

8 Dunnigan Community Park

8.1 Existing Conditions

8.1.1 Description

This 0.5-acre community park is located on County Road 89A near Main Street in the unincorporated community of Dunnigan. The site was the location of the former Dunnigan Town Hall, which was demolished because its structural condition presented safety hazards. The property is across the street from the historic Union Church of Dunnigan.

8.1.2 Improvements

In 2004, this community park site is under improvement by the County Department of Planning and Public Works, local volunteer groups, and civic organizations. The plan calls for the construction of a play equipment area, a half-court basketball court, landscaped barbeque and picnic area, parking, and ADA-compliant portable restrooms. There are streetlights in the area; however, the site currently does not have electrical service. Water is planned to be developed by constructing a line by directional drilling to connect with the local Fire Department water supply. A perimeter fence and drip irrigation will also be installed.

8.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

The site is presently under construction. When completed, it will provide play areas for children, and function as a gathering place for families and community groups.

8.1.4 Environmental Resources

This site had been previously developed with structures and parking areas; the park to be developed will occupy the entire property. It does not appear to be a location where natural resources planning is a major consideration or where environmental issues present major planning constraints in terms of the proposed improvement plan.

8.2 Problems & Opportunities

This park development will provide a much-needed community asset within an unincorporated area of Yolo County.

6.3 Preliminary Recommendations

➤ *Big idea: Building a park helps to build the community.*

The main recommendation for Dunnigan Park is to implement the plan (4, 5). The County should provide appropriate directional and location signage (5). Consultants suggest that the ratio of trees to paved area should be increased if possible for general aesthetic benefit and to enhance summer season usability of the park. Another suggestion is to not provide onsite parking, except for handicap parking.

9 Elkhorn Regional Park

9.1 Existing Conditions

9.1.1 Description

Elkhorn Regional Park is located on Old River Road between the levee and the Sacramento River, approximately 1.75 miles south of where I-5 crosses the Sacramento River. The park is approximately 50 acres in size; approximately 10 acres are developed. The park is open from 7:00 a.m. until dusk, except when river conditions require closure. There is a park host at this site, and a day use fee is required.

9.1.2 Improvements

The park has a boat ramp, barbeque and picnic area, paved parking lot, and a permanent restroom facility with flush toilets. The site has electrical power and phone service; water is provided from an onsite County well. There is a drip irrigation system. A storage building was recently installed onsite and the parking area re-sealed using Prop 12 funds.

9.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

Recreational opportunities at Elkhorn Regional Park include fishing, boating, picnicking, and birdwatching; currently, however, the principal users of the park are recreational boaters using the launch and parking facilities. The site is open for day-use only; overnight camping is prohibited.

A substantial portion of this park is a long, linear riparian zone along the railroad, which has high habitat value and receives limited public use. The park has been used as a stopping point for tourist excursion train rides offered by the Sacramento River Train (Yolo Short Line), operated by Sierra Railroad out of Woodland.

9.1.4 Environmental Resources

Elkhorn Regional Park provides substantial environmental values; the Park offers very high-quality riparian forested habitat, along the Sacramento River, in the context in which this habitat type occurred in pre-settlement times. This park includes a remnant of the Sacramento River floodplain outside the levee that is formed by the railroad and roadway berm southwest of the site (that is, the levee berm that separates the farmed areas in the Elkhorn Region of Yolo County from the Sacramento River).



*n in Elkhorn
includes cottonwood,
willows, black walnut, and epiphytic
R C Roberts)*

This remnant floodplain and other lands within the park (including a “ridge” that appears to be an old levee between the current berm and the riverbank) are vegetated with very large riparian trees, including a number of California sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*) greater than 30 meters tall, many equally large Fremont cottonwoods, and some equally large valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*). The overstory canopy is generally not fully closed, and there is generally a lower tree stratum of willows (*Salix lucida* ssp. *lasiandra*, *S. gooddingii*), black walnut trees, boxelders (*Acer negundo*), and other species. The ground and most of the other vegetation is covered with a dense growth of epiphytic wild grape (*Vitis californica*). Dense button bush stands occupy the marginal strips separating land and water.

