

**Sonoma County General Plan 2020**

**OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION  
ELEMENT**

**Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department  
2550 Ventura Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

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# OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION ELEMENT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE

State law recognizes that open space land is a limited and valuable resource which must be conserved wherever possible. The element addresses open space for the preservation of natural resources, for the managed production of resources, for outdoor recreation, for public health and safety, and for Archeological, Historical, and Cultural resources.

The purpose of the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element is to preserve the natural and scenic resources which contribute to the general welfare and quality of life for the residents of the county and to the maintenance of its tourism industry. This element provides the guidelines for making necessary consistency findings and includes an implementation program, as required by law.

### 1.2 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ELEMENTS

The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element is coordinated with the Public Safety, Public Facilities and Services, Agricultural Resources, and Water Resources Elements. The Land Use Element reinforces the policies of this element and is consistent with the preservation of open space lands for all five of the purposes identified below. Following are the relationships among these elements:

#### **Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources:**

- The Land Use Element establishes the Countywide Land Use Policy Framework. This framework provides the underpinning for the preservation of natural resources by stressing city and community centered growth, compact city and community boundaries, use of environmental suitability for guiding rural growth, protection of agricultural lands, preservation of scenic and biotic resources, and sustainability.
- The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element includes policies addressing the preservation of scenic resources and biotic habitats and riparian corridors. It also

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## Open Space & Resource Conservation Element

addresses air quality and energy resources, mineral and timber resources, and soil resources.

- The Water Resources Element includes policies addressing preservation of both surface and groundwater resources, including water supply and water quality.

### **Open Space for Managed Production of Resources:**

- The Land Use Element establishes land use categories for agriculture, timber, and geothermal energy resource production.
- The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element includes policies addressing management of mineral, energy, and timber resource production.
- The Agricultural Resources Element includes policies addressing agricultural production.
- The Water Resources Element includes policies addressing management of water resources.

### **Open Space for Outdoor Recreation:**

- The Land Use Element identifies areas where recreational facilities are needed and provides streamlined procedures for establishing new parks and trails.
- The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element includes policies addressing Outdoor Recreation, Bikeways, and Scenic Resources.
- The Public Facilities and Services Element includes policies addressing Park and Recreation services.

### **Open Space for Public Health and Safety:**

- The Land Use Element includes policies limiting development in hazardous areas, such as flood zones and fire and geologic hazard areas.
- The Public Safety Element includes policies protecting the community from Geologic hazards, flood hazards, fire hazards, and hazardous materials.
- The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element includes policies addressing air quality and soil and slope stability.
- The Water Resources Element includes policies addressing water quality and quantity.

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**Open Space for the Protection of Archaeological, Historical, and Cultural Resources:**

- The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element includes policies addressing the preservation and protection of archaeological, historical, and cultural resources. It includes policies for the preservation and protection of Native American cultural resources or sacred sites, places, features, and objects, including historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, cemeteries, and ceremonial sites. It also addresses the confidentiality of records pertaining to such resources. It also provides for appropriate treatment of human remains and Native American human remains discovered during a project.

### **1.3 SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION**

The Open Space and Resource Conservation Element has three major components, a policy framework for the preservation of open space and conservation of natural resources, an open space map for each planning area designating lands subject to various policies, and an implementation program.

There are ten classifications of open space and resource conservation:

- scenic resources,
- biotic resources,
- aquaculture,
- soil resources,
- timber resources,
- mineral resources,
- energy resources,
- air resources,
- outdoor recreation, and
- archaeological/historical/cultural resources

## **2. SCENIC RESOURCES**

The unique quality of Sonoma County results from the attractiveness and diversity of its landscape. The scenic resources component includes three categories, Community Separators, Scenic Landscape Units, and Scenic Highway Corridors. Figure OSRC-1 shows these designated scenic resource areas.

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## 2.1 POLICY FOR COMMUNITY SEPARATORS

A characteristic that distinguishes Sonoma County from many parts of the San Francisco Bay Area is the continued existence of separate, identifiable cities and communities. Some land areas need to remain open or retain a rural character in order to avoid corridor-style urbanization. Community Separators are rural open space and agricultural and resource lands that separate cities and other communities, prevent sprawl, protect natural resources, and provide city and community identity by providing visual relief from continuous urbanization. Community Separators enhance the identities of individual cities and communities. As Community Separators are rural areas that have open space characteristics, many of these areas are also scenic. The lands within Community Separators are frequently subject to pressure for development because they are close to developed areas and major roads. The Community Separator designation does not affect underlying land use designations or allowable land uses.

Lands within Community Separators generally meet the following designation criteria:

- (1) Lands shall be located outside an Urban Service Area designated in the General Plan.
- (2) Lands shall have a General Plan land use designation of Timber Production, Resources and Rural Development, Land Intensive Agriculture, Land Extensive Agriculture, Diverse Agriculture, Rural Residential, or Agricultural Residential.
- (3) Lands should logically separate cities or unincorporated communities or extend or complete an existing Community Separator to provide continuity.

Community Separators are designated on the Open Space and Resource Conservation Maps in this Element and briefly described below.

### **Petaluma/Novato**

These lands are designated to retain open space between Petaluma and the Marin County line. Dominant features include rolling hills with trees and farms located along the valley floor. Additional commercial development would detract from this rural atmosphere.

### **Petaluma/Cotati**

This Community Separator between Petaluma, Penngrove and Rohnert Park/Cotati includes Liberty Valley, one of the outstanding views in the County. A substantial amount of land lies within a natural groundwater recharge area in the Petaluma Valley groundwater basin.



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**Rohnert Park/Santa Rosa**

Large parcels along Stony Point Road and Petaluma Hill Road create relief from the urban area and provide views of fields and hills. Rural development now limits the visual separation, but urban development along this corridor would block views of the mountains and create a more intense urban form. Most of this land lies within the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin and contains important farmlands.

**Santa Rosa/Sebastopol**

While some "strip development" exists along the Highway 12 corridor between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol, scenic views of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, oak studded pastures and Mt. St. Helena are available. Retention of the existing oak woodlands and riparian vegetation is critical to the scenic value of this area. Most of this land lies within the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin.

**Windsor/Larkfield/Santa Rosa**

Significant views are available to the west across fields and vineyards to the Mendocino Highlands and to the east over the Mark West Springs Hills to Mt. St. Helena. Most of this land lies within the Santa Rosa Valley groundwater basin and contains important farmlands.



**Windsor/Healdsburg**

These lands are characterized by permanent crops that take advantage of the prime soils and Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin. Screening of future development in the rolling hills to the east of the freeway would maintain scenic quality in this area.

**Healdsburg/Geyserville/Cloverdale**

These lands are characterized by expansive views of the Alexander Valley and the hills to the east and west, interrupted only by the small unincorporated community of Geyserville. Most of this area is located within the Alexander Valley groundwater basin and planted in vineyard.

**Northeast Santa Rosa**

Included in this area are scattered rural residential development and open oak woodlands. Urban encroachment in the hillside areas and valley floor would detract from the visual quality.

The valley floor lies within the Kenwood Valley groundwater sub-basin and contains important farmlands.

### **Glen Ellen/Agua Caliente**

Highway 12, extending through the Valley of the Moon, provides expansive views of the Sonoma-Napa mountains and vineyard covered hillsides. Intense development along the valley floor and mountainsides would lessen the scenic quality in this area.

- GOAL OSRC-1:** **Preserve the visual identities of communities by maintaining open space areas between cities and communities.**
- Objective OSRC-1.1:** Preserve important open space areas in the Community Separators shown on Figures OSRC-5a through OSRC-5i of the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element.
- Objective OSRC-1.2:** Retain a rural character and promote low intensities of development in Community Separators. Avoid their inclusion in City Urban Growth Boundaries or Spheres of Influence. Avoid their inclusion within Urbans Service Areas for unincorporated communities.
- Objective OSRC-1.3:** Preserve existing groundwater recharge and stormwater detention areas within Community Separators.
- Objective OSRC-1.4:** Preserve existing specimen trees and tree stands within Community Separators.

**The following policies, in addition to those in the Land Use Element, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-1a:** Avoid amendments to increase residential density in Community Separators, since these densities were established based upon the policies set forth in other elements of this plan as well as the open space, separation and visual considerations identified in this section. The integrity of Community Separators cannot be maintained at densities in excess of one unit per ten acres. However, under no circumstances shall this policy be used to justify an increase in density from that designated on the land use map.\*

**Policy OSRC-1b:** Avoid commercial or industrial uses in Community Separators other than those that are permitted by the agricultural or resource land use categories.\*

**Policy OSRC-1c:** Require development within Community Separators to be clustered and limited in scale and intensity.

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

**Policy OSRC-1d:** Consider amendments for outdoor recreational uses with a low intensity of structures only in those Community Separators along the Highway 101 Corridor and only where the amendment conforms to the provisions of the voter-approved Community Separators Protection Ordinance.\*

**Policy OSRC-1e:** Apply the Scenic Resources combining district consistent with this Element to all lands located within a Community Separator.\*

**Policy OSRC-1f:** Unless there are existing design guidelines that have been adopted for the affected area, require that new structures within Community Separators meet the following criteria:

- (1) Site and design structures to take maximum advantage of existing topography and vegetation in order to substantially screen them from view from public roads.
- (2) Minimize cuts and fills on hills and ridges.
- (3) Minimize the removal of trees and other mature vegetation; avoid removal of specimen trees, tree groupings, and windbreaks.
- (4) Where existing topography and vegetation would not screen structures from view from public roads, install landscaping consisting of native vegetation in natural groupings that fits with the character of the area in order to substantially screen structures from view. Screening with native, fire retardant plants may be required.
- (5) Design structures to use building materials and color schemes that blend with the natural landscape and vegetation.
- (6) To the extent feasible, cluster structures on each parcel within existing built areas, and near existing natural features such as tree groupings.
- (7) Utilities are underground where economically practical.
- (8) On hills and ridges, avoid structures that project above the silhouette of the hill or ridge against the sky as viewed from public roads, and substantially screen driveways from view where practical.
- (9) Minimize impervious surfaces and encourage groundwater recharge with effective design features and materials that allow stormwater infiltration and detention.

This policy does not apply to farmworker housing or agricultural accessory structures, such as barns, proposed on parcels in the Diverse Agriculture, Land Extensive Agriculture, Land

## Open Space & Resource Conservation Element

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Intensive Agriculture, and Resources and Rural Development land use categories, and on parcels in the Rural Residential land use category with Agriculture and Residential (AR) Zoning, if their use does not require a use permit in the Zoning Code. If compliance with these standards would make a parcel unbuildable, site structures where minimum visual impacts would result.

Exempt telecommunication facilities if they meet the siting and design criteria of the Scenic Resources (SR) Zoning District.\*

**Policy OSRC-1g:** Use the following standards in addition to those of Policy OSRC-1f for subdivisions in Community Separators:

- (1) Establish building envelopes for structures and consider use of height limitations if necessary to further mitigate visual impacts.
- (2) Use clustering to reduce visual impact where consistent with the Land Use Element.
- (3) Locate building sites and roadways to preserve significant existing tree stands and significant oak trees.
- (4) To the extent allowed by law, require dedication of a permanent scenic or agricultural easement at the time of subdivision.\*

**Policy OSRC-1h:** Place measures on the ballot as needed to extend funding of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District for the continuing purpose of acquiring and administering open space lands.\*

**Policy OSRC-1i:** Consider voluntary transfer of development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs and make Community Separators eligible with owner consent.\*

**Policy OSRC-1j:** No lands within a Community Separator should be included in a City's Urban Growth Boundary or Sphere of Influence, in an Urban Service Area for an unincorporated community, or annexed to a city unless the lands are first removed from the Community Separator.

