

# **FRANZ VALLEY AREA PLAN**

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April 17, 1979

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May 22, 2012

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1979, the County adopted the Franz Valley Specific Plan, a planning document prepared under specific requirements of State law and intended to provide an intermediate level of detail between the 1978 General Plan and site development plans submitted to the County for approval. The 1978 General Plan focused on policies of countywide significance and utilized generalized graphics to illustrate land use, open space and other elements.

In 1989, the County adopted an update of the 1978 General Plan. The General Plan update provided parcel-specific information concerning land use and open space. The General Plan update also included "area policies" in an attempt to focus particular attention on a specific area or parcel. Because of this level of specificity in the General Plan update, the Board of Supervisors determined that several of the specific plans, including the Franz Valley Specific Plan, were either duplicative of or conflicted with the updated General Plan. The Board of Supervisors further determined that to the extent the specific plans provided policy guidance beyond that provided by the General Plan update, that such plans should be reviewed and revised to focus on such policies, and re-adopted as "area plans." The General Plan includes a discussion of these specific plans in Land Use Element Section 2.1.1, under Policy LU-1a.

This document was prepared pursuant to General Plan Policy LU-1a.

In keeping with the above intent, the 1993 revisions of the Franz Valley Area Plan did not include exhaustive evaluation or reconsideration of the policies or designations contained in this plan. The scope of the revisions was limited to that necessary to achieve General Plan consistency.

In addition, during this process much of the original background language was deleted. This deletion should not be interpreted as diminishing or reducing the significance of the content of the language to the original plan. Should there be any future questions regarding the intent or basis of the policies in the revised plan, the Planning Department shall keep copies of the original plan on file for reference.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### REGIONAL SETTING

The Franz Valley Plan Area (91,520 acres) is located in the northeastern part of Sonoma County (see Location Map on page 10). The southern and western sections of the area are oriented toward Santa Rosa and Healdsburg, and are within a thirty minute drive to one of these cities. The northern section is oriented to Napa County, Calistoga, and the Northern Napa Valley. Many parcels along the eastern ridgeline have their only or primary access from Napa County. Access to Lake County is available via Ida Clayton Road.

The topography of the area is diverse, including the southern part of the Maacamas Mountains which extend into Mendocino County, the western and northern part of the Sonoma-Napa Mountains, Knights Valley in the shadow of Mt. St. Helena, and Franz Valley to the south. The major watersheds are drained by the Maacama and Mark West Springs Creeks.

### FRANZ VALLEY ISSUES AND POLICIES

The initial meeting of the Citizens Committee focused on a discussion of issues and goals. Subsequent meetings illuminated the policies which are appropriate for the Area Plan. These policies were utilized in the formulation of the land use and open space plans, which are the primary means of implementing the Franz Valley Area Plan. Some implementation of these policies will occur through other mechanisms, such as the subdivision, zoning and riparian ordinances, other County departments, and State agencies.

**TABLE 1: FRANZ VALLEY ISSUES AND POLICIES**

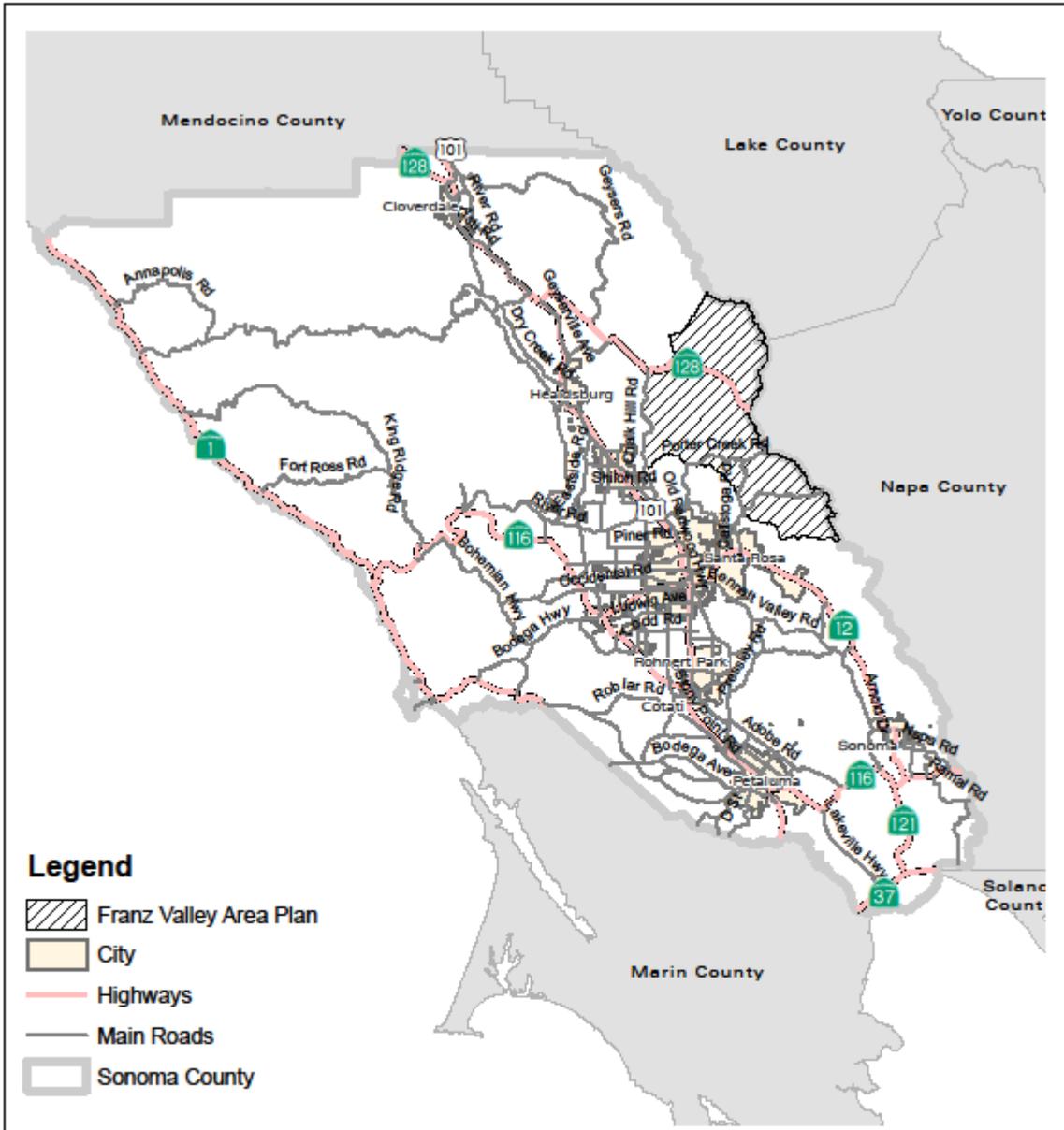
Issues	Policies
<b>Land Use, Housing, and Commercial Services</b>	
Population growth	Plan with respect to planning area growth projections
Large scale residential development	Preserve the rural character of the area.
	Guide residential development so that urban-level public services are not required at a future time.