The occurrences identified within the 7.5-minute USGS quadrangle that includes this park, as identified in the California Natural Diversity Data Base, are listed in Table II-4. The record for Sacramento splittail includes the reach of the Sacramento River adjacent to the park. The park includes a roost location for great egrets, with a strong suggestion of nesting activity. Because snowy egrets typically share roosting preferences with great egrets, the park is likely also used for roosting by this species. The habitat structure in the park is consistent with the known preferences of Swainson’s hawks. The other species listed in Table II-4 may not occur in the park, although the potential exists that they do.

Table II-4. CNDDDB Sensitive Species in the Taylor Monument 7.5-minute Quad.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal/ California/ DFG/CNPS
<i>Ardea alba</i>	Great egret	--/--/--/--
<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	Burrowing owl	--/--/SC/--
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Swainson’s hawk	--/CT--/--
<i>Desmocerus californicus dimorphus</i>	Valley elderberry longhorn beetle	FT/--/--/--
<i>Egretta thula</i>	Snowy egret	--/--/--/--
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Black-crowned night heron	--/--/--/--
<i>Pogonichthys macrolepidotus</i>	Sacramento splittail	--/--/SC/--
<i>Thamnophis gigas</i>	Giant garter snake	FT/CT/--/--

FT Federal Threatened
 CT California Threatened
 SC California Special concern

The Background Report for the Yolo County General Plan Open Space and Recreation Element indicated that a Western yellow-billed cuckoo (State-listed as endangered) was observed in this area. This observation was corroborated by the 2001 Yolo County preliminary draft Habitat Conservation Plan, which stated that the “last known record of the yellow-billed cuckoo in Yolo County was of a migrant individual found along Elkhorn Slough in 1982.” The existing habitat at Elkhorn Regional Park would be an important component of any future program to restore riparian habitat for this species adjacent to the Sacramento River (e.g., as a part of the habitat

restoration program to implement the Yolo County Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP).

Elkhorn Regional Park represents an important conservation node in the riparian corridor along the Sacramento River. The length of the park along the river margin, combined with the breadth of the riparian corridor (which is approximately 250 to 300 feet in the area northwest of the parking lot) provides approximately 40 acres of relatively natural riparian forest habitat when the area of the parking lot and other land uses are excluded.

9.2 Problems & Opportunities

Elkhorn Regional Park is comparatively well-used County park; however, the primary use of the site is as a boat launch facility. Over the years, this park has been operated nearly exclusively for the purpose of boating-related activities; on weekends, it is not uncommon for waiting lines to form at the boat ramp.

As its name implies, Elkhorn Regional Park is intended to function as a regional park; given the size and location of this park property, it could accommodate a variety of other uses without limiting the current levels of boating-related activities. Currently, uses other than boating-related uses are constrained because of two factors: (1) potential (or perceived) interference with safe operation of the boat ramp access, and (2) limited availability of non-boating, day-use facilities. Other than the few picnic tables, other recreational furnishings and amenities are minimal.

A key feature of this park site is its significant, nearly wild riparian habitat; consequently, any additional development at this park must be environmentally compatible, with minimal adverse affects. Conservation of the forested riparian resource is of high importance; at the same time, it also presents an opportunity for public enjoyment and education through interpretive trails and other appropriate, educational facilities.

Management concerns for environmental resources at this park stem primarily from the human activities associated with the parking lot and the boat launch, together with the related park host residence area. The effects of these uses are relatively limited at present, because they are located within the immediate vicinity of the parking area, leaving the park lands northwest and southeast of the parking area relatively undisturbed. Intensified recreational encroachments into the riparian habitat areas, such as with un-managed use of public trails, could have a detrimental effect on ecological values, particularly during the spring and early summer when riparian habitats are among the most important habitats in California for nesting birds. Sensitivity in trail routing and design as well as careful management of public access will be essential in minimizing adverse affects on the habitat values.

