



American River Ranch 2014 Master Plan **American River Parkway Plan Compliance Analysis**

Introduction:

The American River Parkway Plan (ARPP) provides the guidelines for recreation activities that may be conducted on the American River Parkway. This report reviews the proposed Master Plan for American River Ranch for compliance with the American River Parkway Plan.

Project Description:

As a component of the Lease agreement between Soil Born Farms and the Department of Regional Parks a Master Plan has been required to be developed to plan and direct facilities and activities for the future development and operation of the American River Ranch.

Goals and Concept Policies of the American River Parkway Plan (Chapter 1)

Goals (Page 10)

- To provide, protect and enhance for public use a continuous open space greenbelt along the American River extending from the Sacramento River to Folsom Dam; and
- To provide appropriate access and facilities so that present and future generations can enjoy the amenities and resources of the Parkway which enhance the enjoyment of leisure activities; and
- To preserve, protect, interpret and improve the natural, archaeological, historical and recreational resources of the Parkway, including an adequate flow of high quality water, anadromous and resident fishes, migratory and resident wildlife, and diverse natural vegetation; and
- To mitigate adverse effects of activities and facilities adjacent to the Parkway; and
- To provide public safety and protection within and adjacent to the Parkway.

Concept Policies (Page 11)

1.1 Balanced Management

The American River Parkway is a unique regional asset that shall be managed to balance the goals of controlling flooding; preserving and enhancing native vegetation, native fish species, the naturalistic open space and environmental quality within the urban environment; maintaining and improving water flow and quality; providing adequate

habitat connectivity and travel corridors to support migratory and resident wildlife; providing recreational opportunities; and ensuring public safety.

1.2 Recreation

The Parkway shall be oriented to passive, unstructured water-enhanced recreation activities which are appropriate in a natural environment, and which are not normally provided by other County recreational facilities. To this end, development in the Parkway shall be minimal, and facilities which are primarily visitor attractions should be placed in less sensitive areas within the County Park system. Insofar as possible, development shall not occur in areas where natural ecosystems are still relatively undisturbed.

1.3 Resource Protection

Limitation on the use of the Parkway through design and management tools to prevent overuse of the Parkway and preserve the environmental quality, thereby ensuring the integrity of the Parkway for future users.

1.4 Land Use

No existing publicly owned Parkway lands shall be disposed of through sale, lease, or de facto uses adverse to the goals and policies of this Plan, in order to assure the long-term protection and integrity of the present boundaries of the Parkway.

1.5 Cooperation

Coordination and cooperation in Parkway planning and management is essential, especially in recognizing the many important roles of jurisdictions and agencies with regulatory responsibilities within the Parkway.

Non-Recreational Use Of The Parkway (Chapter 6, pages 105 &106)

Although the American River Parkway is a public recreational area, certain activities and facilities occur which are not recreational in character. Some, but not all, of these activities and facilities are incidental to the recreational use of the Parkway. The purpose of this section is to identify non-recreational uses in the Parkway and to provide guidance in permitting or prohibiting those uses.

Non-recreational Use of the Parkway

6.1 Commercial activities shall be permitted only if compatible with the goals of the Parkway, as determined by this Plan.

6.1.1 Commercial activities shall not be permitted solely for the purpose of raising revenue to fund the management of the Parkway.

6.1.2 All proposed commercial activities, whether on land or water, shall be subject to review by the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks and the Recreation and Parks Commission. Final approval shall be by the Board of Supervisors.

6.1.3 The following criteria shall be considered during the review of commercial proposals:

- a Services or sales shall be necessary to the enhancement of permitted recreational activities.
- b Services or sales shall not attract customers who would not otherwise be Parkway users.
- c Services or sales shall be dependent upon the Parkway environment and be consistent with its stated purpose.

6.1.4 Commercial activities determined to be compatible with the goals of the Parkway shall only be considered for location in Developed Recreation areas and only as an auxiliary component to permitted recreational or interpretive/educational facilities.

6.1.5 Commercial activities in association with special events, including the sale of food and beverage from mobile day-use units, will only be considered in fixed locations in association with a special event permit. Staff shall review each special event permit request on an individual basis to assess potential adverse impacts on the Parkway such as litter and other nuisances.

6.1.6 Proposed commercial activities shall be designated on appropriate area plans.

6.2 Caretaker facilities may be installed in Developed Recreation, Limited Recreation and Recreation Reserve Areas whenever lack of surveillance is a problem.

6.3 Caretaker facilities shall be accessible by vehicle, but should not be highly visible to Parkway users. Location, architectural design and screening shall be considered in the placement of the facilities, and such facilities shall conform to the Combining Zone Ordinance policies for architectural standards and consistent with the visual impact policies herein.

6.4 Agricultural activities that promote land stewardship, provide educational/interpretive services to Parkway users, or help to transition land to a restored state are consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

6.4.1 Agricultural activities in the Parkway should incorporate educational and interpretive programs. Sustainable, organic and wildlife-friendly farming practices are preferred.

