

## 10. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT



The rural atmosphere, open space, wildlife refuges, working landscapes, lakes, rivers and scenic vistas of Colusa County are astounding and represent some of the County's greatest assets. Representing over 75 percent of the land base, agriculture vastly contributes to the County's open space character. Numerous resources for outdoor recreational activities, including hunting, fishing, camping, OHV use, bicycling, hiking, bird watching, boating and photography, attract visitors from all over to Colusa County. These assets provide a natural resource base for agricultural and forest industries, tourism and recreation, wildlife habitat, watershed storage and water quality protection, and a high quality of life for residents of Colusa County.

State law requires a General Plan to address open space issues, including the recognition of open space as a valuable resource for its own sake, the coordination of local policies with state and regional policies, and the use of open space to preserve environmentally sensitive natural areas and habitat. State Government Code Section 65560 defines open space lands as being essentially unimproved and devoted to the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, or public health and safety.

The State encourages, but does not require, the General Plan to include a recreation element. Since recreation is an important concern of County residents and since park facilities and recreational opportunities cannot exist without open space, this element addresses parks and recreation issues, goals, objectives and policies. The General Plan also includes the optional Agricultural Element which is a critical part of preserving the County's vast open space agricultural land base. Both elements work hand

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in hand to help maintain the County's open space rural flavor. This Open Space and Recreation Element is intended to fulfill four purposes:

- Meet State of California legislative requirements for the mandatory General Plan Open Space Element;
- Integrate the discussion of open space with parks and recreational opportunities and facilities;
- Provide specific policies and implementing measures to govern preservation of open space and to govern the maintenance, expansion and creation of recreational resources and amenities to maintain a high quality of life for the citizens of Colusa County;
- Integrate consistent goals, objectives, policies and implementation programs with other common General Plan Elements, such as Land Use, Agriculture and Circulation, to ensure a unified approach to fulfilling the County's growth and community development vision over the next 20 years.

This element should be used in combination with the other elements to ensure full implementation of all General Plan open space and recreation-related policies. Background information regarding open space and recreation resources and opportunities in Colusa County, including: natural resources, open space lands, parks, and recreation is provided in the Colusa County General Plan Background Report.

## Goal OSR-1: Preserve and Protect the Natural Resources and Scenic Beauty of the County

### Objective OSR 1-A: Provide a Diverse and Accessible Range of Open Space Lands

**Policy OSR 1-1:** The following General Plan Land Use designations shall be considered Open Space uses: Resource Conservation (RC), Designated Floodway (DF), Parks and Recreation (PR), Agricultural General (AG), and Agricultural Upland (AU).

**Policy OSR 1-2:** Support regional and local natural resource preservation plans of public agencies that retain and protect open space within the County, including: the Mendocino National Forest Plan, the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge Complex, the Delevan National Wildlife Refuge, the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, the Willow Creek-Lurline Management Area and the North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area.

**Policy OSR 1-3:** Support the preservation of open space consistent with this General Plan, via acquisition of fee title or easements by land trusts, government agencies, and conservancies from willing landowners, subject to the standards identified in Policy OSR 1-4.

**Policy OSR 1-4:** Habitat and/or wildlife easements proposed in Colusa County for the loss of open space or habitat in other jurisdictions will not be recognized and are not acceptable unless the easement meets all of the following criteria:

- Prior notification to Colusa County;
- Consistency with the goals and policies of the Colusa County General Plan, particularly as related to planned growth, infrastructure, and agricultural preservation;
- Compensation to Colusa County for all lost direct and indirect revenue;
- Compatible with neighboring land uses;
- Located outside of urban and urban reserve areas;
- Secured water rights and infrastructure to economically maintain the proposed mitigation use;
- Requirements that existing agricultural operations continue to be farmed for commercial gain;
- Requirements that habitat management practices do not adversely impact adjacent agricultural operations;
- Prioritize purchase of mitigation credits by local developers; and
- Accommodation of recreational uses or public access, where appropriate.