The park could be enhanced as an excellent location for birding, with a short nature walk, interpretive signage, and picnicking areas (1). The birding quality of the site is presumably sufficient so that it would make a good stop on “eco-tours” of the region. A wide variety of native, riparian-associated bird species can be observed at the park. In addition, because of the linear configuration of the park there is the potential for a

Class I bicycle trail that could extend the full length of the park in the less environmentally sensitive areas and eventually link with a regional trail system, as indicated on the County's Bike Trails Master Plan.

Periodic siltation of the boat ramp is sometimes a problem at this site, as it is for most riverside boating facilities and marinas along the river. Also, other property owners in the area obtain water for irrigation from a pump in the slough, adjacent to the boat ramp. Coordination is required between private landowners and the County; when landowners conduct maintenance in the slough, spoils disposal may occur on County property. Seasonal flooding from the river can inundate the parking area and other parts of this property.

Directional signage directing visitors to this park could be improved. The entrance / exit to the park presents a moderate level of traffic hazard.

9.3 Preliminary Recommendations

- *Big idea: Boating, birding, and preserving the legacy of a rich remnant of Sacramento River riparian forest.*

Recommendations for Elkhorn Regional Park include the promotion of appropriate and compatible multiple uses. A key component of future management should be to encourage an ethic of appreciation for this rich natural habitat. Emphasis should be placed on realizing the opportunities inherent in this "nearby nature" environment.

While the boat ramp function should be retained, other uses including picnicking and birdwatching should be better accommodated. With support from non-profit organizations and other volunteers, including conservation organizations, the County should investigate the feasibility of developing a minimally intrusive nature trail loop with a separate access and river views for non-boaters (1).

Along with basic day-use accommodations such as picnic sites, this park would be a good location for an environmental education program. Improvements could include an interpretive kiosk facility, interpretive trails with signage, bird-viewing platforms or blinds, and possibly docent-led tours of the more sensitive portions of the property. A Class I trail could be constructed to the east of the railroad track for partial or the full extent of the property (5).

Other preliminary recommendations for Elkhorn Regional Park include the following:

- Improve directional signage to the park as well as signage to identify the location (1, 5).
- Improve traffic safety at the park entrance, based on recommendations from qualified professionals (1, 5).
- Provide educational and interpretive signage (1).
- Formalize the agreement with area landowner(s) regarding the timing of spoils removal and disposal; designate an offsite spoils disposal area (4, 5).

10 Esparto Community Park

10.1 Existing Conditions

10.1.1 Description

The Esparto Community Park is a 1.1-acre site located along State Highway 16 (Yolo Avenue) in the central business area of the unincorporated community of Esparto.

10.1.2 Improvements

The community park is furnished with picnic tables, a barbecue pit, large shade trees, a turf area, play equipment area, and portable restrooms. The site has electrical service. Planned work includes replacements for play equipment and an upgraded drip irrigation system.

10.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

Esparto Community Park functions as a town commons, visual center, and gathering place for family and community events in Esparto. Located adjacent to the County library, the Esparto Community Park is a venue for the Capay Almond Festival, and it serves as a place for information displays and event activities. Recently, the Esparto Farmers Market has used a portion of the park under an agreement between the County and Capay Valley Vision. The park is also a popular site for family and community parties and gatherings. Overnight camping at Esparto Park is prohibited.

10.1.4 Environmental Resources

The Esparto Community Park is an “urban” park in the center of a rural unincorporated community. As a consequence, the park has relatively little connection to broader-scale ecological processes. Large, mostly non-native shade trees provide canopy over most of the park, including the rows of large trees along South Grafton Street on the east, and North Grafton Street on the north. A large pine was recently removed.

10.2 Problems & Opportunities

As a urban-type park, Esparto Community Park requires a relatively high level of maintenance for tree pruning, grass mowing, and other maintenance activities.

10.3 Preliminary Recommendations

➤ *Big idea: Celebrate community.*

This park receives considerable, daily use and serves as an important site for building community cohesiveness and identity; these community-building functions should be continued and enhanced.