**Policy OSRC-1k:** Until the expiration of Ordinance No. 5145R(2018), the General Plan land use regulations for the lands within the Petaluma/Novato Community Separator shall not be changed so as to increase either the allowed intensity or density of development by changing the land use designations in Figure LU-2h of the Land Use Element without the prior approval of the voters of Sonoma County.\*

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## 2.2 POLICY FOR SCENIC LANDSCAPE UNITS

Coastal bluffs, vineyards, San Pablo Bay, the Laguna de Santa Rosa and other landscapes are of special importance to Sonoma County. Preservation of these scenic resources is important to the quality of life of County residents and the tourists and agricultural economy. Other features such as the Mayacamas and Sonoma Mountains provide scenic backdrops to communities. As the County urbanizes, maintenance of the openness of these areas provides important visual relief from urban densities. These landscapes have little capacity to absorb very much development without significant visual impact. Major Scenic Landscape Units have been identified as follows:



### **The Coast**

The Sonoma coast is a scenic resource vital to the County. Three basic types of landscapes are included, the flat terraces south of the Russian River, the more hilly terraces from Fort Ross northward, and the cliffs and landslide areas in between.

### **Oat Valley**

Oat Valley and the hillsides above it provide the scenic northern entrance to the County near Cloverdale.

### **Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys**

Protection of these agricultural valleys' scenic beauty is not only important from an aesthetic standpoint, but also from an economic one as agricultural marketing is closely tied to the area's scenic image. The hills along Highway 101 and above the valley floor are particularly sensitive.

### **Hills East of Windsor**

These hills provide a scenic backdrop to the Santa Rosa Plain. North of Windsor the area extends into the plain and adjoins the low, rolling hills that form part of the Windsor-Healdsburg Community Separator.

### **Eastside Road**

This area of rolling hills is an important transition between the community of Windsor and the rich agricultural and mineral resource areas of the Russian River Valley.

### **River Road**

This area provides a variety of landscapes, including valleys planted in vineyards, orchard covered hillsides, and redwood groves adjacent to the Russian River.

### **Laguna de Santa Rosa**

This area consists primarily of the scenic lowlands and floodplain around the Laguna de Santa Rosa marsh, swamp and riparian forest. It also includes hills between Forestville, Sebastopol and Meacham Hill. It defines the eastern boundary of Sebastopol and associated rural residential development.

### **Bennett Valley**

Bennett Mountain forms a scenic backdrop from Bennett Valley Road. This area defines Santa Rosa's southeastern boundary and also abuts Annadel State Park.

### **Highway 116**

The view corridor along Highway 116 contains unique views of orchards, redwood groves, and the Russian River. This area also defines the community boundaries of Forestville, Guerneville, and Monte Rio and their adjacent rural residential development.

### **Atascadero Creek**

This area consists primarily of the lowlands and floodplains along Atascadero Creek and the hills along Occidental Road. The area defines the western boundary of Sebastopol and its adjacent rural residential development, separates Sebastopol and Graton, and creates a visual connection to the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

### **Coleman Valley**

The Coleman Valley Road area contains unique views of forests, canyons, grazing lands, and the ocean.

### **Sonoma Mountains**

These are highly valuable scenic lands, clearly defining the eastern edge of the Santa Rosa Plain between Petaluma and Sonoma. They provide an important backdrop to the urban plains and Sonoma Valley.

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**Hills South of Petaluma**

The open grassy hillsides and ridgelines of the area are extremely sensitive. Located at the Marin County border, this area serves as a gateway to the County.

**Sonoma Valley/Mayacamas Mountains**

Included in this area are the Sonoma-Napa Mountains that provide a backdrop to the valley and agricultural areas bordering the valley. These areas define the boundaries of the urban and rural communities and are very sensitive because of their small size and the unobstructed view of them from roads and adjoining urban areas.

**South Sonoma Mountains**

These hillsides are an important part of the South County landscape with a simple landform, minimal vegetation, and a clear widespread viewing area. Pasture and forage lands along the Highway 37 corridor are included to preserve views of the San Pablo Bay.

**GOAL OSRC-2:** Retain the largely open, scenic character of important Scenic Landscape Units.

**Objective OSRC-2.1:** Retain a rural, scenic character in Scenic Landscape Units with very low intensities of development. Avoid their inclusion within spheres of influence for public service providers.

**Objective OSRC-2.2:** Protect the ridges and crests of prominent hills in Scenic Landscape Units from the silhouetting of structures against the skyline.

**Objective OSRC-2.3:** Protect hills and ridges in Scenic Landscape Units from cuts and fills.

**The following policies, in addition to those of the Land Use Element, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-2a:** Avoid amendments to increase residential density in Scenic Landscape Units in excess of one unit per ten acres. The land use plan may designate a lower density or larger minimum lot size.\*

**Policy OSRC-2b:** Avoid commercial or industrial uses in Scenic Landscape Units other than those that are permitted by the agricultural or resource land use categories.\*

**Policy OSRC-2c:** Apply the Scenic Resources combining district consistent with this element to all lands located within Scenic Landscape Units.\*

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

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**Policy OSRC-2d:** Unless there are existing design guidelines that have been adopted for the affected area, require that new structures within Scenic Landscape Units meet the following criteria:

- (1) Site and design structures to take maximum advantage of existing topography and vegetation in order to substantially screen them from view from public roads.
- (2) Minimize cuts and fills on hills and ridges.
- (3) Minimize the removal of trees and other mature vegetation. Avoid removal of specimen trees, tree groupings, and windbreaks.
- (4) Where existing topography and vegetation would not screen structures from view from public roads, install landscaping consisting of native vegetation in natural groupings that fits with the character of the area in order to substantially screen structures from view. Screening with native, fire retardant plants may be required.
- (5) Design structures to use building materials and color schemes that blend with the natural landscape and vegetation.
- (6) On hills and ridges, avoid structures that project above the silhouette of the hill or ridge against the sky as viewed from public roads and substantially screen driveways from view where practical.
- (7) To the extent feasible, cluster structures on each parcel within existing built areas and near existing natural features such as tree groupings.

Exempt agricultural accessory structures proposed on parcels in the Diverse Agriculture, Land Extensive Agriculture, Land Intensive Agriculture, and Resources and Rural Development land use categories, and on parcels in the Rural Residential land use category with Agriculture and Residential (AR) Zoning, are exempt from this policy if their use does not require a use permit in the Development Code. If compliance with these standards would make a parcel unbuildable, site structures where minimum visual impacts would result.

Exempt telecommunication facilities if they meet the siting and design criteria of the Scenic Resources (SR) Zoning District.\*

**Policy OSRC-2e:** Use the following standards in addition to those of Policy OSRC-2d for subdivisions in Scenic Landscape Units:

- (1) Establish building envelopes for structures and consider use of height limitations if necessary to further mitigate visual impacts.
- (2) Use clustering to reduce visual impact where consistent with the Land Use Element.

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy



- (3) Locate building sites and roadways to preserve significant existing tree stands and significant oak trees.\*

**Policy OSRC-2f:** Identify critical scenic areas within designated Scenic Landscape Units. To the extent allowed by law, consider requiring dedication of a permanent scenic or agricultural easement at the time of subdivision for properties within these critical scenic areas.\*

**Policy OSRC-2g:** Consider voluntary transfer of development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs and make Scenic Landscape Units eligible with owner consent.\*

**Policy OSRC-2h:** For development on parcels located both within Scenic Landscape Units and adjacent to Scenic Corridors, apply the more restrictive siting and setback policies to preserve visual quality.

## 2.3 POLICY FOR SCENIC CORRIDORS

Many residents of Sonoma County value highly the variety and beauty of the County's many landscapes as viewed from rural roadways. Motorists can travel from urban centers into orchard and forest covered hills, rolling dairy lands, and scenic valleys planted in vineyards. Preserving these landscapes is important to the character of the County.



**GOAL OSRC-3:**

**Identify and preserve roadside landscapes that have a high visual quality as they contribute to the living environment of local residents and to the County's tourism economy.**

**Objective OSRC-3.1:**

Designate the Scenic Corridors on Figures OSRC-5a through OSRC-5i along roadways that cross highly scenic areas, provide visual links to major recreation areas, give access to historic areas, or serve as scenic entranceways to cities.

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

**Objective OSRC-3.2:** Provide guidelines so future land uses, development and roadway construction are compatible with the preservation of scenic values along designated Scenic Corridors.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-3a:** Apply the Scenic Resources combining district to those portions of properties within Scenic Corridor setbacks.\*

**Policy OSRC-3b:** For development on parcels located both within Scenic Landscape Units and adjacent to Scenic Corridors, apply the more restrictive siting and setback policies to preserve visual quality.

**Policy OSRC-3c:** Establish a rural Scenic Corridor setback of 30 percent of the depth of the lot to a maximum of 200 feet from the centerline of the road unless a different setback is provided in the Land Use Policies for the Planning Areas. Prohibit development within the setback with the following exceptions:

- (1) New barns and similar agricultural support structures added to existing farm complexes on parcels in the Diverse Agriculture, Land Extensive Agriculture, Land Intensive Agriculture, and Resources and Rural Development land use categories, and on parcels in the Rural Residential land use category with Agriculture and Residential (AR) Zoning, provided that such structures proposed within a State Scenic Highway or where local design review exists by community choice in an adopted specific or area plan are subject to administrative design review.
- (2) New barns and similar agricultural support structures that do not require a use permit in the Development Code on parcels in the Diverse Agriculture, Land Extensive Agriculture, Land Intensive Agriculture, and Resources and Rural Development land use categories, and on parcels in the Rural Residential land use category with Agriculture and Residential (AR) Zoning, provided that such structures proposed within a State Scenic Highway or where local design review exists by community choice in an adopted specific or area plan are subject to administrative design review.
- (3) Maintenance, restoration, reconstruction, or minor expansion of existing structures.
- (4) Telecommunication facilities that meet the applicable criteria established in the Development Code.
- (5) Other new structures if they are subject to design review and
  - (a) they are associated with existing structures,
  - (b) there is no other reasonable location for the structure,

- (c) the location within the setback is necessary for the use, or
  - (d) existing vegetation and topography screen the use.
- (6) Compliance with the setback would render the parcel unbuildable.
- (7) Satellite dishes that are not visible from the roadway.\*

**Policy OSRC-3d:** Establish a building setback of 20 feet along the Highway 101 Scenic Corridor in Urban Service Areas to be reserved for landscaping. Where a sound barrier or other sound mitigating structure must be located along a Scenic Corridor, ensure that the landscaped area is visible from the highway. Cooperate with State agencies to achieve compatible goals with regard to visual quality along Scenic Corridors.

**Policy OSRC-3e:** In conjunction with Section 2.5 "Policy for Urban Design", incorporate design criteria for Scenic Corridors in urban areas.

**Policy OSRC-3f:** Refer building permits within the setback along historic Bohemian Highway between Occidental and Freestone and along Bodega Highway between Bodega and Freestone to the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission for review and recommendations.