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Policies</b>
	Cluster development where the environmental suitability allows.
Class K Housing	Encourage innovative concepts in housing construction and design when minimum standards of health and safety are met and parcels are at least 20 acres.
Common Ownership of Parcels	Explore concepts which allow for joint ownership of large parcels, especially for the goal of proper land management.
Commercial Services	Promote commercial services in existing communities outside of the Franz Valley Area.
<b>Transportation</b>	
Traffic Hazards Poor Road Condition	<p>Maintain the rural character of roads while providing for necessary maintenance and limited safety improvements, especially with regard to school bus requirements and safety of children.</p> <p>Coordinate land use and transportation planning to achieve the Level of Service designated in the General Plan Circulation and Transit Element.</p>
<b>Conservation, Parks and Public Safety</b>	
Productive Agriculture	Discourage residential development in agricultural areas except where related to the agricultural use of the land.

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Policies</b>
Timber Resource Management	<p>Encourage parcel sizes sufficient for commercial timber harvesting where appropriate. Require adherence to Timber Harvest Plan conditions.</p> <p>Preserve timber stands with unique biotic or scenic qualities.</p> <p>Recognize woodlot management as a vital local resource.</p>
Geothermal Development	<p>Establish geothermal exploration and production areas where known to be compatible with other resource values and where adverse environmental effects can be mitigated.</p>
Wildlife Management	<p>Review proposed development with regard to its effects on plant and animal life.</p>
Stability of the Ecological System	<p>Encourage the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat areas representative of the flora and fauna of the area and necessary for preservation of rare and endangered species.</p> <p>Recognize that replanting and good vegetation management of appropriate native vegetation will help restore and maintain the natural qualities of the area.</p> <p>Enhance hunting and fishing opportunities in the area through effective management programs, issues and policies.</p>
Scenic Qualities	<p>Review proposed development with regard to its effects on views and vistas through the use of scenic routes.</p>

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Policies</b>
Scenic Qualities	Except within the geothermal permit area, any new transmission facilities should parallel existing routes and should be designed to minimize visual and community impacts.
Parks and Recreation Potential	<p>Designate an expansion area of Robert Louis Stevenson Park where required to protect peregrine falcon habitat.</p> <p>Allow for expansion of existing resorts and other private recreational facilities where the traffic generated will not only exceed existing road capacity and environmental impacts can be mitigated.</p> <p>Facilitate designation and development of riding and hiking trails where locally acceptable.</p>
Public Safety	Limit or prevent residential development in areas of high or extreme fire, geologic, and seismic hazards.

LOCATION MAP



## Franz Valley Area Plan

### Location Map

County of Sonoma  
Permit and Resource Management Department  
2000 Vallejo Avenue, Santa Rosa, California 95402  
707/546-1000

Maple PRM - Geography 2 - Route - The Source: 2003 GIS/PRM - 2002PRM - Department/Project/Component/Project/Source/Prj - 2023/04/04/Prm/Plan/Map/Franz Valley Location Map.mxd Date: 11/16/2011

# CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

## NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Slope and Geology

The Department of Planning shall continue to make referrals to a qualified geologist in order to determine when engineering geologic reports are necessary concerning the following discretionary actions: plan amendments, rezonings, use permits, minor and major subdivisions, design review permits, and gravel extraction permits and reclamation plans.

The Building Inspection Department shall continue to apply the Alquist-Priolo Geologic Hazards Zones Act requirements to the Maacama Fault, requiring geologic reports to identify and establish setbacks from fault traces. Also, the Building Inspection Department shall continue to require geologic reports on single-family residence building permits in landslide areas in order to enforce the geologic provisions of Chapter 70 of the latest locally adopted Uniform Building Code.