Events such as the Farmers Market and the Almond Festival should be accommodated to the extent possible, considering traffic and pedestrian concerns and potential effects on adjacent properties and uses. The County should continue working with community civic groups to share maintenance responsibilities.

Potential enhancements for better support of community functions and for better accommodating the special event activities should be developed through the guidance of a local citizen committee to ensure compatibility with community needs and desires. Typical of each of the community parks maintained by the County, soliciting a local “friends of” type organization could greatly contribute to the ongoing operations and maintenance demands of the park as well as possible future improvements.



Esparto Community Park requires a relatively high level of maintenance, but the park plays important roles in terms of community identity and cohesiveness.

11 Grasslands Regional Park

11.1 Existing Conditions

11.1.1 Description

Grasslands Regional Park is located approximately 3.5 miles south of Davis on Mace Boulevard, between County Road 35 and County Road 36. The park currently consists of approximately 323 acres; approximately 50 acres are developed, although virtually the entire site has been affected by past human activities.

A draft master plan for Grasslands Park ¹was recently prepared in 2004 through a planning effort that was separate from, but generally coordinated with, the Countywide parks planning effort. The purposes of the Grasslands plan are generally to provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach to management, recreational uses, habitat protection and enhancement, and unified design. The plan also recognizes the need to control exotic weeds, protect sensitive species, and help restructure agreements associated with leases for the specialty recreational activities that currently occupy portions of the site.

The park property is situated in a location that allows a variety of access opportunities: it is within easy drive from Davis; Tremont Road from Dixon ends at the main entrance to the park; and County roads form a perimeter around three sides of the site. A migrant farm worker living quarters area is located immediately southeast of the adjacent 320-acre parcel, on the west side of County Road 105.

11.1.2 Improvements

Improvements at Grasslands Park include a snack bar and club house, caretaker's quarters, an archery range with 28 targets, horseshoe pits, and barbeque and picnicking areas. Parking areas are unpaved. There is electrical service in the leased areas. An existing County well is used for irrigation purposes only. Groups benefiting from leases to use portions of the park (see below) have made various improvements at the site, including lodgings for a full-time caretaker, gravel parking lots, landscaping and irrigation system, restrooms and leach field, picnic area, and potable water well system.

Prior to County acquisition in 1972, the property was part of McClellan Air Force Base's Davis Global Communications Site. The transfer deed specified that the property was to be a "park or recreation area for use by the general public." The adjacent 315-acre parcel, which includes the Communications Site's former main compound area, remains in federal ownership; eventually this half section will be added to Grasslands Park for a total County park area of nearly 640 acres. Currently there is no public access to this adjacent area. Existing structures on this parcel reportedly have been constructed with asbestos-containing material and have surfaces

¹ Grasslands Park Master Plan. December 2004. Questa Engineering Corporation and Environmental Science Associates. Information in this section of the Existing Conditions report is based in part on the draft plan for Grasslands Park.

covered with lead-based paint; these structures do not meet County building codes and are not likely to be suitable for rehabilitation. The transfer schedule for this property to the County is not determined.

11.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

Grasslands Park provides a regional venue for a variety of specialty recreational uses, including archery, remote-controlled model sail plane and electric glider flying, and horseshoe pitching. Archery activities are conducted under a lease agreement between the County and the Yolo County Bowmen Archery Club, which has held leases at the site since 1979. The lease agreement applies to a 40-acre archery target area plus a 100-yard buffer on three sides, for a total area of approximately 58 acres. A portion of the Archery Club's area is used by the Yolo County Horseshoe Pitching Club under an informal sublease.

The model plane flying is conducted in a designated area under a lease agreement between the County and the Sacramento Valley Soaring Society. The lease agreement applies to a 15-acre area; however, the area used apparently exceeds that size. The model planes are launched by catapult, and no gasoline-powered model planes are permitted. The Soaring Society maintains turf areas, sheds, a portable toilet, shade shelter, and other facilities.