**Policy OSRC-3g:** Avoid freeway oriented billboards along designated Scenic Corridors. Establish design criteria for consideration of new freestanding outdoor advertising structures or signs along designated Scenic Corridors to retain visual quality. Consider amortization of existing signs subject to the limitations of State law as a condition of approval for discretionary permits.\*

**Policy OSRC-3h:** Design public works projects to minimize tree damage and removal along Scenic Corridors. Where trees must be removed, design replanting programs so as to accommodate ultimate planned highway improvements. Require revegetation following grading and road cuts.\*

**Policy OSRC-3i:** Recognize Highway 116 from Highway 1 to the southern edge of Sebastopol as an official State Scenic Highway. The unique scenic qualities of this portion of Highway 116 shall be protected as generally outlined in the 116 Scenic Highway Corridor Study, September 1988. Consider requesting official State Scenic Highway designations for Highways 1 and 37. Upon the request of local residents, the County may pursue similar State status for other Scenic Corridors.\*

## 2.4 POLICY FOR OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Sonoma County has a diversity of natural areas and landforms that contribute to its quality of life, economic well-being, and environmental beauty. Night time views of both the landscape and sky can be significantly degraded by excessive and unnecessary levels of light that increase “sky glow” around urban areas, make the man-made environment prominent, and result in visual clutter at night. Issues related to resolving “light trespass” can direct County staff resources away from other priorities.



Appropriate light levels for varying uses are balanced with a desire to maintain Sonoma County's rural character and preserve views of the night time skies for residents and visitors.

**GOAL OSRC-4:** Preserve and maintain views of the night time skies and visual character of urban, rural and natural areas, while allowing for nighttime lighting levels appropriate to the use and location.

**Objective OSRC-4.1:** Maintain night time lighting levels at the minimum necessary to provide for security and safety of the use and users to preserve night time skies and the night time character of urban, rural and natural areas.

**Objective OSRC-4.2:** Ensure that night time lighting levels for new development are designed to minimize light spillage offsite or upward into the sky.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-4a:** Require that all new development projects, County projects, and signage utilize light fixtures that shield the light source so that light is cast downward and that are no more than the minimum height and power necessary to adequately light the proposed use.\*

**Policy OSRC-4b:** Prohibit continuous all night exterior lighting in rural areas, unless it is demonstrated to the decision making body that such lighting is necessary for security or operational purposes or that it is necessary for agricultural production or processing on a seasonal basis. Where lighting is necessary for the above purposes, minimize glare onto adjacent properties and into the night sky.\*

**Policy OSRC-4c:** Discourage light levels that are in excess of industry and State standards.\*

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

## 2.5 POLICY FOR URBAN DESIGN

Sonoma County has adopted a basic framework of directing the majority of growth into incorporated cities or in unincorporated Urban Service Areas of the County where public sewer and water are available, and where there is an existing pattern of urban level development. This pattern of compact development and community-centered growth preserves the open space, agriculture, and natural resources that make Sonoma County unique, and contribute to its valued quality of life and economic vitality. Ensuring that new development enhances existing



unincorporated communities, while retaining the unique character of each, is important. Successful integration of community amenities such as attractive streets, safe bike and pedestrian access, attractive and long lasting buildings, inviting public spaces, and important natural and cultural resources will make urban spaces more livable.

**GOAL OSRC-5:** Retain and enhance the unique character of each of the County's unincorporated communities, while accommodating projected growth and housing needs.

**Objective OSRC-5.1:** Develop Urban Design Guidelines on a community by community basis to achieve the following: compatibility with and connections to surrounding development; community interaction and pedestrian activity; attractive public views; safe and comfortable infrastructure and streetscape improvements for bikes and pedestrians; increased public safety.

**Objective OSRC-5.2:** Establish community character as a primary criterion for review of projects in Urban Service Areas.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-5a:** Develop Urban Design Guidelines appropriate for each Urban Service Area in

unincorporated Sonoma County that reflect the character of the community.

**Policy OSRC-5b:** Use the following general urban design principles until Urban Design Guidelines specific to each Urban Service Area are adopted.

- (1) Promotion of pedestrian and/or bicycle use.
- (2) Compatibility with adjacent development.
- (3) Incorporation of important historical and natural resources.
- (4) Complementary parking out of view of the streetscape.
- (5) Opportunities for social interaction with other community members.
- (6) Promotion of visible access to buildings and use areas.
- (7) Appropriate lighting levels.\*

## 2.6 POLICY FOR RURAL CHARACTER

Sonoma County is nationally recognized for its agrarian and “wine country” atmosphere, its diverse and beautiful scenic resources, and unique quality of life. Regulating the design of certain types of new development in agricultural, rural, and resource areas will help to preserve the very qualities that attract new development and enhance economic vitality. Rural character design guidelines that avoid urban development requirements in rural areas and promote integration with the surrounding landscape and quality construction and landscaping, will benefit not only property owners and developers but all who live in and come to visit Sonoma County.



The rural character of Sonoma County is quite diverse. Over time, development guidelines and/or design standards have been adopted for several areas, such as Bennett Valley and Sonoma Mountain. These guidelines, while generally similar to each other, reflect the unique quality of each area. As a result, the development of countywide rural character design guidelines must be done in a way that recognizes local character. It is the intent of this policy section that, where proposed development is subject to Area Plan and/or Local Area

Development Guidelines, those guidelines will take precedence over countywide rural character design guidelines.

**GOAL OSRC-6:** **Preserve the unique rural and natural character of Sonoma County for residents, businesses, visitors and future generations.**

**Objective OSRC-6.1:** Develop Rural Character Design Guidelines to achieve the following: preservation of existing site features contributing to rural character; siting of buildings and development features to blend in with the surrounding landscape; and allowance for rural design features in rural areas.

**Objective OSRC-6.2:** Establish Rural Character as a primary criterion for review of discretionary projects, but not including administrative design review for single family homes on existing lots outside of Urban Service Areas.

**The following policy shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-6a:** Develop design guidelines for discretionary projects in rural areas, but not including administrative design review for single family homes on existing lots, that protect and reflect the rural character of Sonoma County. Use the following general design principles until these Design Guidelines are adopted, while assuring that Design Guidelines for agricultural support uses on agricultural lands are consistent with Policy AR-9h of the Agricultural Resources Element.

- (1) New structures blend into the surrounding landscape, rather than stand out.
- (2) Landscaping is included and is designed to blend in with the character of the area.
- (3) Paved areas are minimized and allow for informal parking areas.
- (4) Adequate space is provided for natural site amenities.
- (5) Exterior lighting and signage is minimized.\*

### 3. BIOTIC RESOURCES

Sonoma County's varied natural landscapes range from the marine environments of the coastal zone to the extensive forests, woodlands and grasslands of the Coast Range mountains and foothills to the vernal pools and freshwater marshes of the Santa Rosa Plain and other valley floors to the extensive marshlands along San Pablo Bay. Areas of natural vegetation support many native plant and animal species and encompass habitat for special status species, wetlands and sensitive natural communities. The vegetative cover also helps reduce surface runoff, protect water quality, maintain air quality, retain soil, increase recharge, and maintain stream channels. These areas together create a varied natural environment important to the quality of life and the unique character of the County. The background and policies below are separated into a Biotic Habitat Areas section that addresses protection of several types of biotic habitat in the County and a section that focuses on one type of habitat, the Riparian Corridor. Biotic Resource Areas are generally depicted on Figure OSRC-2.



#### 3.1 POLICY FOR BIOTIC HABITAT AREAS

Protection of Biotic Habitat Areas is necessary because they are sensitive to change and the adverse effects of human activities. Forests have been logged, natural areas converted to urban and agricultural uses, non-native species introduced, and barriers created as a result of development, roadway construction, installation of fencing, etc. These changes in the natural landscape have forced wildlife into smaller areas and marginal habitat and limited the dispersal and movement of native plants and animals.

The Biotic Habitat Areas designated on Figures OSRC-5a through 5i depict the habitats whose locations are known and considered important for protection at this time. However, the policies below provide for protection of biotic habitats both within and outside the designated areas. Currently available information on the location and value of native habitats and sensitive resources is incomplete and changes over time as sites are assessed, new occurrences are reported, and additional locations are identified. As more habitat mapping information becomes available in the future, changes in designations will be considered along with possible policy



changes. Regular collection and updating of reliable information and refinement of best management practices are necessary to protect the County's biotic resources over the long term.

Following are the types of biotic habitat addressed by the policies in this section:

### **Special Status Species Habitat**

Special status species are plant and animals that are listed or candidate species under the Federal or State Endangered Species Acts and other species considered rare enough to warrant special consideration. Reported occurrences of special status species are compiled by the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB) of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and are routinely updated as new information becomes available. Detailed surveys are typically necessary to confirm the presence or absence of special status species.

### **Marshes and Wetlands**

Wetlands are transitional areas between aquatic and terrestrial habitats and include marshes, vernal pools, seeps, springs, and portions of riparian corridors with wetland vegetation. Wetlands are recognized for their high fish and wildlife habitat values, occurrences of unique plant and animal species, and importance in water recharge and filtration. Wetlands meeting certain criteria are subject to regulations of the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), CDFG, or applicable Regional Water Quality Control Boards. Wetland areas mapped as part of the National Wetlands Inventory and other sources include the Laguna de Santa Rosa, vernal pools, San Pablo Bay and Petaluma marshes, coastal and tidal marshes, and such freshwater marshes as the Pitkin, Kenwood, Cunningham, and Atascadero Marshes. Detailed delineations are typically necessary to confirm the presence and extent of any jurisdictional wetlands.

### **Sensitive Natural Communities**

CDFG has identified certain natural habitats as sensitive natural communities that are rare and vulnerable to further loss. Sensitive natural communities identified in Sonoma County include coastal salt marsh, brackish water marsh, freshwater marsh, freshwater seeps, native grasslands, several types of forest and woodland (including riparian, valley oak, Oregon white oak, black oak, buckeye, Sargent cypress and pygmy cypress), old growth redwood and Douglas fir forest, mixed serpentine chaparral, and coastal scrub, prairie, bluff, and dunes. Many of these communities also support populations of special status species and are important to native wildlife.

### **Habitat Connectivity Corridors**

Maintaining and improving opportunities for habitat connectivity throughout the County is essential for protecting biodiversity and sustaining native plant and animal populations. Linkages and corridors are needed to allow movement across the landscape and to connect wetlands and other important habitat areas to undeveloped lands and permanent open space. Important linkages and corridors include lands south of Glen Ellen connecting Sonoma Mountain and the Mayacamas Range and lands connecting the Laguna de Santa Rosa to agricultural areas south of Highway 116. It should be noted that riparian corridors also provide habitat connectivity and are addressed in the next section.