### Hydrology

- (1) Within groundwater recharge areas, construction activities, creation of impervious surfaces, and changes in drainage should be avoided through discretionary actions.
- (2) In order to prevent unnecessary erosion and decrease in water quality, enforce the provisions of Chapter 70 of Uniform Building Code.
- (3) Include grading standards in revision to zoning ordinance.
- (4) Enforce protection of riparian corridors through adoption of riparian standards in revision to zoning ordinance.

### Soils

- (1) Encourage clustering of residential development to insure the retention of parcel sizes and parcel suitabilities relative to resource utilization.
- (2) Promote the use of Agricultural Preserves as a means of maintaining productive open space.
- (3) Adopt and enforce grading and erosion control standards as part of the revision of the County Zoning Ordinance.
- (4) Review soil suitability and slope in conjunction with all development proposals.

## **Wildlife and Vegetation**

- (1) Enforce protection of riparian vegetation through adoption of riparian standards in the revision of the County Zoning Ordinance.
- (2) Timber harvest plans and other construction activities should require the preservation of all riparian grown within a corridor of 200 feet on either side of streams. In the event that this standard conflicts with policies or standards for riparian corridors in the General Plan, the more restrictive policies or standards shall apply.
- (3) All snag trees and hardwoods should be retained.
- (4) Avoid construction of new access to remote areas.
- (5) Cluster residential development in least sensitive areas.
- (6) For projects which could affect nesting raptors, prior to project construction the applicant shall have a qualified wildlife biologist conduct a pre-construction survey for nesting raptors within 800 feet of any area of proposed construction activity. A report containing the results of the pre-construction survey shall be submitted to the project Planner prior to the start of any proposed construction activity. If the biologist finds nesting raptors within 800 feet of any area of proposed construction activity during the pre-construction survey, the applicant shall do one of the following:
  - a. Delay construction activity until after July 15; or
  - b. Delay construction activity until all juvenile raptors in the nests have fledged, as determined by a qualified wildlife biologist; or
  - c. Establish a buffer of 800 feet around each raptor nest by installing exclusionary fencing to ensure that construction vehicles, equipment, and workers do not enter the area.

## **Fire Hazard**

- (1) Recognize the value of the fire protection services rendered by the volunteer fire departments in the area, and encourage continued dedication to training of volunteers and neighborhood fire prevention sessions.
- (2) Continue to require fire management plans with minor and major subdivision applications and require implementation of such plans.
- (3) Any construction should be to the standards prescribed by comprehensive Building Codes and Fire Prevention Codes which give special consideration as needed to mountain hazard areas.
- (4) Special attention should also be given to building siting to minimize fire hazards.

## **CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **Archaeology**

- (1) The archaeological sensitivity map is too generalized to make site specific determinations. In reviewing proposed new development, the decision to require field survey to identify potential archaeological sites should be made in consultation with a professional archaeologist.

### **Circulation**

- (1) Requiring off-site improvements through development fees would be a method to pass some of the County's costs associated with rural development on to those subdividing land.
- (2) On Mountain Home Ranch Road and Sharpe Road, the establishment of a road improvement trust fund may be warranted as a method of dividing the cost of maintenance of these relatively long dead-end roads between the new parcels which will be created.

### **Noise**

- (1) Development shall comply with the policies and standards of the General Plan Noise Element.

### **Air Quality**

- (1) Any geothermal development or major subdivisions should proceed only if adverse air quality impacts can be mitigated as determined through environmental review on the project level.

### **Schools**

- (1) Adoption of the Franz Valley Plan will limit development and the associated school impacts to a level which most school districts can absorb over the next two decades.
- (2) School districts should consider adopting a policy of school impact fees, in order to charge new construction for the cost of new schools, if a school district expects to be impacted. The Board of Supervisors should implement the fees if so directed by school boards.

### **Sheriff**

- (1) Encourage the clustering of homes, as homes visible to neighbors have a greater degree of protection from burglary than visibly isolated units.

- (2) Encourage the use of outdoor lighting and other security measures, subject to General Plan Open Space and Resource Conservation Element policy for outdoor lighting.

### **Fire Protection**

- (1) Mitigation measures are addressed under the Fire Hazard Section.

### **Water Supply Systems**

- (1) Water conservation methods should be encouraged and conservation devices installed in homes.
- (2) Pool covers should be required for swimming pools to reduce evaporation.
- (3) To the extent feasible in terms of fire retardant vegetation, native species requiring little water should be planted.

### **Sanitary Waste Disposal Systems**

- (1) Continue adherence to the regulations of the Sonoma County Environmental Health Department with respect to required percolation tests and creek setbacks.
- (2) Any proposed disposal systems within slide area or on a fault will require careful study by a qualified geologist in order to determine if the site is suitable for a leach field.
- (3) The primary problem associated with locating septic systems in slides is the additional moisture load added to the soils, which may accelerate sliding. Location in a fault may result in water slipping through the sheared rock into a water(1)bearing strata without adequate treatment that occurs when percolated through the soil.

### **Solid Waste Disposal**

- (1) It is imperative that solid waste be disposed of properly in waste disposal sites, and not in critical areas (streams, ravines) as is the temptation on large parcels.

### **Energy**

- (1) Cluster residential development where feasible. The Land Use Plan allows for small minimum lot sizes while proposing an overall low density.
- (2) The County of Sonoma should continue to oppose the proposed Geysers to Lakeville transmission line because it is not consistent with the policies of this plan.

# LAND USE PLAN

## OVERVIEW

As an expression of public policy the Land Use Plan for Franz Valley delineates general land use types and specific densities for residential development. Where existing parcelization and development have already occurred, the plan provides some additional minor subdivision potential in the rural residential category.

