships***

- County needs a partnership with landowners to achieve the goals of this plan (16:68; 44:104).
- There may be willing landowners who might allow limited public access if there is a financial reward (44:104).
- Commenter suggests a “Guest Farms & Ranches” Program – a network of farms and ranches under voluntary contract with County to help provide outdoor recreation activities (16:4).
- Some landowners already provide seasonal recreational opportunities to the public through hunting clubs that are accountable to the landowners and provide a small income to them (4:63).
- The Middle Mountain Foundation in the Sutter Buttes area is considered by commenters to be a good model for the role of non-profit organization with respect to parks and private lands (16:5; 5:35).
- Public-private partnerships could be formed where hikers could visit local farms, purchase produce, learn about agriculture (20:8).
- Parkland can work in concert with County policies promoting agricultural tourism; visitors may buy produce and become aware of “Yolo Grown” branding in the future (25:27).

- County could establish a database of landowners who would be willing to offer outdoor recreation activities (52:42).
- The USDA has dramatically increased funding for land conservation and habitat enhancement; partnerships may provide a means to showcase this funding and give the public a chance to connect (44:104-105).
- Commenter points out that agri-tourism is a result of regional product identity, defines Farm Trails as a motorized access concept, and indicates that outdoor recreation activities can be offered as an extension of farm management and marketing (50:46).
- Commenter suggests that landowners could offer a “Berryessa Peak Hiking Days” for one or two weekends a year (16:33; 16:73).
- Commenter suggests that landowners could agree to contracts with a local hiking club (16:33; 16:74).
- Commenter outlines several possible incentives for landowners to allow limited public access: “super” Williamson Act contracts, access to more irrigation water, strengthened regulations against future development, fee waivers for agri-tourism projects, financing assistance for conservation easements (16:34; 16:74).
- Commenter recommends a “Friends” type of foundation for County parks and open spaces as an example of a successful funding engine, as has occurred in other park systems (34:101).

***Public Agencies / JPAs***

- City of Sacramento cannot commit to non-specified partnerships, but is generally supportive; the updated City Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides a basis for City policies and goals for potential cooperation (47:10)
- A Countywide JPA to support and maintain existing recreational facilities would be a sound strategy (24:15).
- Commenter notes potential for enhanced cooperation and possible operations tie-ins between Solano County Parks and Yolo County Parks within Putah Creek corridor. Collaboration would include Bureau of Reclamation, UC Natural Reserve, Department of Fish and Game; collaborative planning may involve a separate Dam-to-Dam Corridor Master Plan among all parties (10:110).

## List of Commenters (page(s))

1. Mark Abildgaard (39)
2. Dolores Anderson (28)
3. Heidi Aoki (22)
4. Gary T. Armitage et al. (62-65)
5. Rob Beggs (34-437, 84-85)
6. Betty Berteaux (111)
7. Cairo Cocalis (90-91, 106-107)
8. William Chapman (48, 87-89)
9. Claire Daughtry (28)
10. Duane Davis, Solano County (109-110)
11. Timothy Doane (30)
12. Fritz Durst (20-21)
13. Sarah Estrella (92)
14. Tom and Laurie Flynn (19)
15. Dr. Rodney R. Gay (94)
16. Frank Greer (2-6, 32-33, 67-74)
17. Claire Haag (24, 102)
18. Gerald Hartwig (38, 59, 60-61)
19. Jack Haskel (29)
20. Patrick Huber (7-8)
21. Alan Jackman (25)
22. Jack Jonas (31)
23. Melissa D. Jordan (103)
24. Kevin Kemper / Law Offices of George E. Phillips (12-17)
25. Mick Klasson (27)
26. Robin Kulakow (86)
27. Mike Kuppenbender / HefnerStrain Realty Corporation (39)
28. Nancy F. Lea (79-80)
29. Dawn M. Lindstrom (75)
30. Rich Marovich, Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee (97-98)
31. Giacomo Moris (100-101)
32. John Murphy (44)
33. Vicki Murphy (40, 49-50)
34. Tony Norris, Solano County (101)
35. Malcolm North (91)
36. Ron and Som Oertel (14)
37. Eric Paulsen (41)
38. Leslie Pfardresher (41)
39. Catherine Portman, Pam Nieberg Burrowing Owl Preservation Society (66)
40. Tim Ramirez and Karyn Schultz (11)
41. Julie Rose (99)
42. Bob Schneider (93)
43. Herb and Marlene Schuler (18)
44. Casey Stone (104-105)
45. Martha Teeter (23)
46. Merrie L. Tompkins (57-58)
47. J.P. Tindell, City of Sacramento (9-10, 92)
48. Pat Vellines (26, 102)
49. Jim Wirth (76-78)
50. Robert Wirth (1, 45-47, 51-56, 81-83)
51. Suey Wong (95, 96, 108)
52. Yolo County Farm Bureau (42-43)