- GOAL OSRC-7:** **Protect and enhance the County's natural habitats and diverse plant and animal communities.**
- Objective OSRC-7.1:** Identify and protect native vegetation and wildlife, particularly occurrences of special status species, wetlands, sensitive natural communities, woodlands, and areas of essential habitat connectivity.
- Objective OSRC-7.2:** Designate important Biotic Habitat Areas and update designations periodically using credible data sources.
- Objective OSRC-7.3:** Establish development guidelines to protect designated Biotic Habitat Areas and assure that the quality of these natural resources is maintained.
- Objective OSRC-7.4:** Where appropriate, support regulatory efforts by other agencies to protect biotic habitat.
- Objective OSRC-7.5:** Maintain connectivity between natural habitat areas.
- Objective OSRC-7.6:** Establish standards and programs to protect native trees and plant communities.
- Objective OSRC-7.7:** Support use of native plant species and removal of invasive exotic species.
- Objective OSRC-7.8:** Encourage voluntary efforts to restore and enhance biotic habitat.
- Objective OSRC-7.9:** Preserve and restore the Laguna de Santa Rosa, San Pablo Bay and Petaluma marshes and other major marshes and wetlands.
- Objective OSRC-7.10:** Promote production of native marine and shoreline plant and animal habitats along the Pacific Coast and San Pablo Bay shorelines.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-7a:** Designate as Biotic Habitat Areas in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element the known locations shown on Figures OSRC-5a through OSRC 5i and identified as Special Status Species Habitat, Marshes and Wetlands, Sensitive Natural Communities, and Habitat Connectivity Corridors.\*

**Policy OSRC-7b:** Rezone to the Biotic Resources combining district all lands designated as Biotic Habitat Areas. Prepare and adopt an ordinance that provides for protection of designated Biotic Habitat Areas in conformance with the following principles. Until the ordinance is adopted, require that land use and development in designated areas comply with these principles:

- (1) For discretionary projects, notify applicants of protected habitats and species and possible requirements of Federal and State regulatory agencies, request identification of known protected habitats and species, and:
  - (a) In designated Biotic Habitat Areas, require site assessment and adequate mitigation. The priorities for adequate mitigation are, in order of highest to lowest priority:
    - Avoid the habitat.
    - Mitigate on site to achieve no net loss.
    - Mitigate off site to achieve no net loss.
  - (b) In designated Marshes and Wetlands, require a setback of 100 feet from the delineated edges of wetlands. The setback may be reduced based upon site assessment and appropriate mitigation.
  - (c) In designated Habitat Connectivity Corridors, encourage property owners to consult with CDFG, install wildlife friendly fencing, and provide for roadway undercrossings and oversized culverts and bridges to allow movement of terrestrial wildlife.
  - (d) The acreage required for adequate mitigation and replacement habitat shall be at least two times the acreage affected unless a lower level is acceptable to the applicable State and Federal agencies, with the amount depending on the habitat affected and the applicable mitigation priority value.
- (2) For discretionary projects in all designated Biotic Habitat Areas, send referrals to

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

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appropriate regulatory agencies and, where such agencies' comments or other agency information indicates biotic resources could be adversely affected, require site assessment, compliance with agency requirements and adequate mitigation pursuant to the priorities in (1) (a).\*

**Policy OSRC-7c:** Notify discretionary and ministerial permit applicants of possible requirements of Federal and State regulatory agencies related to jurisdictional wetlands or special status species.\*

**Policy OSRC-7d:** In all areas outside Urban Service Areas, encourage property owners to utilize wildlife friendly fencing and to minimize the use of outdoor lighting that could disrupt native wildlife movement activity.\*

**Policy OSRC-7e:** In coordination with resource agencies, landowners and affected public, review Biotic Habitat Area designations and related policy issues periodically, but at least every five years. If warranted, develop recommendations for additional policies that may be needed to ensure appropriate protection of biotic resources. Include consideration of methods to identify and monitor cumulative habitat loss and establish thresholds to protect sensitive resources.\*

**Policy OSRC-7f:** Support acquisition of conservation easements or fee title by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (SCAPOS) of designated Biotic Habitat Areas.\*

**Policy OSRC-7g:** Where additional Biotic Habitat Areas are designated in Area Plans, revise such plans and guidelines as needed to provide protection of biotic resources equivalent or better than the protection provided by the General Plan.

**Policy OSRC-7h:** In coordination with resource agencies, landowners and affected public, conduct a comprehensive study of the cumulative impacts of habitat fragmentation and connectivity loss and the effects of exclusionary fencing on wildlife movement. If warranted, identify essential habitat connectivity corridors and develop recommendations for policies to protect essential habitat corridors and linkages and to restore and improve opportunities for native plant and animal dispersal.\*

**Policy OSRC-7i:** Conduct a comprehensive habitat identification and mapping program for use in future policy determinations.\*

**Policy OSRC-7j:** Establish a clearinghouse of information for public use related to biotic habitat protection and management and work toward making this information available by computer.

**Policy OSRC-7k:** Require the identification, preservation and protection of native trees and

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## Open Space & Resource Conservation Element

woodlands in the design of discretionary projects, and, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize the removal of native trees and fragmentation of woodlands, require any trees removed to be replaced, preferably on the site, and provide permanent protection of other existing woodlands where replacement planting does not provide adequate mitigation.

**Policy OSRC-7l:** Identify important oak woodlands, assess current protection, identify options to provide greater protection of oak woodlands and their role in connectivity, water quality and scenic resources, and develop recommendations for regulatory protection and voluntary programs to protect and enhance oak woodlands through education, technical assistance, easements and incentives.\*

**Policy OSRC-7m:** Designate important valley oak habitat areas, reevaluate current designations, and apply a Valley Oak Habitat combining district zoning that requires adequate mitigation for trees removed and monitoring of replacement tree survival.\*

**Policy OSRC-7n:** Encourage landowners to voluntarily participate in a program that protects officially designated individual trees or groves that either have historical interest or significance or have outstanding size, age, rarity, shape or location.\*

**Policy OSRC-7o:** Encourage the use of native plant species in landscaping. For discretionary projects, require the use of native or compatible non-native species for landscaping where consistent with fire safety. Prohibit the use of invasive exotic species.\*

**Policy OSRC-7p:** Support voluntary programs for habitat restoration and enhancement, hazardous fuel management, removal and control of invasive exotics, native plant revegetation, treatment of woodlands affected by Sudden Oak Death, use of fencerows and hedgerows, and management of biotic habitat.\*

**Policy OSRC-7q:** Participate in the development of a conservation strategy to preserve, restore and enhance the unique vernal pool habitat of the Santa Rosa Plain and protect the associated special-status species. Seek ways to minimize the adverse effects of irrigation on valley oaks and vernal pool habitat.\*

**Policy OSRC-7r:** Develop comprehensive programs for preservation and restoration of the freshwater marsh habitat of the Laguna de Santa Rosa area, the extensive marsh areas along the Petaluma River, other tidal marshes, and freshwater marshes such as the Pitkin, Kenwood, Cunningham, and Atascadero Marshes. Include mechanisms for preservation and enhancement such as land acquisition, zoning restrictions, public and private conservation easements, regulating filling, grading or construction, floodwater retention, and wetland restoration.\*

**Policy OSRC-7s:** Develop comprehensive programs for preservation and restoration of the San Pablo Bay area and shoreline habitats, including mechanisms for preservation and enhancement such as acquisition, zoning and easements and avoiding activities such as filling, grading or

construction that would be detrimental to the biotic resources or historic water retention functions.\*

**Policy OSRC-7t:** Continue to actively participate in the FishNet4C program and work cooperatively with participating agencies to implement recommendations to improve and restore aquatic habitat for listed anadromous fish species and other fishery resources.\*

**Policy OSRC-7u:** Identify and consider designation of old growth Redwood and Douglas Fir as sensitive natural communities. Encourage preservation and public acquisition of remaining old growth Redwood and Douglas Fir forests in private ownership with the County. Because of their rarity and biological importance, these sensitive natural community types should be made priorities for protection through conservation easements, fee title purchase, or other mechanisms.\*

### 3.2 POLICY FOR RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

Areas along streams that naturally support native vegetation and wetlands are referred to as "Riparian Corridors." The abundant vegetation in the streamside environment provides food and water and creates breeding, egg deposition, and nesting areas for insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. The diversity of plant and animal species in riparian areas is among the highest of Sonoma County's natural landscapes. The dense vegetation provides protective cover and shade and contributes woody debris to stream channels, providing critically important habitat for salmon, steelhead, freshwater shrimp, and other protected freshwater fisheries and aquatic species.



Riparian vegetation contributes to water quantity and quality in several ways. Vegetation filters sediment and pollutants in stormwater runoff, slows flood flows, provides erosion protection for streambanks, and facilitates groundwater recharge. Elimination of natural plant communities along streams can increase surface run-off and siltation, contribute to water temperatures too warm for steelhead, salmon, and other fish, and reduce long term water availability.

The protection of riparian areas can create conflicts with agricultural and urban uses. Riparian corridors often contain prime soils for crops, provide water and shade for livestock, and provide a source of irrigation water and locations for agricultural wells. Riparian areas may support

insect pests, wildlife, invasive plants and plant diseases that may adversely affect adjacent agricultural uses. In turn, vegetation removal, mowing, fencing, spraying, disking and other agricultural practices can reduce the habitat supporting functions of nearby riparian areas. In urban areas, streamside areas provide natural open space and opportunities for recreation, education, and aesthetic appreciation, but these areas and their habitat value are often restricted by buildings, yards, landscaping, fencing, and trails.

**GOAL OSRC-8:** **Protect and enhance Riparian Corridors and functions along streams, balancing the need for agricultural production, urban development, timber and mining operations, and other land uses with the preservation of riparian vegetation, protection of water resources, flood control, bank stabilization, and other riparian functions and values.**

**Objective OSRC-8.1:** Designate all streams shown on USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle topographic maps as of March 18, 2003, as Riparian Corridors and establish streamside conservation areas along these designated corridors.

**Objective OSRC-8.2:** Provide standards for land use and development in streamside conservation areas that protect riparian vegetation, water resources and habitat values while considering the needs of residents, agriculture, businesses and other land users.

**Objective OSRC-8.3:** Recognize and protect riparian functions and values of undesignated streams during review of discretionary projects.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-8a:** Classify "Riparian Corridors" designated in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element as follows:

- (1) "Russian River Riparian Corridor" is the corridor adjacent to the main stem of the Russian River, excluding lands located within the Urban Residential, Commercial, Industrial, or Public-Quasi Public land use categories or within the jurisdiction of a city.
- (2) "Flatland Riparian Corridors" are the corridors adjacent to designated streams in the 1989 General Plan that flow through predominantly flat or very gently sloping land, generally with alluvial soil. This classification excludes areas located within the "Russian River Riparian Corridor" or within the Urban Residential, Commercial, Industrial, or Public/Quasi-Public land use categories.
- (3) "Other Riparian Corridors" are the corridors adjacent to all designated streams not

included in (1) or (2) above.\*

**Policy OSRC-8b:** Establish streamside conservation areas along both sides of designated Riparian Corridors as follows, measured from the top of the higher bank on each side of the stream as determined by PRMD:

- (1) Russian River Riparian Corridor: 200'
- (2) Flatland Riparian Corridors: 100'
- (3) Other Riparian Corridors: 50'\*

**Policy OSRC-8c:** Continue to utilize the Biotic Resources combining district for all lands within the designated streamside conservation areas. Develop and adopt regulations establishing standards applicable to Riparian Corridors along designated streams consistent with Policies OSRC-8d and OSRC-8e. Until the regulations are adopted, require that land use and development comply with Policies OSRC-8d and OSRC-8e.\*

**Policy OSRC-8d:** Allow or consider allowing the following uses within any streamside conservation area:

- (1) Timber harvest operations conducted in accordance with an approved timber harvest plan.
- (2) Streamside maintenance and restoration.
- (3) Fire fuel management where vegetation removal is limited to the minimum required for fire safety purposes and where there are no feasible alternative development locations or designs that do not require vegetation removal.
- (4) Road crossings, street crossings, utility line crossings.
- (5) Mining operations conducted in accordance with the County Surface Mining and Reclamation Ordinance.
- (6) Stream dams and stream-related water storage approved by applicable agencies.
- (7) Grazing and similar agricultural production activities not involving structures or cultivation, except as defined by (8) below, and conducted in accordance with water quality protection guidelines of the Agricultural Commissioner, Resource Conservation Districts, or Regional Water Quality Control Boards.
- (8) Agricultural cultivation and related planting, seeding, fertilizing, weeding, irrigation, and



harvesting.

- (a) located no closer than 100' from the top of the bank in the "Russian River Riparian Corridor".
- (b) located no closer than 50' from the top of the bank in the "Flatland Riparian Corridors" or in upland areas of "Other Riparian Corridors".
- (c) located no closer than 25' from the top of the bank in the "Other Riparian Corridors" not in upland areas.

The upland areas in (b) and (c) above shall be determined using information on streamside slopes from USGS topographic maps and soil types from the Soil Conservation Service "Soil Survey of Sonoma County".