A **conservation easement** is a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the type or amount of development on their property while retaining private ownership of the land. After the easement is signed, it applies to all future owners of the land.

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**Policy OSR 1-5:** Open space that is actively managed or placed under conservation easement for habitat, wetlands, or species preservation or conservation shall be restricted to lands designated Resource Conservation (RC).

**Policy OSR 1-6:** The National Wildlife Refuges in the County should remain in their present use and any significant expansion or alterations shall be subject to the same criteria listed in Policy OSR 1-4.

**Policy OSR 1-7:** New development should be designed and constructed to preserve open space features such as scenic corridors, wetlands, riparian vegetation, native vegetation, trees and natural resource areas where feasible and appropriate.

**Policy OSR 1-8:** Publicly owned lands currently used for recreational purposes or as undeveloped open space should be retained in their present use, unless designated for an alternative use by the General Plan Land Use Map.

*Action OSR 1-A: Adopt regulations for habitat easements, conservation easements, and open space banking operations, including any significant alterations and/or expansions. These regulations shall include, but are not limited to, the criteria identified in Policy OSR 1-4.*

### **Objective OSR 1-B: Balance Open Space Preservation with Economic Development Needs**

**Policy OSR 1-9:** Open space near transportation infrastructure, such as I-5, SR 20, SR 45, and existing railroads shall be given consideration for conversion to industrial, commercial, and other job-creating uses if there is a demonstrated need for such uses and there is not a viable alternative location already designated for urban uses.

**Policy OSR 1-10:** Conversion of open space to developed commercial, industrial or other non-residential job-generating uses may be allowed if needed to support economic development.

**Policy OSR 1-11:** Maintain open space for future water and drainage projects.

### **Objective OSR 1-C: Maintain and Enhance the Quality of the County's Scenic and Visual Resources**

**Policy OSR 1-12:** To the maximum extent feasible, maintain and protect views of scenic resources, including water bodies, the Sutter Buttes, Snow Mountain, St. John Mountain, Goat Mountain, unique geologic features, and wildlife habitat areas.

**Policy OSR 1-13:** To the maximum extent feasible, the significant open space resources in the County, such as the western foothills, Indian Valley, and Bear Valley should remain visually undisturbed.

**Policy OSR 1-14:** Limit visually intrusive development near scenic resources in order to minimize visual impacts to the greatest extent feasible.

**Policy OSR 1-15:** Visual impacts to scenic resources, such as regional focal points, from new development or resource extraction activities shall be addressed and mitigated through the CEQA review process.

**Policy OSR 1-16:** Reduce light and glare from artificial lighting within open space and agricultural areas to the extent that it does not adversely impact the County's rural character.

**Objective OSR 1-D:** *Encourage the Preservation of Scenic Vistas and Limit the Proliferation of Unsightly Signage along County Roadways and in Scenic Areas*

**Policy OSR 1-17:** Protect roadway viewsheds with high scenic value and "rural flavor" and encourage the establishment of public viewing areas in areas with rural character and scenic beauty.

**Policy OSR-1-18:** Protect and preserve the following features along rural character corridors and in scenic areas to the extent appropriate and feasible:

- Trees, wildflowers, and other natural or unique vegetation
- Landforms and natural or unique features
- Views and vistas, including expansive views of open space and agricultural lands
- Historic structures (where feasible), including buildings, bridges, and signs

**Policy OSR 1-19:** Provide a greater number of areas along rural character corridors and in scenic areas for public access and recreation, including vistas, rest stops, or picnicking.

**Policy OSR 1-20:** Discourage non-agricultural or non-recreational roadside commercial and industrial activities along rural character corridors.

**Policy OSR 1-21:** Design new roads in hillside areas along the lines of the landscape and in a manner which minimizes visual impact from surrounding areas.