In addition to the specialty recreation uses, the park is used for several other purposes. In the northeast portion of the current park property, the City of Davis in 2004 established a 63-acre permanent conservation easement to provide a reserve for Western burrowing owls, as a mitigation site for impacts associated with the Mace Ranch development in the City. The agreement also provides for a 35-acre off-leash dog park, with funds committed for fencing and a parking area.

Since the early 1990s, volunteers have planted and maintained valley oak trees in several areas of Grasslands Park. The tree-planting was originally approved by the County Board of Supervisors in part to assure compliance with terms of the acquisition from the federal government, which required development and use of the site as a park. The primary planting area has been in the area that is also designated for the off-leash dog park. Several other tree planting areas are located near the archery range area and in the northwest portion of the park. Volunteers have also planted approximately 15 acres of native grasses at the site. The site and the adjacent federal parcel are also used for environmental research, particularly for sensitive species and vernal pools.

11.1.4 Environmental Resources

Grasslands Park currently exhibits a highly variable mixture of native and non-native plants as a result of previous disturbances, turf management, landscaping, experimental oak tree- and native grasses-planting efforts, weed eradication and controlled burns, local agricultural practices, and other historical uses. Invasive, non-native weeds occupy extensive areas of the park. A subsurface clay layer and other areas of alkaline soils may limit the diversity of native plant species; however, such conditions may also provide habitats that favor certain sensitive species. Landscaped

areas include windbreaks comprised of tall shrubs and eucalyptus trees surrounding the archery area.

Within this somewhat motley landscape, there are a number of sensitive species and habitats. As the draft Grasslands Park Master Plan points out, the current park area and, to an even larger extent, the adjacent federal parcel are remnants of a historically more extensive native grasslands landscape, characterized by perennial native grasslands, shallow swales, alkali-adapted vegetation, and vernal pools with highly specialized, rare, endemic plants and invertebrates.

The uplands provide important foraging habitat for raptors, including the Swainson's hawk, Northern harriers, and Western burrowing owls. The designated 63-acre Western burrowing owl preserve will increase the existing habitat, although it will require active management to maintain the preferred short-grass habitat and to protect the area from disturbance. The draft Master Plan suggests a number of ways to enhance the natural resource values at Grasslands Park.

11.2 Problems & Opportunities

Problems and opportunities at Grasslands Park are being addressed through the concurrent planning effort. One general, tacit objective is to relieve the tension that exists among special interest activities, conservation groups, and general public regarding preferred uses on the sites.

The adjacent parcel to be acquired contains former military barracks and communications building that are known to contain asbestos-containing materials and surfaces coated with lead-based paint. Also, various portions of the former Communications Site were used for antenna pads, wastewater holding ponds, and as a "North Aircraft Repair Area."

Vernal pools in the Central Valley are significant natural resources that should be preserved.

11.3 Preliminary Recommendations

- *Big idea: Arrive at a compatible, mixed-use future through participatory planning. Protect irreplaceable natural resources.*

The essential recommendation of this background report is for the County, stakeholders, lessees, user groups, and the public to participate in planning for the park and to support and implement the Grasslands Regional Park Master Plan (4, 5).

Other preliminary recommendations include the following:

- Structures on the adjacent federal parcel should probably be removed and the site remediated prior to County acceptance of the property. A definite acquisition timetable is needed. An alternative suggestion for the structures, assuming that they can be restored and remediated, would be to use the site as an interpreted historical building and site(1).

- Vernal pools and the conditions that cause them to exist should be protected (1) and the site's vernal pools could possibly be a focus for regional "eco-tours."
- Signs need to be improved. Provide park information in Spanish (1, 2).
- As one of the park properties that is located in closer proximity to the County's major urban areas, park management should ensure that the proposed and developed park uses cover at least some of the activities within the range of recreation preferences suggested through the public outreach process.