- (9) Equipment turnaround and access roads associated with agricultural cultivation, provided that the affected area is the minimum necessary for these turnaround and access roads and that a minimum 25' vegetative filter strip is provided and maintained between the affected area and the top of the bank.
- (10) Vegetation removal as part of an integrated pest management program administered by the Agricultural Commissioner.
- (11) Creekside bikeways, trails, and parks within Urban Residential, Commercial, Industrial, or Public-Quasi Public land use categories.
- (12) Development authorized by exception under Policy OSRC-8e.\*

**Policy OSRC-8e:** Prohibit, except as otherwise allowed by Policy OSRC-8d, grading, vegetation removal, agricultural cultivation, structures, roads, utility lines, and parking lots within any streamside conservation area. Consider an exception to this prohibition if:

- (1) It makes a lot unbuildable and vegetation removal is minimized,
- (2) The use involves the minor expansion of an existing structure where it is demonstrated that the expansion will be accomplished with minimum damage to riparian functions,
- (3) The use involves only the maintenance or restoration of an existing structure or a non-structural use,
- (4) It can be clearly demonstrated through photographs or other information that the affected area has no substantial value for riparian functions, or

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- (5) A conservation plan is approved that provides for the appropriate protection of the biotic resources, water quality, flood management, bank stability, groundwater recharge, and other applicable riparian functions. Until the County adopts mitigation standards and procedures for specific uses and riparian functions, prior to approving the conservation plan, consult on areas of concern with the Resource Conservation District, Agricultural Commissioner, and resource agencies that are applicable to the proposed plan.\*

**Policy OSRC-8f:** Develop and/or adopt, where appropriate, revised streamside specific standards, guidelines, and/or best management practices that provide for protection of Riparian Corridors by watershed, stream, or other geographic areas. Once adopted, the revised standards would replace the standards that are in effect at the time.

**Policy OSRC-8g:** Support non-regulatory programs for protection of streams and riparian functions, including education, technical assistance, tax incentives, and voluntary efforts to protect riparian resources.

**Policy OSRC-8h:** Where additional Riparian Corridors are designated in Area Plans, revise such plans and guidelines as needed to provide protection of riparian corridors equivalent to or better than the protection provided by the General Plan.\*

**Policy OSRC-8i:** As part of the environmental review process, refer discretionary permit applications near streams to CDFG and other agencies responsible for natural resource protection.\*

**Policy OSRC-8j:** Notify permit applicants of possible Federal and State permit requirements in areas near streams and notify landowners whose property overlaps or touches a designated Riparian Corridor regarding the public hearings on the proposed regulations affecting them.\*

**Policy OSRC-8k:** In coordination with resource agencies, landowners and the affected public, conduct a comprehensive study of riparian corridors in grazing areas and, if warranted, develop recommendations for County policies that may be needed to ensure appropriate protection of such corridors.\*

**Policy OSRC-8l:** In coordination with resource agencies, landowners and the affected public, regularly review Riparian Corridor designations, ephemeral drainages, the requests, approvals and required mitigation for setback reductions, any cumulative effect of the approved reductions, and other protection issues and, if warranted, develop recommendations for County policies that may be needed to ensure appropriate protection of riparian corridors.\*

**Policy OSRC-8m:** Apply the SCWA Flood Control Design Criteria creek setback to development along streams where necessary to protect against streambank erosion.

**Policy OSRC-8n:** Work with the Sonoma County Water Agency and other entities to identify all

streams with “bed-and-bank” channels and consider Riparian Corridor designation for all such streams.

### 3.3 POLICY FOR MARINE FISHERY AND HARBOR RESOURCES

Sonoma County contains marine and inland fisheries and a growing aquaculture industry. Bodega Harbor is the home of a major commercial fishing fleet with berth installations, boat launching ramps, fish receiving piers, a navigation channel and a marina. Commercial and sport fishing net salmon, crab, herring, halibut, shark and bottom fish.



Oil exploration and drilling along the coast may adversely affect sensitive areas identified in the Local Coastal Plan. Streams and estuaries serve as nurseries and habitats for commercial fish species and are especially vulnerable to damage by an oil spill. Offshore activities such as oil platforms, pipelines, and tankers could interfere with commercial fishing activities. Ocean disposal of wastewater could also adversely affect nursery areas and the commercial fishing industry.

The Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan is the primary planning document for land use in the Coastal Zone. County goals, objectives, and policies that address these issues are contained in that Plan.

**GOAL OSRC-9:** Protect and conserve the quality of ocean, marine and estuarine environments for their scenic, economic and environmental values.

**Objective OSRC-9.1:** Utilize the Local Coastal Plan as the policy document for protection of marine fishery and harbor resources.

**The following policy shall be used to achieve this objective:**

**Policy OSRC-9a:** Incorporate policies for protection and conservation of ocean marine and estuarine environments into the Local Coastal Plan.

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## 4. SOIL RESOURCES

Soil resource policy tries to maintain soil productivity and prevent lands with productive soils from converting to non-resource uses and to promote soil management and conservation practices that will maintain productivity of those lands.

### 4.1 POLICY FOR CONSERVATION OF AGRICULTURE AND TIMBER SOILS

Important farmland soils are located throughout the County but are concentrated primarily in the Sonoma Valley, west Sebastopol, west Santa Rosa, Alexander Valley, and Dry Creek Valley regions. Soil, climate, topography and water combine to make these lands highly productive agricultural areas. However, lands with good agricultural soils are often desirable for building sites as they are generally located in flat valleys with few physical constraints.



Important timberland soils are located primarily in the northwest County and Russian River area.

**GOAL OSRC-10:**

**Encourage the conservation of soil resources to protect their long term productivity and economic value.**

**Objective OSRC-10.1:**

Preserve lands containing prime agricultural and productive woodland soils and avoid their conversion to incompatible residential, commercial or industrial uses.

**The following policies, in addition to those in the Land Use and Agricultural Resources Elements, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-10a:** Apply the "Land Intensive Agriculture", "Land Extensive Agriculture", and "Diverse Agriculture" land use categories to areas with productive agricultural soils.

**Policy OSRC-10b:** Apply the "Resources and Rural Development" land use category to all lands with timberland production zoning to protect timber soils.

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## 4.2 POLICY FOR REDUCTION OF SOIL EROSION

Although some types of soils are more susceptible to erosion, all benefit from conservation practices. Erosion results in the loss of topsoil that may reduce crop yields and cause sedimentation problems downstream. Sediment can fill reservoirs and stream channels, reduce water quality and storage capacity, and damage fishery and wildlife habitats. Erosion is caused by a combination of high rainfall, lack of cover, fragile soils, and steep slopes. Activities that may increase erosion include urban development, road and general construction activities, logging, mining, agriculture and recreational activities.



Soil loss in the Petaluma Valley under adverse conditions has been severe. Hillside cultivation and overgrazing are a particular concern. Measures are needed to reduce erosion. However, protection measures may not always be cost effective for the landowner.

**GOAL OSRC-11:** Promote and encourage soil conservation and management practices that maintain the productivity of soil resources.

**Objective OSRC-11.1:** Ensure that permitted uses are compatible with reducing potential damage due to soil erosion.

**Objective OSRC-11.2:** Establish ways to prevent soil erosion and restore areas damaged by erosion.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-11a:** Design discretionary projects so that structures and roads are not located on slopes of 30 percent or greater. This requirement is not intended to make any existing parcel unbuildable if Health and Building requirements can be met.\*

**Policy OSRC-11b:** Include erosion control measures for any discretionary project involving construction or grading near waterways or on lands with slopes over 10 percent.\*

**Policy OSRC-11c:** Encourage agricultural land owners to work closely with the N.R.C.S. and local Resource Conservation Districts to reduce soil erosion and to encourage soil restoration.\*

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

**Policy OSRC-11d:** Require a soil conservation program to reduce soil erosion impacts for discretionary projects that could increase waterway or hillside erosion. Design improvements such as roads and driveways to retain natural vegetation and topography to the extent feasible.\*

**Policy OSRC-11e:** Retain natural vegetation and topography to the extent economically feasible for any discretionary project improvements near waterways or in areas with a high risk of erosion as noted in the Sonoma County Soil Survey.\*

**Policy OSRC-11f:** Prepare and submit to the Board of Supervisors an erosion and sediment control report.\*

**Policy OSRC-11g:** Continue to enforce the Uniform Building Code to reduce erosion and slope instability problems.\*

## 5. TIMBER RESOURCES

Approximately 513,000 acres (about 50% of the County land area) in Sonoma County are devoted to forest and woodlands. These include 72,000 acres (7%) of conifer forest, 284,000 acres (28%) of hardwoods, and 157,000 (15%) acres of conifer mixed with hardwoods. These areas are often interspersed with grasslands, shrublands or agricultural lands and residences.



Forests and woodlands provide a number of aesthetic and ecological benefits such as wildlife habitat, watershed protection and recreation.

These forest values are important to the quality of the environment and life in the County and are addressed in the Water Resources Element and other sections of this Element. Forests also provide commercial timber as a renewable resource. In 2000, a total of 24,157,000 board feet of lumber valued at roughly 19.5 million dollars was harvested in Sonoma County. This amount was roughly 1.2% of the timber harvested in the State during that year. Pursuant to the Forest Practices Act of 1973, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is the lead agency responsible for approving timber harvest plans and ensuring their compliance with the Forest Practices Rules (FPR) and other applicable regulations.

For purposes of the above regulations, "timberlands" are generally considered to be those lands that are capable of and available for growing a commercial species of timber such as Redwoods and Douglas Fir. In Sonoma County, these lands are predominantly in the northwest part of

the County. There are approximately 232,000 acres of timberland in the County. Sonoma County is unique among many counties in California because 94 percent of the timberlands are privately owned.

In order to assure that timber resource lands are available in the future, the California Timberland Productivity Act requires the County to designate timberlands in the General Plan and to establish "Timber Production" zones where uses are limited to timber production and compatible uses. The County currently has 69,000 acres of its commercial timberland in "Timber Production" zones.

Pressures on timberland include rural development, agricultural conversions, and increased public scrutiny regarding the potential impacts associated with logging operations, particularly near streams. These issues can affect both the economic feasibility of the timber industry and/or the long term availability of timber resources. However, since State law gives primary regulatory responsibility for timber operations to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the County's land use authority is limited. Instead, the County has focused its policy directives on the maintenance of a sustainable supply of timber resources in the future by reducing the potential for conversion of timberland to incompatible uses.

**GOAL OSRC-12:** **Preserve, sustain and restore forestry resources for their economic, conservation, recreation, and open space values.**

**Objective OSRC-12.1:** Identify and preserve areas with timber soils and commercial timber stands for timber production. Reduce incompatible uses and the conversion of timberlands to agriculture and other uses that effectively prevent future timber production in these areas.

**Objective OSRC-12.2:** Minimize the potential adverse impacts of timber harvesting on economic, conservation, recreation and open space values and restore harvested areas to production for a future yield.

**The following policies, in addition to those in the Land Use Element, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-12a:** Apply the "Resources and Rural Development" category to designate all lands in a "Timberland Production Zone" and adjacent parcels with timber soils or commercial timber stands.