The only areas which are generally suitable for residential development are suitable for and currently committed to agriculture. This is recognized in the General Plan which places these areas, specifically Knights and Franz Valleys, and along Chalk Hill Road, in agricultural designations. The Franz Valley Plan reinforces the County's policy of protecting agriculture. Different residential densities were assigned to agricultural lands, according to type of agriculture and parcel size.

Most of the area has been placed in a resource conservation designation, recognizing the resource suitabilities, environmental and public service constraints, and natural sensitivities of the area. The General Plan termed these areas "Resources and Rural Development", where the land is characterized by a low level of human utilization, primarily related to the use of the land. This plan recognizes that these lands are best used for extensive agriculture, timber and woodlot management, geothermal development, wildlife habitat, watershed conservation, and related uses. The Napa County General Plan has categorized similar lands, which border the area, as "Agriculture, Watershed, and Open Space," and implemented 40-160 acre minimum parcel sizes through their zoning.

In several parts of the area, a range of land use densities is recommended. Such as the range of 40 to 100 acres per dwelling unit. A range is utilized because of the large acreage involved and the difficulty of making exact determinations of suitabilities, constraints, and sensitivities for each parcel. Proposals to develop properties at the high end of the range (higher density than General Plan Land Use Plan Map) shall include a General Plan Amendment and are subject to Policy LU 14 of the General Plan.

## DESCRIPTION OF LAND USE CATEGORIES

The land use categories are summarized below. Land use designations are shown on the Land Use Plan Map on page 25.

### Resources and Rural Development

The majority of the area is in the Resource and Rural Development land use category. The goal is to keep options open for resource development and conservation by not permitting residential

uses or other types of development which would preclude the best use of the land. Environmental constraints play an important role because residential development could be damaging to the environment and result in increased public service costs. These lands are not needed to accommodate residential growth in the County over the next two decades.

## **PLANNING UNITS**

### **Agriculture**

Agricultural lands are second in number of acres placed in a land use designation, although agriculture is the single resource which has been most intensively developed in the study area. The agricultural designation is applied where there is suitability for agriculture including orchards and vineyards, hay production, and grazing and dairies. The intent is to preserve and promote agriculture, as well as to preclude residential development in remote areas.

The General Plan designates agricultural lands as "Land Intensive Agriculture," "Land Extensive Agriculture," and "Diverse Agriculture." Land uses must be consistent with the applicable General Plan category.

It should also be noted that dwelling unit density is intended not to exceed two units per quarter (1) quarter section in the area designated 20-40 acre density, north of St. Helena Road.

### **Rural Residential**

The Rural Residential land use category recognizes existing pockets of residential development from five to twenty acres in size. Limited in-filling will be allowed. Because of the environmental constraints of the area, the maximum permitted density is five acres. The least acreage is devoted to Rural Residential in the study. Except for the existing development, there is limited environmental justification for Rural Residential designations in the plan area.

## **PLANNING UNIT ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The area has been divided into twelve units for planning and descriptive purposes (see Planning Units Map on page 18). These planning units are used in a summary analysis table which describes some of the characteristics of the area, including suitabilities, constraints, and sensitivities (See Table 1).

Suitabilities may be thought of as the best potential use of the environment. Class I-IV Agricultural Soils and agricultural zoning are indicators in the Franz Valley Plan area of agricultural suitability. Other resource suitabilities include timber management, geothermal development, preservation of groundwater recharge areas, and wildlife habitat and watershed conservation. Residential suitability is partially indicated by a commitment to residential development.

Constraints are environmental conditions and hazards that can be mitigated but at an environmental and financial cost. Geologic and seismic hazards, fire hazard, slope constraints, poor water availability, and soil constraints to residential development were evaluated for their potential adverse impact on residential development. Areas constrained for residential development except at a very low density are suitable for uses of the land related to resource management as described in "suitabilities."

Sensitivities are the third aspect of the environmental evaluation done in Franz Valley: those natural characteristics and features which would be irreversibly affected by development activities. Scenic and bicycle routes, vistas, parks, historical sites, riparian corridors, critical habitat for peregrine falcons, sensitive areas and unique features are factors mapped in the open space map. The Franz Valley Area Plan will insure protection of the area's biological diversity, and scenic, educational and recreational values.



**TABLE 2: FRANZ VALLEY LAND USE PLAN ANALYSIS**

	<b>Planning Unit</b>	
<b>Characteristic*</b>	<b>Geothermal</b>	<b>Mt. St. Helena</b>
Acreage:	8500	8250
Major Access Road:	Ida Clayton Road	Ida Clayton Road
Suitabilities:	Secondary Geothermal Resource Area Timber Soils Timber Stands Resource Conservation Area** Agricultural Soils No Residential Commitment	Resource Conservation Area Timber Soils Timber Stands  Agricultural Soils No Residential Commitment
Constraints: Slope Geologic Hazards Fire Hazard Soil Constraints Water Availability	50%, 30-50%, 15-30% Least Stable Extreme, High, Moderate Moderately Suitable, Unsuitable Zone 4, Zone 3	30-50%, 15-30%, <50% Least Stable, Most Stable Extreme, High, Moderate Unsuitable, Moderately Suitable Zone 4, Zone 3
Sensitivities:	Parks and Public Lands Riparian Corridors Unique Feature Sensitive Areas	Riparian Corridors Public Lands Proposed Hiking Trail Unique Feature
Land Use Plan Policies: (including density)	Resource Conservation Recreation (Trout Farm) Note: Any residential development must be related to resource base (geothermal primarily)	Resource Conservation (60-200)
Rezoning Criteria:	None: General Plan Amendment required	Protect parcel's suitabilities and sensitivities Demonstrate mitigation of parcel's constraints
	<b>Planning Unit</b>	
<b>Characteristic*</b>	<b>Knights Valley</b>	<b>Chalk Hill</b>