12 Helvetia Oak Grove

12.1 Existing Conditions

12.1.1 Description

Helvetia Oak Grove is a 9.7-acre (11-acre?) property acquired in 1989. As stated in the County General Plan Open Space and Recreation Element (2002): “Helvetia Oak Grove is located just 2.5 miles south of Elkhorn Regional Park near the Sacramento River on an undeveloped oak preserve. Presently there is no public access to this site. Once access is established to the site it would enable the County to manage the site as a natural type park use area. The site contains no improvements or amenities. Current management practices include harvesting fallen oak limbs for sale as firewood at Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park. The site is patrolled monthly by the Parks Department for litter, refuse collection and monitoring.”

12.1.2 Improvements

There are no public improvements at Helvetia Oak Grove except a perimeter fence. Nearby structures and other improvements are located on private property. The access road is not paved; the right-of-way is in dispute.

12.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

There is no public access at this time. According to a County staff report, the County was in the process of obtaining access to the Oak Grove in 2002, when a landowner dispute developed among the various owners, halting the process. This dispute has led County staff to seek alternative options for access to the site. In 2004, Yolo County joined Sacramento County, the Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento, and SAFCA in a joint Prop 50 application for riverfront natural resources and recreation projects for locations along the Sacramento and American Rivers; one of these projects was to obtain funding for access and minor development.

12.1.4 Environmental Resources

Helvetia Oak Grove includes a number of relatively large valley oak individuals; however, in a larger context, its habitat and conservation values are limited. The habitat structure near the oaks has been altered substantially, with minimal lower-tier or understory native vegetation. There is a mature upper canopy, but a limited middle layer. The higher value, native woodland habitat area appears to be less than an acre in extent, and it is embedded in a matrix of farmland and exurban residential uses, with no direct connection to other woodland habitats or to the riparian corridor along the nearby Sacramento River.

12.2 Problems & Opportunities

Helvetia Oak Grove is essentially being held hostage by its limited access and adjacent land uses. The site presents potential opportunities for group events; it is probably not suitable for intensive development. Conservation values could be increased by

removing exotic vegetation and by restoring native species and appropriate habitat structure in the part of the grove that still has large oak trees.

12.3 Preliminary Recommendations

- *Big idea: Get in – acquire the necessary public access – or get out – sell for conservation or civic uses by others.*

The County should continue negotiations for acquisition of access and additional property at this site. Partnerships with non profit or quasi-public organizations might be appropriate for this site, and help to facilitate a long-term lease arrangement. After the access issues are resolved, these partnerships could provide the basis for subsequent uses and management.

If this option to gain legal access is unattainable within a certain, set period of time (e.g., five years), the property should be sold to a land trust or non-profit conservation organization, with proper assurances that the oak trees and natural values will continue to be protected in perpetuity (5).

Assuming that a public access route can be acquired, it is recommended that the site should be used for supervised group events, which could be managed through a reservation system. Uses could include group picnics and perhaps overnight camping, similar to Nelson's Grove, near Woodland, which is used in such ways by civic groups such as the YMCA and Girl Scouts.



Large Valley Oaks at the County's Helvetia Oak Grove provide a high shade canopy, creating opportunities for a supervised group event site, managed through a reservation system.

13 Knights Landing Boat Launch (Public Access Area)

13.1 Existing Conditions

13.1.1 Description

Knights Landing Boat Launch is located on an approximately 4-acre site near the town of Knights Landing, off State Route 45, about 25 miles northwest of Sacramento. Similar to the Clarksburg Boat Launch/Public Access area, this site is maintained and operated by the County under an operating agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board of the Department of Fish & Game. The park site adjoins Sycamore Slough, just upstream of where the Slough joins the Sacramento River. A \$6.00 parking and day use fee or \$8.00 parking and launching fee is required. There is currently no onsite park host or caretaker. There is a private recreational vehicle area nearby. The property immediately to the southwest is also publicly owned lands acquired through the Wildlife Conservation Board and managed by Department of Fish and Game.

13.1.2 Improvements

The main improvements at this site are the boat ramp and adjoining parking area. The parking area provides spaces for approximately 28 cars with trailers and 15 single vehicle spaces. Portable sanitary facilities are also provided. Electrical power and telephone service is available onsite; however, there is no potable water.