**Policy OSRC-12b:** Review all timber harvest plans for compatibility with General Plan policies and economic viability of the industry.\*

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

**Policy OSRC-12c:** Where applicable, comment on timber harvest plans in support of increased protection of Class III streams.\*

**Policy OSRC-12d:** Review timber harvest plans adjacent to designated Riparian Corridors and request that clear cutting not occur within streamside conservation areas. Where clear cutting is approved by the applicable State or Federal agency along designated Riparian Corridors, ensure that at least 50 percent of the overstory canopy and at least 50 percent of the understory vegetation be retained.\*

**Policy OSRC-12e:** Revise the districts of the Zoning Code that implement the Resources and Rural Development land use category to reduce the potential for conversion of timberland to non-timber uses.\*

## 6. MINERAL RESOURCES

Though various minerals have been mined in Sonoma County during the past century, mining operations at the current time consist almost exclusively of the extraction and processing of rock, sand and earth products for use in construction and landscaping. From 1995 to 2002, an average of 4.84 million tons of construction aggregate was mined and marketed each year to meet local needs and a share of the North Bay regional needs. Approximately 75 to 112 million tons are likely to be needed over the next 20 years.



The potential impacts of mining activities include, but are not limited to, noise, dust, air emissions, truck traffic, erosion, siltation, and loss of agricultural land. These impacts create conflicts with nearby residential, agricultural and recreational uses and may impact habitat and fishery resources.

The State Geologist classifies or inventories mineral lands throughout the state and has designated certain mineral bearing areas as being of regional significance. By law, local agencies must adopt mineral management policies that recognize mineral information provided by the State, assist in the management of land use that affect areas of statewide and regional significance, and emphasize the conservation and development of identified mineral deposits.

Accordingly, Sonoma County has adopted the Aggregate Resources Management (ARM) Plan to set forth the State mandated mineral management policy for the County. During the process of adoption of the plan, the County considered the aggregate resource areas classified as MRZ-2

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy



by the State Geologist.

Land use policies have been formulated with full recognition and consideration of the classification and designation information transmitted by the State (State Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey Special Report 175 and subsequent amendments) and incorporated by reference herein. Sonoma County has considered the importance of its aggregate resources to the regional market and not just to the County.

**GOAL OSRC-13:** Provide for production of aggregates to meet local needs and contribute the County's share of demand in the North Bay production-consumption region. Manage aggregate resources to avoid needless resource depletion and ensure that extraction results in the fewest environmental impacts.

**Objective OSRC-13.1:** Use the ARM Plan to establish priority areas for aggregate production and to establish detailed policies, procedures, and standards for mineral extraction.

**Objective OSRC-13.2:** Minimize and mitigate the adverse environmental effects of mineral extraction and reclaim mined lands.

**The following policies, in addition to those in the Land Use Element, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-13a:** Consider lands designated in the ARM Plan as priority sites for aggregate production and mineral extraction and review requests for additional designations for conformity with the General Plan and the ARM Plan.\*

**Policy OSRC-13b:** Review projects for environmental impact and land use conflicts and consider the following minimum factors when approving mining permits: topsoil salvage, vegetation, fisheries and wildlife impacts, noise, erosion control, roadway conditions and capacities, reclamation and bonding, air quality, energy consumption, engineering and geological surveys, aggregate supply and replenishment, drainage, and the need for economical aggregate materials.\*

**Policy OSRC-13c:** Review projects that are on or near sites designated "Mineral Resources" in the ARM Plan for compatibility with future mineral extraction.\*

## 7. ENERGY RESOURCES

Sonoma County residents and businesses consume energy in many forms and for many uses,

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Footnote: \*Mitigating Policy

but primarily oil and gas for transportation and electricity for home and business. Sonoma County residents and businesses also produce energy, primarily in the form of electrical power generated at the Geysers steam fields, but also in individual, small scale uses throughout the County. Energy resource issues are therefore addressed in two sections. The first addresses how County citizens can reduce future energy demand through conservation and efficiency measures. The second addresses how the County can contribute to future energy supplies.

## 7.1 POLICY FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION AND DEMAND REDUCTION

Reduction in energy demand can be achieved in many ways. Land use strategies include compact development form and promotion of mixed uses. Energy used for transportation can be reduced through increased use of pedestrian and bicycle travel, public transit, and alternative fuels. Other strategies include improved construction standards and agricultural practices, solid waste management, and education.



Sonoma County has led the way in programs designed to conserve energy in County operations, including building audits, lighting retrofits, and electric and hybrid fleet vehicles. The County has also initiated the Sustainable Policies and Practices Project that aims to monitor and reduce energy use in all County operations on an ongoing basis. In 2005, Sonoma County became the first county in the nation where the County and all of its Cities pledged to measure and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2015. Reducing energy demand is the primary strategy for meeting this target. Much more work is needed to ensure that the County's efforts are coordinated with evolving State and Federal initiatives.

**GOAL OSRC-14:** Promote energy conservation and contribute to energy demand reduction in the County.

**Objective OSRC-14.1:** Increase energy conservation and improve energy efficiency in County government operations.

**Objective OSRC-14.2:** Encourage County residents and businesses to increase energy conservation and improve energy efficiency.

**Objective OSRC-14.3:** Reduce the generation of solid waste and increase solid waste reuse and recycling.

**Objective OSRC-14.4:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2015.

**The following policies, in addition to those in the Land Use and Circulation and Transit Elements, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-14a:** Continue to support education programs that promote energy conservation; energy efficiency; and solid waste reduction, reuse, and recycling opportunities for County operations, residents and businesses, and local utilities.\*

**Policy OSRC-14b:** Continue to provide strategic planning for energy conservation and efficiency in County operations.\*

**Policy OSRC-14c:** Continue to purchase and utilize hybrid, electric, or other alternative fuel vehicles for the County vehicle fleet; and encourage County residents and businesses to do the same.\*

**Policy OSRC-14d:** Support project applicants in incorporating cost effective energy efficiency that may exceed State standards\*

**Policy OSRC-14e:** Develop energy conservation and efficiency design standards for new development.\*

**Policy OSRC-14f:** Use the latest green building certification standards, such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, for new development.\*

**Policy OSRC-14g:** Develop a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Program, as a high priority, to include the following:

- (1) A methodology to measure baseline and future VMT and greenhouse gas emissions
- (2) Targets for various sectors including existing development and potential future development of commercial, industrial, residential, transportation, and utility sources
- (3) Collaboration with local, regional, and State agencies and other community groups to identify effective greenhouse gas reduction policies and programs in compliance with new State and Federal standards
- (4) Adoption of development policies or standards that substantially reduce emissions for new development
- (5) Creation of a task force of key department and agency staff to develop action plans,

including identified capital improvements and other programs to reduce greenhouse gases and a funding mechanism for implementation

(6) Monitoring and annual reporting of progress in meeting emission reduction targets\*

**Policy OSRC-14h:** Continue to participate in the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Program.\*

**Policy OSRC-14i:** Manage timberlands for their value both in timber production and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions.\*

**Policy OSRC-14j:** Encourage the Sonoma County Water Agency and other water and wastewater service providers to reduce energy demand from their operations.\*

## 7.2 POLICY FOR ENERGY PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY

Energy production in Sonoma County is dominated by the electricity generated from geothermal resources at the Geysers. This source generates about 5,000,000 megawatt-hours per year. Additional sources include hydroelectric power, methane gas, and solar photovoltaics. Additional opportunities exist for individual and small scale production from other renewable energy sources, including passive solar collection, wind energy, hot water, and biomass. These sources have distinct advantages over the more traditional fossil fuel sources such as oil and gas in that they typically have lower up-front costs, better efficiency, and minimal environmental impacts.



**GOAL OSRC-15:** **Contribute to the supply of energy in the County primarily by increased reliance on renewable energy sources.**

**Objective OSRC-15.1:** Increase the development of renewable energy and distributed energy generation systems and facilities for County operations.

**Objective OSRC-15.2:** Promote the use of renewable energy and distributed energy generation systems and facilities in new development in the County.\*

**Objective OSRC-15.3:** Establish guidelines and standards for development of energy generation systems and facilities in the County.

**Objective OSRC-15.4:** Encourage exploration of the extent and potential use of hot water geothermal resources.

**The following policies, in addition to those in the Land Use and Circulation and Transit Elements, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-15a:** Develop a Sonoma County Energy Strategic Plan that addresses the activities and operations of both County government and private residents and businesses.

**Policy OSRC-15b:** Encourage and promote the development of renewable energy and distributed energy generation systems and facilities for County operations.\*

**Policy OSRC-15c:** Encourage and promote the use of renewable energy and distributed energy generation systems and facilities that are integral to and contained within existing and new development (e.g., solar thermal installations to provide space and water heating or solar electric installations for small commercial buildings or residences in rural areas, small wind energy systems to provide electricity to agricultural accessory structures, etc.).\*

**Policy OSRC-15d:** Incorporate energy facility siting policies into the Sonoma County Development Code that would:

- (1) Define accessory renewable energy systems as those designed to primarily serve on-site energy demand, and commercial renewable energy facilities as providing energy for off-site use.
- (2) Allow accessory renewable energy systems close to the end energy users in all zoning districts where visual and other environmental impacts can be mitigated.
- (3) Allow commercial renewable energy facilities on lands designated for commercial, industrial, resource or public use. Avoid in agricultural areas mapped as Prime, Statewide or Unique Farmlands, and in areas designated as Scenic and Biotic Resources. Limit their use to compatible scale in rural residential, and agricultural areas.
- (4) Notwithstanding Policy AR-4a, consider allowing commercial renewable energy as a primary use facilities on agricultural lands only where a Renewable Energy (RE) Combining District is applied, when the history of the site demonstrates that it is of low value for agricultural production, and agricultural operations on surrounding agricultural parcels are not compromised, consistent with Policies AR 4d, 4e and 4f.
- (5) Discourage commercial renewable energy facilities in designated Biotic Resource Areas, Scenic Resource Areas, and Geologic Hazard Areas.\*

**Policy OSRC-15f:** Review and condition proposed natural gas wells through the use permit

process.

**Policy OSRC-15g:** Allow the use of hot water geothermal resources in all land use designations if it can be demonstrated that it will be compatible with surrounding land uses.\*

## 8. AIR RESOURCES

Sonoma County residents enjoy the cleanest air in the Bay Area. Nonetheless, air quality is affected when pollutants are concentrated during temperature inversions. As a result, inland valleys are particularly susceptible to air pollution.

Air pollutants include both gases and particulates. The automobile is the most common source of smog. Particulates come from residential, industrial, and agricultural sources, mainly during grading and construction activities.



Sources of air pollution are both stationary and mobile. Mobile sources, such as motor vehicles, produce most of the air pollutants in the County. Air pollution from mobile sources is regulated by the State through exhaust emissions standards, but can be reduced by proper management of the transportation system. The Geysers power plants are the largest stationary pollutant source. Other stationary sources include mining operations, industrial and agricultural activities and lumber mills. Residential wood stoves are a contributor to particulate levels in urban areas in the north County.

Improved air quality and decisions on air quality standards and mitigation measures are balanced with competing interests for production efficiency, energy costs and ease of transportation while meeting all the requirements of the Federal and State Clean Air Acts.

**GOAL OSRC-16:** **Preserve and maintain good air quality and provide for an air quality standard that will protect human health and preclude crop, plant and property damage in accordance with the requirements of the Federal and State Clean Air Acts.**

**Objective OSRC-16.1:** Minimize air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

**Objective OSRC-16.2:** Encourage reduced motor vehicle use as a means of reducing resultant air pollution.

**The following policies, in addition to those of the Circulation and Transit Element, shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-16a:** Require that development projects be designed to minimize air emissions. Reduce direct emissions by utilizing construction techniques that decrease the need for space heating and cooling.\*

**Policy OSRC-16b:** Encourage public transit, ridesharing and van pooling, shortened and combined motor vehicle trips to work and services, use of bicycles, and walking. Minimize single passenger motor vehicle use.