Acreeage:	5000	5000
Major Access Road:	Highway 128 Spencer Lane	Chalk Hill Road West Leslie Road Spurgeon Road Thomas Road
Suitabilities:	Agricultural Soils Agricultural Contracts, Type I Groundwater Recharge Area Timber Soils Timber Stands Resource Conservation Area Limited commitment to residential development	Resource Conservation Area Agricultural Soils Timber Stands Timber Soils Agricultural Contracts, Type I Limited commitment to residential development
Constraints: Slope Geologic Hazards  Fire Hazard Soil Constraints  Water Availability	0-6%, 6-15%, 15-30% Most Stable, Least Stable  Moderate, Extreme, High Suitable, Moderately Suitable, Unsuitable Zone 1, Zone 3, Zone 4	Equal amount of all categories Least Stable, Fault Zone, Most Stable  High, Moderate, Extreme Suitable, Unsuitable Zone 3, Zone 4
Sensitivities:	Scenic Route Bicycle Route Historical Sites Vista Points Riparian Corridors Sensitive Area Proposed Hiking Trail	Riparian Corridors Vista Points Scenic Route Bicycle Route Sensitive Area
Land Use Plan Policies:	Agriculture (20, 40, 80)	Agriculture (20, 40)
Rezoning Criteria:	None: General Plan Amendment required	None: General Plan Amendment required.

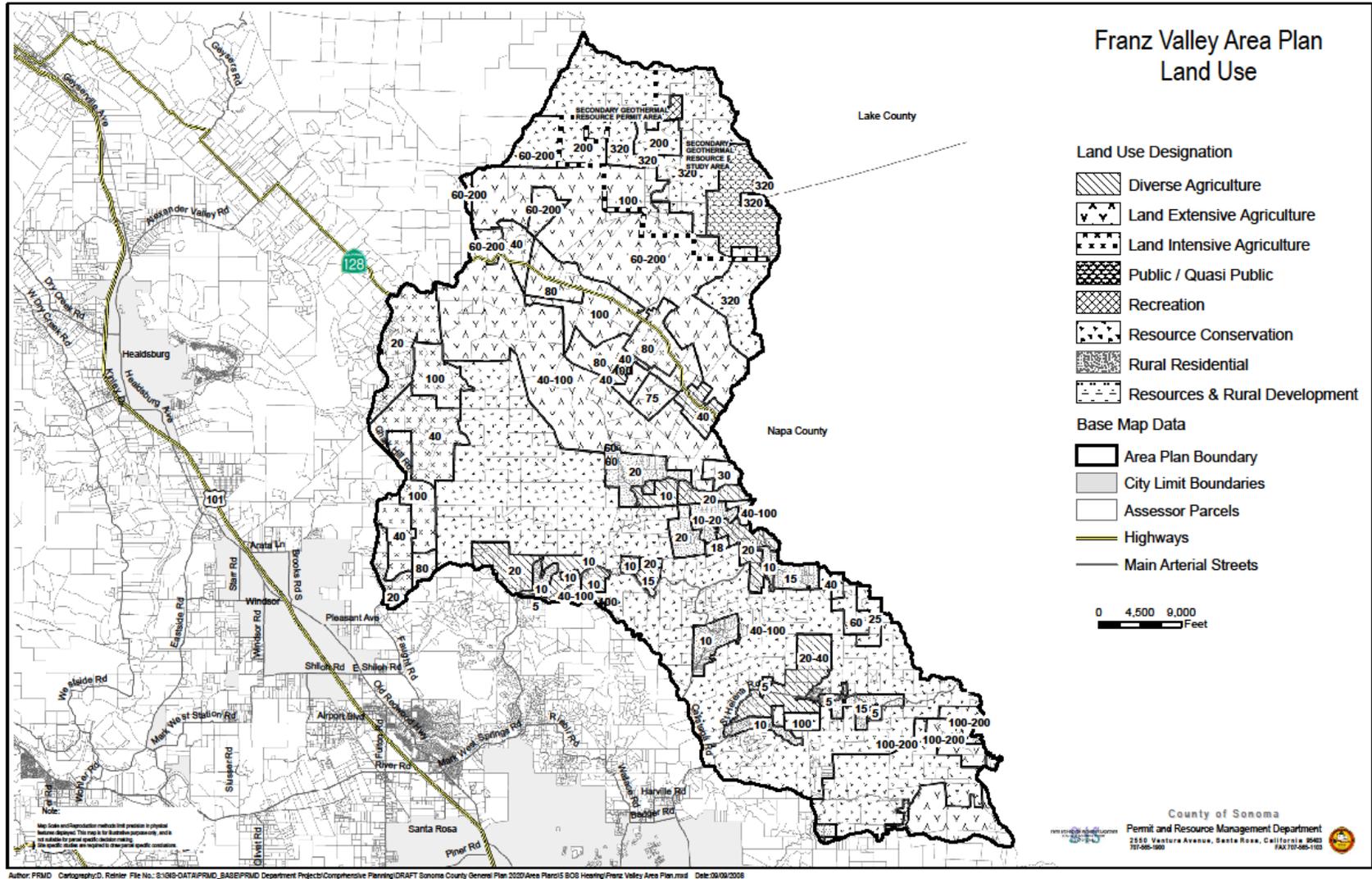
	<b>Planning Unit</b>	
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>West Porter Creek</b>	<b>East Porter Creek</b>
Acreage	1125	600
Major Access Road(s)	Porter Creek Road Franz Valley Road East Leslie Road Loch Haven Drive	Porter Creek Road
Suitabilities	Resource Conservation Area Agricultural Soils Timber Stands Small Area Committed to Rural Residential	Resource Conservation Area Timber Soils Timber Stands Institutional Commitment Small Area Committed to Rural Residential
Constraints Slope Geologic Hazards Fire Hazard Soil Constraints  Water Availability	30050%, 15030%, >50% Most Stable, Least Stable  Equal amounts of all categories Moderately Suitable, Suitable, Unsuitable Zone 3	>50%, 30050, 15030% Least Stable, Moderately Stable Stable Extreme, Moderate, High Moderately Suitable, Unsuitable Zone 4
Sensitivities	Scenic Route Bicycle Route Riparian Corridor Unique Feature	Scenic Route Bicycle Route Riparian Corridor Unique Feature
Land Use Plan Policies:	Agriculture (20) Rural Residential (10)	Open Land/Residential (20) Rural Residential (10) Institutional (Marine Cooks and Stewards)
Rezoning Criteria	None: General Plan Amendment required	None: General Plan Amendment required