13.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

This park provides access to the Sacramento River for boating, water-skiing, and fishing, with incidental day-use activities. The park is well-used, both on weekends and during the week. County staff estimate that approximately 75 percent of the site users pay the required fees. Boating-related uses including boat launching for fishing, trailer and vehicle parking are the predominate use of the site with incidental shore fishing and day use activities; the major activities at this site appear to be powerboat-related. Overnight camping is prohibited.

13.1.4 Environmental Resources

A large cottonwood tree at the bottom of the parking lot is a scenic amenity; however, environmental resource values directly on the park site are largely limited to the slough waterway and limited riparian vegetation. Adjacent areas on State lands also provide riparian and wetland habitat.

The Knights Landing Boat Launch site is largely occupied by a parking area and the boat ramp, uses that have little environmental resource value. This site does, however, have a narrow vegetated strip between the parking lot and the adjacent County roadway, and the site immediately adjoins an area of State-owned land with substantial valley foothill riparian habitat; the quality of the habitat on the State-owned land and the proximity of the vegetation within the two adjoining parcels increases the habitat value on the County-owned land.

The riparian forest on the State-owned land has a multi-layered vegetation structure, with an overstory dominated by Fremont cottonwoods, valley oaks, black walnuts, and large Goodding willows. Epiphytic wild grape is abundant. A second tree stratum includes Oregon ash and boxelder. A shrub layer exists in areas with a canopy open enough to allow light to reach the ground; Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*), grape, and blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) are significant species present. The habitat structure on the adjacent CDFG-managed lands is suitable for a variety of riparian-associated songbirds and other wildlife.

Species records from the California Natural Diversity Data Base for the 7.5-minute USGS quadrangle that contains the Knight's Landing Boat Launch (Table II-5) include records for species that could occur within this park (particularly Swainson's hawk and VELB). The descriptions of the existing records in the CNDDDB do not indicate that these observations included this site, however.

Table II-5. CNDDDB Sensitive Species in the Knight's landing 7.5-minute Quad.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal/ California/ DFG/CNPS
<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	Tricolored blackbird	--/--/SC/--
<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Swainson's hawk	--/CT--/--
<i>Desmocerus californicus dimorphus</i>	Valley elderberry longhorn beetle	FT/--/--/--
<i>Hibiscus lasiocarpus</i>	Rose-mallow	--/--/--/2
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Bank swallow	--/CT/--/--
<i>Thamnophis gigas</i>	Giant garter snake	FT/CT/--/--

FT	Federal Threatened
CT	California Threatened
FC	Federal Special Concern
SC	California Special Concern
CNPS 2	Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California, but more common elsewhere

13.2 Problems & Opportunities

Further development or additional uses on the existing site is constrained by the existing parking and ramp development, which dominates the site.

Environmental resource management considerations for this park include a potential for positive effects, a result that would follow from an increase in the area of mature trees around the parking lot. This result would involve planting additional native riparian tree species in areas that lack tree cover now.

The location of this site offers potential for future interpretation of Sacramento River and slough waterways, riparian ecosystems, and river bank processes.

The parking lot drains toward the slough, suggesting a potential for water quality impacts. There are occasional problems with littering and garbage at this site.

13.3 Preliminary Recommendations

➤ *Big idea: Boating of all kinds, with supporting day-use areas on shore.*

Even within the public-use preference of freshwater fishing, this park narrowly emphasizes boat-related fishing, particularly motor boats. Management of this facility should be expanded to serve a wider range of users, including non-motorized boats. However, there is insufficient space to accommodate substantial additional use areas. Incidental picnic and shore fishing facilities would greatly enhance this park facility. Additionally, a gateway trailhead could be carved out of the parking area for a potential nature trail located on the State lands for wildlife-viewing and nature appreciation. A fish-cleaning station could be developed to accommodate the fishing constituents and improve the overall hygiene of the water edge.

The County should investigate acquisition of additional areas adjacent to Knight's Landing Park for expansion, particularly those that are suitable for other public uses such as picnicking, as well as other adjacent areas with significant habitat value (5). Opportunities for cooperative use may exist with the Department of Fish and Game on their adjoining managed land that potentially could be adapted to accommodate day uses.