**Policy OSRC-16c:** Refer projects to the local air quality districts for their review.

**Policy OSRC-16d:** Review proposed changes in land use designations for potential deterioration of air quality and deny them unless they are consistent with the air quality levels projected in the General Plan EIR.\*

**Policy OSRC-16e:** Cooperate with the local air quality district to monitor air pollution and enforce mitigations in areas affected by emissions from fireplaces and woodburning stoves.\*

**Policy OSRC-16f:** Encourage the adoption of standards, the development of new technology, and retrofitting to reduce air pollution resulting from geothermal development.\*

**Policy OSRC-16g:** Residential units shall be required to only install fireplaces, woodstoves or any other residential wood-burning devices that meet the gram-per-hour EPA or Oregon DEQ wood heater emissions limits (exempt devices are not allowed).\*

**Policy OSRC-16h:** Require that development within the Bay Area Air Quality Management District that generates high numbers of vehicle trips, such as shopping centers and business parks, incorporate air quality mitigation measures in their design.

**Policy OSRC-16i:** Ensure that any proposed new sources of toxic air contaminants or odors provide adequate buffers to protect sensitive receptors and comply with applicable health standards. Promote land use compatibility for new development by using buffering techniques such as landscaping, setbacks, and screening in areas where such land uses abut one another.\*

**Policy OSRC-16j:** Require consideration of odor impacts when evaluating discretionary land uses and development projects near wastewater treatment plant or similar uses.

**Policy OSRC-16k:** Require that discretionary projects involving sensitive receptors (facilities or

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land uses that include members of the population sensitive to the effects of air pollutants such as children, the elderly, and people with illnesses) proposed near the Highway 101 corridor include an analysis of mobile source toxic air contaminant health risks. Project review should, if necessary, identify design mitigation measures to reduce health risks to acceptable levels.\*

**Policy OSRC-16l:** Work with the applicable Air Quality districts to adopt a diesel particulate ordinance. The ordinance should prioritize on site over off site mitigation of diesel particulate emissions in order to protect neighboring sensitive receptors from these emissions.\*

**Policy OSRC-16m:** Provide education and outreach to the public regarding the Air Quality Districts' "Spare the Air" Programs.\*

## 9. OUTDOOR RECREATION

Open space for outdoor recreation, including parks, equestrian and hiking trails, and bicycle routes, provides pleasure and enjoyment for County residents. The Public Facilities and Services Element also includes parkland needs and implementation measures. Figures OSRC-3, 4, and 5a through 5i show designated outdoor recreation areas.

### 9.1 POLICY FOR PARKS AND EQUESTRIAN AND HIKING TRAILS

As of 1986, hiking and riding trails were primarily confined to parklands and to Coastal access trails within the Sea Ranch Subdivision. A trail system plan developed by the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department links various parks and expands hiking and riding opportunities. The trail plan is not a trail users guide but a plan for securing lands for a countywide trail system. Many property owners, especially those engaged in agriculture, are concerned about trespassing, liability, and damage if hikers release farm animals or bring unleashed dogs. Funding the acquisition and maintenance of trails is also an issue.





**GOAL OSRC-17:** Establish a countywide park and trail system that meets future recreational needs of the County's residents while protecting agricultural uses. The emphasis of the trail system should be near urban areas and on public lands.

**Objective OSRC-17.1:** Provide for adequate parklands and trails primarily in locations that are convenient to urban areas to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the population, while not negatively impacting agricultural uses.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve this objective:**

**Policy OSRC-17a:** Apply the "Public-Quasi Public/Park" designation to all existing local, County, and State parklands.

**Policy OSRC-17b:** Apply the "Planned Parks" designation to indicate general areas where a need exists for parks.

**Policy OSRC-17c:** Consider requiring dedication of public access by fee or easement from a public roadway to a navigable stream (Subdivision Map Act), the ocean, public lakes, and major reservoirs as a condition of approval for major subdivisions if the project blocks an existing public access point or it results in the need for additional access, and other reasonable access is not available.

**Policy OSRC-17d:** The trails on Figure OSRC-3 make up the County's designated plan for trails. Trail locations are approximate and are described below. Roadways may be used where access cannot be obtained through private property.

- **Gualala River Waterway Trail.** The Gualala River is a navigable waterway and, as such, public access is protected by Article XV, Section 2 of the California Constitution. The trail follows the river from the Sonoma/Mendocino County line to Stewart's Point Road.
- **Sonoma Coast Trail.** The trail extends from Black Point southward to the Estero Americano, is consistent with California State Coastal Plan Policy 145 that calls for establishment of a coastal trail system statewide.
- **Russian River Waterway Trail.** The Russian River is a navigable waterway from Cloverdale to the coast and as such, public access is protected by Article XV, Section 2 of the California Constitution. This proposed waterway trail extends from the coast to Preston Bridge immediately north of Cloverdale.
- **Santa Rosa Creek Trail.** The proposed Santa Rosa Creek Trail is located between

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Guerneville Road and Highway 101 and is owned in fee by the SCWA.

- **Santa Rosa - Forestville Trail.** The proposed trail primarily follows the abandoned right-of-way of the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad from Highway 101 to Steelhead Beach.
- **Gossage and Hinebaugh Creek Trail.** The proposed trail follows a SCWA channel between Llano Road and Petaluma Hill Road. The trail further extends southward to the intersection of Stony Point Road and Highway 116. It is owned in fee by the Agency.
- **Copeland Creek Trail.** The proposed trail follows Copeland Creek and links Rohnert Park near Sonoma State University to Crane Creek Regional Park.
- **Taylor Mountain Trail.** The proposed trail connects the proposed Taylor Mountain County Park with Annadel State Park.
- **Stevenson Trail.** The trail was proposed by the California State Department of Parks and Recreation in 1958 to connect Robert Louis Stevenson Park and the Napa Valley.
- **Hood Mountain Trail North.** The proposed trail links Hood Mountain County Park to a 240 acre Bureau of Land Management holding to the east at the Sonoma/Napa county line.
- **Hood Mountain - Annadel Trail.** The proposed trail links Hood Mountain County Park to Annadel State Park. However, a crossing at Highway 12 will be necessary.
- **Valley of the Moon Trail.** The proposed trail traverses the Valley of the Moon between Jack London State Park and the Sonoma/Napa County line and links Sonoma Valley Regional Park to the Glen Ellen community.
- **Sonoma Trail.** The proposed trail follows the right-of-way of the Northwestern Railroad from the City of Sonoma to Highway 121/12.
- **Petaluma River Waterway Trail.** The Petaluma River is a navigable waterway and as such, public access is protected by Article XV, Section 2 of the California Constitution. The proposed trail extends from Shollenberger River Park to San Pablo Bay.

Classify potential trails as follows:

- (1) **Recreational Waterways.** Recognize boating and canoeing activities on designated waterways. Limit hiking trails to connections between urban areas, parks and the waterway.

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- (2) **Hiking and Equestrian Trails.** Locate a trail system along the Sonoma County/Napa County boundary. Link existing and proposed State and County parks adjacent to urban areas.
- (3) **Multiple Use Trails.** Use railroad rights-of-way and water agency channels as multiple use trails for hiking, equestrian and bike use. Use existing roadways as alternative routes if access cannot be obtained.

**Policy OSRC-17e:** Encourage private organizations to assist in the construction and maintenance of trails.

**Policy OSRC-17f:** Consider requiring a dedication in fee or by easement for trails as a condition of approval of subdivisions. There must be a need identified on Figure OSRC-3 and the project must either block an existing access or result in the need for additional recreational opportunities. Locate and fence trails to minimize impacts on agricultural uses.

**Policy OSRC-17g:** Use the following guidelines to determine consistency of projects involving lands with abandoned railroad rights of way where reasonably related to the impacts of the project:

- (1) The project does not or will not preclude the use of the right-of-way for trails.
- (2) A width of 60 feet generally is reserved for trail purposes, unless the Regional Parks Department determines that a different width would be adequate.
- (3) An irrevocable offer of dedication for the right-of-way has been made to the County of Sonoma.

**Policy OSRC-17h:** Identify and evaluate alternative sites in the Boyes Hot Springs area to meet the projected need for a regional park facility in Sonoma Valley.

### 9.2 POLICY FOR BIKEWAYS

Greater use of bicycling and walking for transportation and recreation has the potential to create a wide range of health benefits not only for bicyclist and pedestrians, but for all citizens of Sonoma County.

Bicycle races, organized tours, and a unique combination of mild climate, challenging topography, spectacular scenery, and an

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extensive network of rural roads have given Sonoma County an international reputation as a bicycling vacation destination. Events such as the Tour of California, Wine Country Century and the Gran Fondo attract tens of thousands of visitors each year, generating income for Sonoma County's hospitality industry. Creating walkable and bikeable areas in unincorporated communities further enhances Sonoma County's tourism industry.

Bikeways are classified as Class I, II, III or Bicycle Boulevards.

Class I Bikeways are also known as multi-use paths. Class I bikeways provide bicycle travel on an all-weather surface within a right-of-way that is for exclusive use by pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized modes. In addition to providing important transportation links, the safety provided by Class I bikeways makes them a preferred facility for recreational activities, especially for children, inexperienced bicyclists, and people with disabilities. These bikeways also offer recreational opportunities for walkers, runners, equestrians, and many other users that prefer or require an off-road facility. The Class I Bikeway Network is shown in Figure OSRC-4.

Class II Bikeways are often referred to as "bike lanes" and provide a striped and stenciled lane for one-way travel on either side of a street or highway. Unlike Class III bikeways (below), Class II bikeways have specific width and geometric standards.

Class III Bikeways are facilities shared with motor vehicles that provide connection to Class I and II bikeways through signage, and design, creating advantages for bicyclists not available on other streets. By law, bicycles are allowed on all roadways in California except on freeways when a suitable alternate route exists. However, Class III bikeways serve to identify roads that are more suitable for bicycles.

**GOAL OSRC-18:**                    **Establish a Bikeways Network that provides safe and convenient recreational opportunities for all bicyclists and enhances Sonoma County's reputation as a world-class bicycling destination.**

**Objective OSRC-18.1:**        Design, construct and maintain a comprehensive Bikeways Network that links the County's cities, unincorporated communities, and other major activity centers including schools, recreational areas and employment centers.

**Objective OSRC-18.2:**        Establish Sonoma County as a world-class destination for bicycle racing, touring, and events.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-18a:** Use the adopted Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as the

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detailed planning document for existing and proposed bikeways.\*

**Policy OSRC-18b:** Develop a comprehensive system of bikeways through implementation of the Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as described in the Circulation and Transit Element.\*

**Policy OSRC-18c:** Support and encourage events that enhance Sonoma County's reputation as a world class bicycling destination and introduce Sonoma County residents to walking and bicycling, such as bike-to-work days, walk and bike-to-school days, senior walks and historic walks.

**Policy OSRC-18d:** Encourage bicycle event promoters and the bicycle tourism industry to coordinate large bicycle events with other regional events or activities to avoid congestion on County roads.

**Policy OSRC-18e:** Consider connectivity to public and open space lands when identifying needs for new bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

## 10. ARCHAEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Historic preservation is intended to maintain reminders of the County's heritage and development. Historic building surveys for the Coastal, Sebastopol, Healdsburg, and Sonoma Valley areas provide an inventory of the County's historic resources, some of which may be threatened by development or by a lack of maintenance. Archaeological sites provide information on the history and culture of Sonoma County's earliest residents and can be disturbed by development activities. Heritage and landmark trees enhance the quality of the environment and have historical significance.