	<b>Planning Unit</b>	
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Franz Valley</b>	<b>Petrified Forest</b>
Acreage	1200	1800
Major Access Road(s)	Franz Valley Road Franz Valley School Road	Petrified Forest Rd. Mountain Home Ranch Rd. Sharpe Rd.
Suitabilities	Agricultural Soils Groundwater Recharge Area Resource Conservation Area Timber Stands Timber Soils Limited Commitment to Residential Development	Agricultural Soils Timber Stands Timber Soils Resource Conservation Area Some Commitment to Residential Development
Constraints Slope  Geologic Hazards Fire Hazard Soil Constraints  Water Availability	15-30%, 30-50%, 6-15% >50%  Least Stable, Most Stable Equal amounts of all categories Moderately Suitable, Suitable, Unsuitable Zone 3	Equal amounts of all categories except 0-6%. Least Stable, Most Stable High, Moderate, Extreme Moderately Suitable, Unsuitable, Suitable  Zone 3
Sensitivities	Riparian Corridor Vista Point Scenic Route Proposed Hiking Trail Historical Sites Sensitive Area	Riparian Corridor Proposed Hiking Trail Scenic Route Unique Feature
Land Use Plan Policies:	Agriculture (20, 30)	Agriculture (20) Rural Residential (10-20)
Rezoning Criteria	None: General Plan Amendment required	None: General Plan Amendment required

Characteristic	Planning Unit	
	Gates Canyon	St. Helena Road
Acreage	375	1725
Major Access Road(s)	Calistoga Road Gates Canyon Road	St. Helena Road
Suitabilities	Timber Stands Resource Conservation Areas Commitment to Residential Development	Timber Soils  Timber Stands Agricultural Soils Resource Conservation Areas Groundwater Recharge Area Some Commitment to Residential Development
Constraints Slope  Geologic Hazards Fire Hazard Soil Constraints  Water Availability	30-50%, >50%, 15-30%  Least Stable Extreme, High Unsuitable  Zone 3	Equal amounts of all categories except 0-15%. Least Stable, Most Stable Extreme, Moderate, High Unsuitable, Suitable, Moderately Suitable Zone 3, Zone 4
Sensitivities	Unique Feature Riparian Corridor Scenic Route	Scenic Route Riparian Corridor Unique Feature
Land Use Plan Recommendations	Rural Residential (10)	Agriculture (20-40) Rural Residential (5-20)
Rezoning Criteria	None: General Plan Amendment required	Protect parcel's suitabilities and sensitivities Demonstrate mitigation of parcels's constraints

Characteristic	Planning Unit	
	Santa Rosa Creek	Resource Conservation
Acreage	5500	23,750
Major Access Road(s)	Los Alamos Road	Franz Valley Road Porter Creek Road Petrified Forest Road Calistoga Road St. Helena Road
Suitabilities	Resource Conservation Area Timber Stands Groundwater Recharge Area Timber Soils Agricultural Soils	Resource Conservation Areas Timber Stands Timber Soils Agricultural Soils Groundwater Recharge Area Mineral Deposits
Constraints Slope  Geologic Hazards Fire Hazard Soil Constraints Water Availability	>50%, 30-50%, 15-30% Least Stable Extreme, Moderate Unsuitable, Moderately Suitable Zone 4, Zone 3	30-50%, 50%, 15-30% Least Stable, Fault Zone Extreme, Moderate, High Unsuitable, Moderately Suitable, Suitable Zone 3, Zone 4
Sensitivities	Parks and Public Lands Riparian Corridors Unique Features	Riparian Corridors Scenic Routes Bicycle Routes Parks and Public Lands Proposed Hiking Trail Unique Features Sensitive Areas Vista Points
Land Use Plan Policies:	Resource Conservation (100 - 200)	Resource Conservation (40 - 100)
Rezoning Criteria	Protect Parcel's suitabilities and sensitivities Demonstrate mitigation of parcel's constraints	Protect Parcels' suitabilities and sensitivities Demonstrate mitigation of parcel's constraints