Other recommendations include the following:

- Funding should be sought for improvements and best management practices to capture and treat runoff prior to release into the slough (5).
- Investigate and, if feasible, construct a fish-cleaning station.
- A concession in an off-location site could provide non-motorized boat rentals (5).
- A park host with an off-site residence should be considered for at this site (5).
- Vehicular access to an area below the dam via a short dirt road should be locked off (1).
- Consider the gateway concept here with expanded low-impact recreation uses on adjoining State lands
- Native species of trees should be planted in areas of the park that would enhance other uses (5).

14 Otis Ranch Open Space Park

14.1 Existing Conditions

14.1.1 Description

The approximately 587-acre Otis Ranch property is located between Cache Creek Canyon Campground and Camp Haswell, with frontage on State Route 16. Acquired by the County in 2002, the property provides nearly continuous County ownership along Cache Creek for nearly two miles in the upper canyon area. There is no host at this site.

14.1.2 Improvements

There are no existing improvements at the Otis Ranch property. Parking along Highway 16 is presumably within the State right-of-way. There are informal trails on the property but no developed access into the interior and upper elevations of the property.

14.1.3 Current Uses & Activities

Currently Otis Ranch is essentially a passive open space property with limited hiking uses.

14.1.4 Environmental Resources

The Otis Ranch Open Space Park property shares many of the ecological values identified previously for the Cache Creek Canyon Park. However, the Otis property covers a greater elevation range than occurs in the Cache Creek Canyon Park, potentially increasing the range of habitats present. The large size of this property and the linkage that it provides to natural habitats on public lands both north and south of Cache Creek enhances its environmental resource value.

The occurrences of known elements in the Glascock Mountain 7.5-minute USGS quad were previously reported for Cache Creek Regional Park.

Management concerns associated with natural or environmental resources are relatively limited for the Otis Ranch Park. Low-intensity recreation, such as hiking trails, would not be expected to significantly affect the natural habitat values in this park. More intense recreational uses (e.g., roads leading to campgrounds) could have adverse effects on the environmental values of the park.

14.2 Problems & Opportunities

Opportunities for extensive range of recreational activities and uses appear to be limited by topography and other natural constraints at this site; however, Otis Ranch has the potential of providing one of the recreational activities that is presently limited in the County – that of recreational trail use. This site offers three advantages toward that purpose: it is adjacent to Highway 16, which allows public access; it is a large

area with a diversity of onsite terrain; and it is adjacent to public lands administered by the BLM to the south and west.

A challenging obstacle related to the severe topography would be developing a trail system that can be used by a diversity of users, including ADA-dependent users. Without considerable trailhead-related improvements, vehicular access and parking accommodations along the highway would be problematic. Parking locations along the highway would need to be coordinated with Caltrans. Along this section of highway, entering, exiting, and turning vehicles, as well as the presence of pedestrians would present considerable safety issues. Other parking capacity could be located at Camp Haswell. Overall, the site holds great potential for recreational trail use, with trailheads and trail linkages developed in conjunction with the Cache Canyon facilities and the trail system on BLM land.

14.3 Preliminary Recommendations

➤ *Big idea: Keep it rough – and ready.*

This park property should be kept primarily in its natural condition. In cooperation with interested organizations, a trail system should be developed for experienced hikers, seeking a challenging outdoor experience (1, 5). One trail could be routed up through the “panhandle” to the adjoining BLM land. At several viewpoints along the trails, benches could be provided (1).

A trailhead could be provided adjacent to Highway 16 or in conjunction with the Camp Haswell site; trails would allow foot access into this site and to adjacent public lands. A shuttle from other parks or nearby Rumsey could stop at the trailhead. Because this park site is more of a “wilderness” type of resource area, the trailhead facilities should include a trail map, directional signage, public safety and environmental interpretive information (1, 5). Trash receptacles and chemical toilet facilities should also be provided at the trailhead (5).