**GOAL OSRC-19:** **Protect and preserve significant archaeological and historical sites that represent the ethnic, cultural, and economic groups that have lived and worked in Sonoma County, including Native American populations. Preserve unique or historically significant heritage or landmark trees.**

**Objective OSRC-19.1:** Encourage the preservation and conservation of historic structures by promoting their rehabilitation or adaptation to new uses.

**Objective OSRC-19.2:** Encourage preservation of historic building or cemeteries by maintaining a Landmarks Commission to review projects that may affect historic structures or other cultural resources.

**Objective OSRC-19.3:** Encourage protection and preservation of archaeological and cultural resources by reviewing all development projects in archaeologically sensitive areas.

**Objective OSRC-19.4:** Identify and preserve heritage and landmark trees.

**Objective OSRC-19.5:** Encourage the identification, preservation, and protection of Native American cultural resources, sacred sites, places, features, and objects, including historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, cemeteries, and ceremonial sites. Ensure appropriate treatment of Native American and other human remains discovered during a project.

**Objective OSRC-19-6:** Develop and employ procedures to protect the confidentiality and prevent inappropriate public exposure of sensitive archaeological resources and Native American cultural resources, sacred sites, places, features, or objects.

**The following policies shall be used to achieve these objectives:**

**Policy OSRC-19a:** Designate the County Landmarks Commission to review projects within designated historic districts.\*

**Policy OSRC-19b:** Refer proposals for County Landmark status and rezonings to the Historic Combining District to the County Landmarks Commission.\*

**Policy OSRC-19c:** The County Landmarks Commission shall review Historic Building Surveys and make recommendations for designation of structures or cemeteries as County landmarks.\*

**Policy OSRC-19d:** Include a list of historic structures proposed for designation as County landmarks in Specific or Area Plans or Local Area Development Guidelines and refer the list to the Landmarks Commission for their recommendations.\*

**Policy OSRC-19e:** Refer applications that involve the removal, destruction or alteration of a structure or cemetery identified in a historic building survey to the Landmarks Commission for mitigation. Measures may include reuse, relocation, or photo documentation.\*

**Policy OSRC-19f:** Use the Heritage or Landmark Tree Ordinance and the design review process to protect trees.

**Policy OSRC-19g:** Pursue grant funding for the preparation and updating of historic resource inventories.\*

**Policy OSRC-19h:** Designate the County Landmarks Commission to administer a preservation program for stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic structures.\*

**Policy OSRC-19i:** Develop a historic resources protection program that provides for an ongoing process of updating the inventory of historic resources. Such a program should include:

- (1) Periodic historic building surveys,
- (2) Formalized recognition of the inventory of historic resources as recommended by the State Office of Historic Preservation, including rezoning to the Historic Combining District (HD), and
- (3) Procedures for the protection of recognized historic resources for both ministerial and

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discretionary permits \*

**Policy OSRC-19j:** Develop an archaeological and paleontological resource protection program that provides:

- (1) Guidelines for land uses and development on parcels identified as containing such resources,
- (2) Standard project review procedures for protection of such resources when discovered during excavation and site disturbance, and
- (3) Educational materials for the building industry and the general public on the identification and protection of such resources.\*

**Policy OSRC-19k:** Refer applications for discretionary permits to the Northwest Information Center to determine if the project site might contain archaeological or historical resources. If a site is likely to have these resources, require a field survey and preparation of an archaeological report containing the results of the survey and include mitigation measures if needed.\*

**Policy OSRC-19l:** If a project site is determined to contain Native American cultural resources, such as sacred sites, places, features, or objects, including historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, cemeteries, and ceremonial sites, notify and offer to consult with the tribe or tribes that have been identified as having cultural ties and affiliation with that geographic area.\*

**Policy OSRC-19m:** Develop procedures for consulting with appropriate Native American tribes during the General Plan adoption and amendment process.\*

**Policy OSRC-19n:** Develop procedures for complying with the provisions of State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, if applicable, in the event of the discovery of a burial or suspected human bone. Develop procedures for consultation with the Most Likely Descendant as identified by the California Native American Heritage Commission, in the event that the remains are determined to be Native American.\*

## 11. OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

### Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 1: Open Space Development Code Amendments

**Program Description:** Revise Development Code Regulations to conform to the 2020 General Plan, including provisions for scenic, biotic, soils, timber, mineral, energy, archaeological



resources, and cultural resources (Policy reference: NA).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 2: Subdivision Ordinance Amendment to Establish Open Space Siting Requirements**

**Program Description:** Prepare an ordinance amendment that would require building envelopes in Community Separators and Scenic Landscape Units and building setbacks for Scenic Corridors, Riparian Corridors and Biotic Habitat Areas (Policy reference: NA).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 3: Request State Scenic Highway Designations for Highway 1 and Highway 37**

**Program Description:** Adopt a resolution requesting a State study and appointment of citizens committee that includes representation from property owners along these corridors. The final Scenic Highway report will be sent to the Board and the State for approval (Policy reference: OSRC-3i).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 4: Extension of the Sonoma County Agriculture Preservation and Open Space District**

**Program Description:** Prior to expiration, place measure on the ballot to extend the Sonoma County Agriculture and Open Space Preservation District to acquire and administer open space lands (Policy reference: OSRC-1h).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 5: Acquisition of Lands for Parks and Trails**

**Program Description:** The Regional Parks Department will continue to include in its five-year capital improvement program any proposed County acquisition or development of lands for parks and trails (Policy reference: NA).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 6: Expansion of Community Separator Lands**

**Program Description:** Periodically identify and consider designation of additional lands around cities and unincorporated communities in the County as Community Separator. Consider designation of additional lands including a review of the allowable densities between Cotati and Penngrove. In cooperation with the City of Rohnert Park's effort to update its Urban Growth Boundary, review the Urban Service Area and Community Separator designations west of Petaluma Hill Road and the lands south of Valley House Drive. Review and consider designating the area located south of the Urban Service Areas in Sonoma and Highway 121. Include broad community and landowner participation in identifying potential lands and provide timely notification to all owners of property proposed for designation. (Policy reference: NA).

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**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 7: Outdoor Lighting Standards**

**Program Description:** Prepare countywide standards for preservation and conservation of night time skies in the use of outdoor lighting. Develop standards for night time lighting specific to the use and location, including but not limited to parking lots, security lighting, street lighting, commercial establishments, visitor serving uses, hillside homes, and signage. The program will apply to all new development, County projects, signage, retrofitting, expansions, and remodeling, and all new and replacement lighting fixtures/systems. The program will include a voluntary educational component to encourage existing sources of light pollution to convert to less glaring lighting systems. The program will be incorporated into the Development Code (Policy reference: OSRC-4a, 4b, 4c).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 8: Scenic Highway 116 Program**

**Program Description:** Prepare Local Area Development Guidelines for land areas encompassing the general corridor area identified in the 116 Scenic Highway Corridor Study, September 1988, and incorporated into Development Code Article 90 (Local Area Development Guidelines). Such guidelines shall be derived from the local objectives and policies contained in that study. The Scenic Landscape Unit boundaries shall be expanded to encompass the general corridor area mapped in that study. Properties within new Scenic Landscape Unit areas shall be rezoned to SR accordingly (Policy reference: OSRC-2c, 3i).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 9. Urban Design Standards**

**Program Description:** Develop Urban Design Guidelines on a community by community basis for Urban Service Areas to implement the Urban Design Policies of the General Plan (Policy reference: OSRC-5a).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 10. Rural Character Code Revisions.**

**Program Description:** Develop Rural Character Design Guidelines to be incorporated into the Development Code and publish a separate, illustrated document for public use (Policy reference: OSRC-6a).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 11. Rezoning of Designated Biotic Resource Areas**

**Program Description:** Prepare and adopt an ordinance zoning properties to correspond to the designated Biotic Habitat Areas and Streamside Conservation Areas (Policy reference: OSRC-7b and 8c).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 12. Biotic Resource Protection**

## Ordinances

**Program Description:** Prepare and adopt implementing ordinances for protection of designated Biotic Habitat Areas and Streamside Conservation Areas consistent with the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element (Policy reference: OSRC-7b, 8d, and 8e).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 13. Landowner Notification of Biotic Resources**

**Program Description:** Send a letter to owners of property that includes designated Biotic Resource Areas that informs them of the designation and the proposed regulations (Policy reference: OSRC-7b and 8j).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 14. Periodic Review of Biotic Resources**

**Program Description:** Periodically, but at least every five years, prepare a review of Riparian Corridor and Biotic Habitat Area Resource data and functions, including possible recommendations for revised designation and policies (Policy reference: OSRC-7e and 8l).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 15. Habitat Fragmentation Study**

**Program Description:** Conduct a study of cumulative habitat fragmentation, loss of connectivity, and exclusionary fencing on wildlife movement, including possible recommendations for corridor designation and protection policies (Policy reference: OSRC-7h).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 16. Comprehensive Habitat Mapping Program**

**Program Description:** Prepare a countywide habitat map(s) identifying and classifying various habitat types and develop a program for periodic policy review and consideration of habitat conservation plan(s) (Policy reference: OSRC-7i).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 17. Biotic Resource Data Clearinghouse**

**Program Description:** Develop a clearinghouse for biotic resource data and habitat information, and, if possible, provide it in electronic format (Policy reference: OSRC-7j).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 18. Oak Protection Study**

**Program Description:** Establish an advisory committee to assist in a study of important oak

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woodlands and options for protection, including possible recommendations for protection (Policy reference: OSRC-7l).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 19. Grazing Land Riparian Corridor Study**

**Program Description:** Conduct a study of riparian corridors in grazing areas and the effects of livestock use on riparian habitat, including possible recommendations for habitat protection. Work with the Resource Conservation Districts to establish best management practices for grazing and pastures near streams (Policy reference: OSRC-8k).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 20. Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy**

**Program Description:** Work with affected cities and agencies to prepare a conservation strategy for Santa Rosa Plain in order to preserve, restore, and enhance the vernal pool and associated habitats (Policy reference: OSRC-7q).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 21. Comprehensive Restoration Programs**

**Program Description:** Develop programs for preservation and restoration of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, San Pablo Bay margin, and other marshes (Policy reference: OSRC-7s, 7r).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 22: Flood Control Design Criteria**

**Program Description:** Work with the SCWA to clarify how the Flood Control Design Criteria creek setback standards can be utilized to protect streams that are not designated as Riparian Corridors (Policy reference: OSRC-8m).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 23: Stream Protection Standards/Guidelines**

**Program Description:** Establish a process for developing and adopting updated standards, guidelines, and/or best management practices for protection of streams and riparian functions. Involve affected landowners, local groups and associations, Resource Conservation Districts, the Agricultural Commissioner, UC Cooperative Extension, The Regional Water Quality Control Boards, CDFG, and other regulatory agencies (Policy reference: OSRC-8f).

**Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 24: Non-regulatory Stream Protection**

**Program Description:** Work with CDFG, the Agricultural Commissioner, the Resource Conservation Districts, UC Cooperative Extension, the Regional Water Quality Control Boards,

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## Open Space & Resource Conservation Element

and the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to support and strengthen non-regulatory programs for the protection of streams and riparian functions, including education, technical assistance, tax incentives and voluntary efforts (Policy reference: OSRC-8g).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Program 25: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

**Program Description:** Develop a program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in concert with State and Federal standards (Policy reference: OSRC-14g).

### **Open Space and Resource Conservation Element Program 26: Improved Mapping of Riparian Corridors**

**Program Description:** Support mapping by the Sonoma County Water Agency and other entities of all stream channels with “bed-and-banks”. As this information becomes available, initiate rezoning to the BR Combining District for these streams, including corresponding General Plan Amendments necessary to designate them as Riparian Corridors (Policy reference: OSRC-8n).