**Policy OSR 1-22:** Prohibit off-site advertising and billboards in rural character and scenic areas outside of communities, unless the off-site signage is part of a Countywide sign program to direct travelers to various recreation and destination points in the County.

**Policy OSR 1-23:** Rural character policies and requirements shall not be used to impose a hardship on agriculture. Agricultural activities may have adverse visual impacts, but are recognized as necessary and contributors to the rural and agricultural character of the County.

***Action OSR 1-B:** Revise Article 8 (Development Standards) of the Zoning Ordinance to require that light fixtures be designed and sited so as to minimize light pollution, light spillage, and glare into adjoining properties and the night sky. Consider amending the Public Nuisance Abatement Code to include light glare impacts to the extent that it does not adversely interfere with agricultural operations.*

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***Action OSR 1-C:** Develop a local Rural Character Corridors program that protects roadways and areas with high scenic value and rural flavor. The intent of the program would be to identify areas where rural and scenic characteristics should be protected and enhanced, to the extent that the protection does not interfere with the County's agricultural and economic development goals.*

*Designate areas as "Rural Character Corridors" only after careful consideration of the following:*

- *Scenic and rural characteristics, including vista points, geologic resources, native plant and animal species, waterways, historic sites, cultural resources, expansive open space or agricultural areas, and agricultural, timber, and recreational uses.*
- *Safety characteristics, including road surface and alignment, shoulder width, traffic levels, number of intersections, access points, turnouts, and rest areas.*
- *Economic impacts on properties affected by a Rural Character Corridors designation.*

*The Rural Character Corridors program should include the following:*

- *Encourage uses to be designed and sited in a manner that does not interfere with the rural and scenic characteristics of the area, to the extent feasible.*
- *Encourage public access, including signage, vistas, rest stops, or picnicking, to viewing points such as rural viewsheds, wildflower areas, unique landforms, historic and cultural resources, and expansive agricultural and rural views.*
- *Site utilities underground, where feasible, otherwise site utilities in a way that minimizes their intrusiveness into scenic views.*
- *Require earthmoving and road reconstruction projects to be followed by re-seeding and re-vegetation which restores a natural appearance.*

**Objective OSR 1-E: Retain and Preserve Expansive Open spaces, Uninterrupted by Urban Development, both in the Valley Floor and in Upland Valleys**

**Policy OSR 1-24:** Retain areas of permanent open space, including agricultural uses, between existing communities.

**Policy OSR 1-25:** Ensure that open space buffers such as greenbelts, drainage features, parks, or other improved and maintained features are provided by new development projects, where appropriate, between new urban development and sensitive open space uses, such as agriculture and wildlife habitat. Buffers shall be adequately sized to reduce potential land use conflicts between adjacent uses.

***Action OSR 1-C:** Revise the Zoning Ordinance to include specific development standards for the preservation of on-site open space and scenic resources including sensitive habitat, wetlands, trees, and scenic resources.*



## Goal OSR-2: Increase Opportunities for Recreational Activities in Open Space

### *Objective OSR 2-A: Ensure Adequate and Increased Public Access is Available to Open Space*

#### *Recreation Areas*

**Policy OSR 2-1:** Develop “gateways” or trailheads that provide access for the public to recreation areas, including County, State and Federal lands. Where located on private land, gateways shall be developed by working with willing landowners.

**Policy OSR 2-2:** Require a clear, coordinated system of signage for any new equestrian, hiking, or bicycling trail or modification of an existing trail, with priority given to well-used or linked trail systems.

**Policy OSR 2-3:** Encourage the expansion of public access and recreation facilities along the Sacramento River, East Park Reservoir, and the Mendocino National Forest.

**Policy OSR 2-4:** Support efforts of citizens and non-profit groups to establish trails or to improve access and recreational amenities within public and private open space areas.

**Policy OSR 2-5:** Public access to the water and shoreline areas of lakes, reservoirs, rivers and streams, should be provided where appropriate.