6.4.2 Agricultural activities, as permitted per land use designation, may be used as a management tool on an interim basis to inhibit the spread of invasive species.

6.4.3 It is the preference of this Plan that lands previously leased for agricultural purposes be converted to uses that improve wildlife habitat and ensure a wildlife corridor.

Commercial Activities defined in the American River Parkway Plan (pg 106)

Commercial activities in the Parkway are intended to augment and improve the Parkway visitor's experience. The primary purpose of any permitted commercial activity should be consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.

Commercial activities may be permitted in Developed Recreation areas as an auxiliary component of a permitted recreational facility or interpretive/educational facility. Commercial activities which occur on the Parkway are usually operated by private concession rather than by the County. A concession is a privately operated activity, usually for profit, which occurs on public domain by authorization of the responsible land use authority. A number of concessions have been awarded within the Parkway, including raft and canoe rentals, activities associated with the Ancil Hoffman Golf Course and operations of the Effie Yeaw Interpretive Center. Concessions are normally awarded when a desired activity or service can be accomplished more efficiently by a private entity than by the County.

Commercial activity by concession can be divided into two general groups: services and sales. Commercial services include such activities as garbage pickup, maintenance of grounds and structures, restoration planting and monitoring, professional instruction, and rental and boarding of horses. Commercial sales include food and beverages, recreation equipment, "convenience items" and other recreational or educational/ interpretive merchandise. In the future, commercial sales could also include a stand for the sale of produce and/or plants at the proposed native plant nursery and farm (preferably organic farm) in American River Ranch. These two groups, service and sales, may occasionally overlap. For example, a raft rental may include the sale of food and beverage. Recommended criteria to facilitate determinations on the establishment of commercial activities in the Parkway are included in the Implementation Measures section (Chapter 11) of this plan.

Agriculture defined in American River Parkway Plan (pages 107 & 108)

Agriculture

"Various forms of agricultural production have been occurring along the American River Parkway for the last half century. At the time of the 2006 update of this Plan, active agricultural leases exist in the American River Ranch and Rossmoor Bar areas of the Parkway.

Once only valued for food production, farms now are increasingly recognized as open space resources that can be compatible with wildlife and educate the urban public about agriculture and ecology. As farmland continues to disappear in the Sacramento region, the maintenance of model agriculture within the Parkway can help preserve the agricultural heritage of our region and serve as a valuable interpretive tool that brings together environmental, stewardship and food production activities unique to our river ecosystem.

Farming in the Parkway should include an educational component, such as interpretive signage or farm tours, as a part of the lease agreement.

Agriculture can also be used as a management tool to transition areas planned for restoration into a more naturalistic state. Actively farming the land can provide food for native wildlife and foraging species, while inhibiting the establishment of invasive non-native vegetation. Areas of the Parkway that are no longer in agricultural production should be restored in order to improve the habitat values of the area, in association with the land use designation.”

River Bend Park Area Plan (Pages 179 & 180)

10.31 In order to protect the Nature Study Area, those uses established in the Protected Area should be compatible with, or directed away from, the Nature Study Area.

10.32 No more than seven acres of Developed Recreation uses may be permitted within the 10 acre Developed Recreation designation area west of Hagan Park, in the River Bend Park Area Plan Map and the General Land Use Map. Development of the remaining three acres shall be consistent with Limited Recreation designation regulations.

10.33 New picnic sites in Developed Recreation areas shall not be created by turfing land under oak trees.

10.34 A demonstration farm and native plant nursery may be developed in the Limited and Developed Recreation areas located at the eastern edge of River Bend Park.

10.35 The use of organic farming procedures is strongly encouraged in connection with the demonstration farm.

10.36 A bicycle/pedestrian trail should be constructed from the end of Chase Drive to connect with the existing Jedediah Smith Memorial Bicycle trail.

Activities and Facilities

Access to the River Bend Park Area from Folsom Boulevard is possible via Rod Beaudry Drive. An unimproved parking facility is located near the park entrance and adjacent to the picnic areas. There is another unimproved parking facility located near the day and overnight group camping area.

River Bend Park consists of two distinct areas, the western portion, which is heavily vegetated, and the area to the east, which is presently being leased for agricultural uses. The two areas are divided by the existing bicycle trail. A variety of activities take place in the western portion of the park including picnicking, day camps and overnight group camping, fishing and equestrian use. In addition, the area is a popular take out point for

rafters. Private property owned by Campfire U.S.A. is located at the northern end of the park. There is a County pump station located at the northeast end of the park adjacent to the Rancho Cordova Community Park (Hagan Park). The western portion of River Bend Park consists of Developed Recreation and Limited Recreation land use designations, three separate areas of Protected Area and a large Nature Study Area off of Rod Beaudry Drive. An equestrian staging area is located off of Rod Beaudry Drive in the Nature Study Area. Due to the popularity of the River Bend Park Area, increased use should be anticipated.