LAND USE PLAN MAP



## **OPEN SPACE PLAN**

The Franz Valley Open Space Plan complements the Land Use Plan, providing implementation procedures to insure that environmental, recreation, and resource values are maintained. The Open Space Plan proposes the preservation of open space having the following characteristics:

- (1) Preservation of natural resources such as areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including fish and wildlife species, streams, and banks of streams.
- (2) Promotion of outdoor recreation including areas of outstanding scenic and historical value, areas suited for parks and recreation, and corridors which link recreational areas.
- (3) Managed production of resources such as forests, geothermal areas, rangelands, agricultural lands, areas required for the recharge of groundwater, and areas containing mineral deposits.
- (4) Maintenance of public health and safety, including areas which require special management due to earthquake fault zones, unstable soil, steep slopes and high fire hazard.

The preservation of natural resources and promotion of outdoor recreation are provided for in the Open Space Plan Map on page 34.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Slope constraints, geologic and seismic hazards, limited groundwater availability, soil constraints, and fire hazard are major constraints to residential development, especially as they occur together frequently in Franz Valley. They were given substantial weight in the Land Use Plan policies which have been formulated. Adherence to mitigation measures described in relation to the various public safety characteristics will reduce potential public safety hazards.

## **OPEN SPACE PLAN MAP**

The Open Space Plan Map for Franz Valley shows areas of special scenic, historical, recreational, ecological, and archaeological value. These values are critical to the long term preservation of open space in the area and in the county. As development activities could adversely affect any of these open space values, all discretionary actions which the County reviews and approves or makes comments on shall be subject to the policies of the Franz Valley Open Space Plan.

## **Scenic Routes, Vista Points, Bicycle Routes**

Scenic routes in Franz Valley are Highway 128, Chalk Hill Road, Franz Valley Road, Porter Creek Road, Petrified Forest Road, Calistoga Road, and St. Helena Road. They have been selected as scenic routes because they are the area's major thoroughfares and have high scenic value for the motorist. Vista points have been identified along scenic routes where expansive views are especially noteworthy.

Four of the scenic routes are also recommended bicycle routes: Highway 128, Chalk Hill Road, Porter Creek Road, and Petrified Forest Road. They have been selected because the routes lead to recreation areas (Napa and Alexander Valleys and the Petrified Forest) and the routes are generally moderate in slope and broad in width.

## **Policies**

- (1) Along scenic routes, a building setback of 30% of the depth of the lot (a maximum of 200 feet from the centerline of the road) is required to preserve the open rural character of the route. If development is proposed within the setback an administrative procedure is hereby established that can authorize exceptions according to design and siting criteria appropriate to rural areas.
- (2) In the vicinity of vista points, a 400 foot building setback is required to prevent disturbing or blocking long views from the road. Administrative permits to build within the setback may be approved.
- (3) Within the plan area, new transmission routes are not consistent with the long term preservation of open space.
- (4) Ridgelines should be protected from development, and utilities for new construction installed underground along scenic routes and near vista points.
- (5) The County Public Works Department should be notified of bicycle routes in order to make shoulder improvements which can accommodate bicycles as part of their improvement program.

Where the foregoing standards are less restrictive than required by the General Plan, compliance with the General Plan standards is required.

## **Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands**

Part of Robert Louis Stevenson State Park lies within the area. Visitor attendance is now approximately 30,000 annually. The park is especially valuable because it provides nesting habitat for a pair of peregrine falcon and their young. Booth(1)Napa Valley State Park has acquired about 100 acres in the eastern part of the area north of St. Helena Road. The State Department of Parks and Recreation is now actively acquiring the 503 acres of the Petrified Forest.

In 1958, the State proposed a riding and hiking trail to Robert Louis Stevenson Park from the Napa Valley. The trail is shown on the Open Space Plan Map, though the legal status on the deeded right-of-way trail easements is being evaluated now and the future development of the trail is uncertain.

Part of the Hood Mountain County Regional Park is in the southern part of the plan area. County Parks and Recreation has proposed a trail along Santa Rosa Creek to a 240 acre Bureau of Land Management holding, a potential expansion area for Hood Mountain Park. The other potential addition to the County Park system is a regional preserve along Mark West Creek, proposed because of its outstanding riparian qualities.

There are several other Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holdings within the plan area. They have no legal access and are probably used for hunting and hiking by adjacent land owners who control the access. The most substantial BLM holding, called Pilot Knob, is leased for geothermal development.

Private recreation includes three resorts on Mountain Home Ranch Road, two riding stables (Petrified Forest and Alpine Roads) and the Smith Trout Farm off Ida Clayton Road.

## **Policies**

- (1) Support the State in any property acquisition proposals in order to enlarge Robert Louis Stevenson Park.
- (2) Support the State Department of Parks and Recreation in their effort to create a hiking trail from Napa County to Robert Louis Stevenson State Park.
- (3) Encourage the expansion of Hood Mountain County Regional Park.
- (4) Maintain a low intensity of residential development in the Mark West Creek area to maintain future County preserve options; especially observe riparian setbacks along this creek.
- (5) Ensure that the area's recreational resources are protected from residential or other potentially incompatible uses.

## **Historical Sites**

Eighteen sites of historical interest have been identified, the majority through a survey of Knights and Franz Valley. Two sites are on the National Register of Historic Places: The Mark West Lodge and the Petrified Forest.