**Policy OSR 2-6:** Prohibit the use of off-road vehicles on bicycling, hiking and horseback riding trails.

**Policy OSR 2-7:** Require the development of open space corridors, bicycle paths and trails providing access and connectivity to waterways, scenic areas, parks, and other outdoor recreation areas in collaboration with affected landowners as a part of project approval. The intent is to provide trails and corridors that connect each community and city to special places and recreation opportunities, throughout the County.

**Policy OSR 2-8:** Require dedication of public access by fee or easement from a public roadway to a public-use recreational stream, public lakes, and major reservoirs as a condition of approval for major subdivisions adjacent to such features if: 1) the project blocks an existing public access point or it results in the need for additional access, and 2) other reasonable access to the public-use recreational waterway is not available.

***Action OSR 2-A:** Develop a countywide outdoor recreation plan to link various outdoor recreation areas, including waterways, lakes, reservoirs, parks, wildlife refuges, and the Mendocino National Forest, to communities as well as to specific access points proximate to major roadways. The plan should address the following:*

- *Existing and potential recreation areas;*
- *Existing and potential routes for walking, hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking opportunities and specify access points to each outdoor recreational area;*
- *Trail linkages between established communities, such as Arbuckle, Maxwell, Grimes, Princeton, College City and the cities of Colusa and Williams;*

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- *Connections to the various recreation areas where feasible;*
- *Unified Countywide signage to identify recreation areas and equestrian, hiking, or bicycling trails.*

*The outdoor recreation plan will serve as a plan for securing lands for a countywide recreation and trail system and funding the acquisition and maintenance of recreation areas and trails. This plan shall be developed in conjunction with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (Policy CIRC 1-I).*

*Action OSR 2-B: Coordinate with park districts, other special districts, parks and recreation interests and related Federal and State agencies for the implementation of a unified directory sign program for equestrian, hiking, or bicycling trails.*

*Action OSR 2-C: Acquire voluntary easements to provide connectivity through open space and agricultural properties to the Sacramento River and other public recreation amenities.*

### ***Objective OSR 2-B: Increase Opportunities for County Residents and Visitors to Engage in a Broad Variety of Outdoor Recreation Activities***

**Policy OSR 2-9:** Ensure private landowners continue to have the right to offer hunters access to their land during hunting seasons.

**Policy OSR 2-10:** Discourage the conversion of existing privately operated outdoor recreational facilities, such as hunting camps and organizational camps, into year-round residential or commercial developments.

**Policy OSR 2-11:** Support development of a new off-highway vehicle (OHV) park at an appropriate location.

**Policy OSR 2-12:** Enhance parking and public facilities at the Sacramento River, East Park Reservoir, Mendocino National Forest, and other open space and waterway recreation areas. Encourage the use of alternative transportation by providing bike racks and other appropriate facilities.

**Policy OSR 2-13:** Encourage recreational uses that emphasize use of the waterways in locations directly on the Sacramento River, East Park Reservoir, and the proposed Sites Reservoir. Examples include fishing, canoeing, boating, and nature observation. With the exception of boat launches and docks, more active uses, such as parking, restrooms, and picnic areas, shall be located in areas away from the river and sensitive riparian habitat.

**Policy OSR 2-14:** Encourage recreational uses that emphasize a range of outdoor activities, such as hiking, drive-in camping, hike-in camping, picnics, off-highway vehicle use, and nature observation, at the Mendocino National Forest, East Park Reservoir, proposed Sites Reservoir, Sacramento River, and other outdoor recreation areas.

**Policy OSR 2-15:** Support the location and creation of Sites Reservoir in Colusa County. (See Policies LU 4-1 through 4-5.)



**Policy OSR 2-16:** Require future water development projects, including reservoirs, marinas, and water-front developments, to include provisions for public access to the water and shoreline areas.

**Policy OSR 2-17:** Require future forest recreation projects to include provisions for public access and a range of amenities, including off-highway vehicles, hiking trails, drive-in campgrounds, and hike-in campgrounds, to serve a variety of visitors.