The Protected Area adjacent to the large Nature Study area is ideal for restoration and mitigation uses, offering an opportunity to recreate a native plant community and riparian habitat area. The overall arrangement of this area should provide for a system of trails to accommodate walking tours, providing an outdoor classroom for the education of students, both young and old, in biology, botany, ecology, etc. The stormwater outfall channel, which flows along the eastern edge of the Protected Area land use, should be restored to create a riparian corridor. With the appropriate design and the adherence to the procedures described in Chapter 4, Opportunities for Reducing Contaminants in Urban Runoff, it could also provide an opportunity for filtering the urban run-off before it empties into the American River. The restoration of the Protected Area would serve as a buffer between the Nature Study Area to the west and the Limited and Developed Recreation land uses to the east.

The land uses east of the bike trail consist of Developed and Limited Recreation areas. These areas have historically been leased for agricultural use. Recognizing that farms are important as open space resources that protect habitat, preserve view sheds and can serve to educate the urban public, a native plant nursery and demonstration farm (preferably using organic farming methods) would be appropriate in the 78-acre Limited Recreation land use designation area east of the outfall channel. This area has historically been used for agricultural purposes. The demonstration farm should encourage organic farming methods as much as possible to protect the habitat and waters of the American River. The purpose of the native plant nursery is to provide a supply of native plants for the Parkway, which are grown in climate and conditions equivalent to that of their final planting site. The native plant nursery and demonstration (organic) farm would provide a site for school age children and adults throughout the region to learn the techniques of plant cultivation and care, tree pruning, organic farming and other horticultural techniques. The Developed Recreation land use area on the eastern side of the River Bend Park Area Plan is an appropriate area for an interpretive/educational center and for the historic operational facilities of the nursery/farm. The outdoor educational opportunities offered through the demonstration garden, native plant nursery, riparian habitat and natural plant communities, would be brought together and enhanced through indoor classrooms located at the interpretive center.

The eastern portion of the bike trail within the River Bend Park Area Plan should be improved with a bicycle/pedestrian trail leading from the end of Chase Drive and connecting to the existing Jedediah Smith Memorial Bicycle trail.

Staff Analysis:

Staff reviewed the proposed Master Plan and found the existing infrastructure and programs to be compliant with the American River Parkway Plan Land Use Designation, Goals and Policies.

Additional review of the proposed new infrastructure is below:

Natural Play-Scape

Playground facilities are not permitted (Policy 5.27.2), *except* when integrated into picnic facilities in a visually unobtrusive manner. The description provided in the proposed Master Plan indicates the play-scape will be associated with a picnic area, which makes it permissible.

Community Kitchen

The Community Kitchen is deemed compatible with the American River Parkway Plan, as it is an auxiliary component of an interpretive/educational facility within the Developed Recreation land use (Policies 6.1.4, 6.6.1 and 7.16).

Staff Housing

There are no specific references within the American River Parkway Plan related to staff housing. Caretaker housing is permitted within the American River Parkway Plan and allowed in Limited Recreation, Developed Recreation and Recreation Reserve (Policy 6.2). “Caretaker facilities shall be accessible by vehicle, but should not be highly visible to Parkway users.

Location, architectural design and screening shall be considered in the placement of the facilities, and such facilities shall conform to the Combining Zone Ordinance policies for architectural standards and consistent with the visual impact policies herein” (Policy 6.3). Caretaking facilities traditionally have been limited to 1 or 2 people in a small residence located in a park facility for the purpose of security and maintenance of certain park assets. In the case of the American River Ranch the historical operation has included staff housing of 5-10 people. It is the Department’s determination that while staff housing is not directly permitted by the American River Parkway Plan the historical use and the intent of the operation of an Agricultural Farm as provided in the American River Parkway Plan includes the use of staff living on site in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of a working agricultural farm and interpretive center (Policy 7.16). While not specifically permitted, staff housing is determined to be consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the American River Parkway Plan.

Improved Parking

Improved Parking facilities are deemed compatible with the American River Parkway Plan, as it is an auxiliary component of an interpretive/educational facility within the Developed Recreation land use (Policies 6.1.4 and 6.6.1).

Interpretive Center

An Interpretive Center is deemed compatible with the American River Parkway Plan, within the Developed Land use area, and specifically within the River Bend Area Plan (Policy 6.6.1 and River Bend Area Plan Narrative) provided that the River Bend Area Plan Map is amended to show such a facility prior to the construction of the facility (Policies 3.18, 7.1 and 10.2).

Final construction drawings all new structures will be brought to the Recreation and Park Commission to ensure compatibility with the American River Parkway Plan (Policy 10.1).

American River Ranch Proposed 2014 Master Plan
American River Parkway Plan Compliance Determination

It is the determination of the Department of Regional Parks that with the proposed Area Plan Map Amendment, the proposed American River Ranch 2014 Master Plan is consistent with the American River Parkway Plan.