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## **American River Ranch Area Plan Map Amendment**

### **Introduction:**

The River Bend Area Plan of the American River Parkway identifies the intended use of a specific area of the Parkway as an ideal location for an agricultural use with a preference for organic farming. Soil Born Farms has been operating the American River Ranch since 2008 and has submitted a proposed Master Plan for the future use and improvement of the American River Ranch. The intent of this analysis is to review and recommend an Area Plan Map Amendment which would incorporate facilities consistent with the proposed 2014 Master Plan.

### **Project Description:**

The proposed Area Plan Map Amendment defines the final seven acre footprint of developed recreation for American River Ranch, and labels the following facilities: interpretive center, parking and picnic area.

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

#### Goals (Page 10)

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

#### Concept Policies (Page 11)

##### 1.1 Balanced Management

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

support migratory and resident wildlife; providing recreational opportunities; and ensuring public safety.

### 1.2 Recreation

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

### 1.3 Resource Protection

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

### 1.4 Land Use

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

### 1.5 Cooperation

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

## **River Bend Park Area Plan (Pages 179 & 180)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Activities and Facilities**

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

River Bend Park consists of two distinct areas, the western portion, which is heavily vegetated, and the area to the east, which is presently being leased for agricultural uses. The two areas are divided by the existing bicycle trail. A variety of activities take place in the western portion of the park including picnicking, day camps and overnight group camping, fishing and equestrian use. In addition, the area is a popular take out point for rafters. Private property owned by Campfire U.S.A. is located at the northern end of the park. There is a County pump station located at the northeast end of the park adjacent to the Rancho Cordova Community Park (Hagan Park). The western portion of River Bend Park consists of Developed Recreation and Limited Recreation land use designations, three separate areas of Protected Area and a large Nature Study Area off of Rod Beaudry Drive. An equestrian staging area is located off of Rod Beaudry Drive in the Nature Study Area. Due to the popularity of the River Bend Park Area, increased use should be anticipated.

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

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

native plant nursery, riparian habitat and natural plant communities, would be brought together and enhanced through indoor classrooms located at the interpretive center.

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

The approval of the proposed Master Plan requires the concurrent amendment to the River Bend Area Plan Map. The map would be amended to identify the seven acre footprint, and label the following facilities: interpretive center, parking and picnic area. There is a separate Parkway Plan Analysis for the proposed American River Ranch 2014 Master Plan.

#### Area Plan Map Amendment Process

The Area Plan Map Amendment is proposed per the steps described in the American River Parkway Plan. Once the Area Plan Map Amendment and the Master Plan are approved, individual improvements shall be approved by the Recreation and Park Commission consistent with Chapter 11 page 224 & 225 of the American River Parkway Plan (policy 10.1).

#### **Proposed River Bend Area Plan Map Amendment** **American River Parkway Plan Compliance Determination**

Based on a review of the proposed American River Ranch 2014 Master Plan and the narrative language for the River Bend Area Plan, it is the determination of the Department of Regional Parks that the proposed Area Plan Map Amendment is consistent with the American River Parkway Plan.