*Action OSR 2-D: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to create a new zoning district for Resort Commercial uses. This designation shall allow for a mix of commercial uses oriented towards tourists and other visitors to the County, including but not limited to, agriculturally based tourism, sports fishing, hunting, and other related uses. Allowable uses may include, but are not limited to, marinas, hotels, RV camping, entertainment services, restaurants, and other visitor serving uses. The district would provide flexible use and development standards including a set of performance standards that:*

- *Allows, as a priority, the development of boating facilities, such as docks and boat launching ramps along the Sacramento River and other water way recreation areas.*
- *Achieves commercial development which is sensitive to the scale and character of the surroundings;*
- *Ensures that commercial development places the most minimal possible economic and natural resource demands on the area and on public services;*
- *Controls sprawl and strip commercial development, and provides for the effective control of commercial signs;*
- *Avoids significant residential development, including mobile home or RV parks with full time residents; and*
- *Encourages the continuation of surrounding farming and ranching uses to minimize the disruption of agriculture by new development.*

*Action OSR 2-E: Consider formation of a self-supporting parks and recreation system by employing user fees (where appropriate), concessionaire revenues, soliciting grants and private contributions, requesting volunteer help, and by other means that further cost-effective park operations.*

*Action OSR 2-F: Assist Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) interests in identifying location(s) for future OHV areas and facilitate development of these facilities.*

**Goal OSR-3: Support the Creation and Expansion of Recreational Opportunities In and Around Existing Communities**

**Objective OSR 3-A: Ensure Adequate Parks and Active Recreational Facilities are Available to County Residents**

**Policy OSR 3-1:** Pursue partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to provide services and/or maintain all or components of park facilities, wherever practical.

**Policy OSR 3-2:** Encourage the joint-use of parks and recreation facilities owned and operated by school districts.

**Policy OSR 3-3:** Ensure that community parks and recreational facilities have stable and self-sufficient funding resources, paid by those who derive benefit from these facilities.

**Policy OSR 3-4:** Support the efforts of existing parks and recreation districts to provide facilities within and around communities. The County should also support the creation of new parks and recreation districts in communities that are not already served by one.

**Policy OSR 3-5:** Ensure that a mechanism is in place to develop parks and recreation facilities, at a rate of five acres of park land for each 1,000 residents, as new residential development occurs.

**Policy OSR 3-6:** New parks and park rehabilitation projects should incorporate sustainable design and construction measures such as providing recycling and composting facilities, and use of local native plants and local materials.

**Policy OSR 3-7:** Ensure access for disabled people is provided for park and recreation areas and facilities as appropriate.

**Policy OSR 3-8:** Incorporate security measures into park design and recreation facilities to ensure public health and safety.

Park security measures may include lighting, fencing, and improved visibility.

***Action OSR 3-A:** Consider adoption of a parks and recreation ordinance that would apply to new residential development. The ordinance should establish a parkland dedication requirement based on five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The program would require dedication of parkland and/or payment of in lieu fees, consistent with the requirements of the Quimby Act, based upon the residential density, park land cost, and other factors. The County shall collect these fees and either distribute to the applicable park district or agency (contingent on the district's or agency's use of these funds towards new parks or park expansions that serve the residents of the unincorporated area) or provide facilities that serve the local and regional needs of the County. Public land dedicated and/or fees collected pursuant to the Quimby Act may only be used for the purpose of developing new or rehabilitating existing park or recreational facilities.*

***Action OSR 3-B:** Collaborate with park districts and community groups to develop an inventory of sites for potential park development and park expansion. Every five years,*

*review the inventory to determine whether there is sufficient land to serve the County's needs for parks and recreation. This Action should be implemented in conjunction with Action OSR 2-A.*

*Action OSR 3-C: Amend the zoning ordinance to identify minimum sizes for new parks, including neighborhood parks, community parks and regional parks.*