## **Policies**

- (1) The County Landmarks Commission should review the identified sites for historical and architectural merit and recommend sites worthy of historic district zoning.

## **Riparian Corridors**

Riparian corridors of two widths have been designated on the Open Space Plan Map. Major riparian corridors, with a 200 foot setback from the stream bank, have been designated according to the following criteria:

- a. if already a designated major riparian corridor in the General Plan
- b. if slope is greater than 50% (many creeks)
- c. if there are redwood groves (many creeks)
- d. if there are known archaeological sites (Little Briggs Creek)
- e. if stream channel is wide (Brooks Creek)

Minor riparian corridors have a 100 foot setback and include all other creeks in the plan area. A 100 foot setback is critical in affording minimal protection to not only the riparian setting but to archaeological sites which are frequently distributed near water sources. A riparian corridor helps maintain healthy aquatic habitat. Erosion and elimination of shade producing vegetation due to development too close to a stream are the major causes of stream degradation. Loss of riparian vegetation contributes to the loss of many wildlife species. Riparian vegetation also provides aesthetic enhancement and shade for stream banks.

Where such standards are less restrictive than those of the General Plan, compliance with the General Plan standards is required.

## **Policies**

- (1) Include the above riparian protection standards in the County Zoning Ordinance revision.

## **Biotic Habitat Areas**

Biotic Habitat Areas include a variety of special, usually natural features which are particularly vulnerable to disruption by development and land conversion activities. In Franz Valley, these sensitive areas consist of Redwood groves, archaeological sites, the habitat of rare and endangered plants, wetlands, cliff habitat, a heron rookery, and the Smith Trout Farm off Ida Clayton Road.

Other Biotic Habitat Areas include unique features such as serpentine soils and geologic features such as a fault exposure along Calistoga Road. Serpentine soils are often the site of rare plants.

## **Policies**

- (1) Review all development and land conversion proposals in the vicinity of sensitive areas and unique features in order to mitigate potential adverse impacts.
- (2) Encourage open space land preservation activities and any scientific and educational activities which would protect and enhance the natural values of the area.

Where such policies are less restrictive than General Plan standards and policies, compliance with the General Plan is required.

## **RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION**

The majority of the people of the Franz Valley Plan Area have traditionally supported themselves by managing and producing the resources of their land. Recent settlers depend more often on employment outside the area.

The high degree of environmental diversity of the area is reflected in the variety of resources and the wide range of productivity. It is the policy of this plan that excepting residentially designated areas, the guiding principle for land use and the dominant criteria for rezoning is the conservation, enhancement and timely production of the area's resources.

### **Agriculture**

Agricultural productivity includes the grazing of cattle, sheep, and goats and the more intensive agricultural uses of orchards, vineyards and row crops. Soil type and depth, water availability, and climate determine the suitability for more intensive uses. The Knights and Franz Valleys include intensive vineyard as well as hay and pasture lands. The mountainous areas of volcanic soils in the study area are generally free of frost and have been extensively planted to orchard and vineyard, producing crops of exceptional quality although often lower yields than valley areas.

Grazing of the steeper areas of the Franz Valley area requires particularly careful management in order to minimize erosion. In addition, grazing maintains as grassland areas formerly in oak or fir forest, or brush land.

### **Timber**

Eight timber harvest plans have been approved in the plan area since 1975. The timber resource is largely limited to north and east facing slopes with suitable soil depth. Site index, the estimated production potential of timber, is III or IV. Productivity is somewhat less than found in coastal areas experiencing higher rainfall.

The site indices found in the area favor frequent selective timber harvesting, resulting in only minor disruption of the area at any one time. More general harvesting (clear cutting and seed tree methods) has resulted in loss of areas to timber species with conversion to hard woods.

Frequently, excessive harvesting in Site Index III and IV areas require re-vegetation, using more drought tolerant pines rather than the native firs. Once the pines become established, fir can be reintroduced.

Those areas converted to hardwoods and brush by past management practices can be converted back to timber production, using hardwood harvesting and/or controlled burning followed by replanting. Use of controlled burning also reduces accumulated fuel load and eases fire hazard in the area. These management requirements should be considered along with any proposals for new residential development in the area. Despite the somewhat lower timber productivity of the area, the long term value of the timber resource remains high, particularly as lumber prices climb and supplies diminish.

Fuel wood production has provided an important source of income to many Franz Valley residents in the past. Thousands of cords of oak cut to four foot lengths and used to fuel the hop kilns were harvested from the area. The practice of grazing areas after the harvest of the oaks has resulted in the conversion of the majority of the oak woodland to grassland. Inspection of these areas today reveals a relatively even age oak population with little or no reproduction of young trees. Protection of some areas from grazing would benefit oak reproduction, although the cost of fencing and loss of grazing income makes this unlikely.

The need to protect and reestablish areas to woodland species can not be overemphasized. Intensive human use of the area has greatly diminished the tree cover over a relatively short time period. If we continue to deplete forest and woodland cover at the existing rate, we can look forward to a future of climate change, loss of soil, loss of groundwater, increased runoff and a general decrease in the habitability and prosperity of the area.

## **Geothermal**

Most of the geothermal development to date has been confined to The Geysers steam fields in the the Mayacamas Mountains north of the plan area. The majority of geologists working in The Geysers field believe the Pine Flat area marks the southerly limit of the geologic structure from which steam is now being produced. Steam wells located just north of the Franz Valley area tend to be deeper (12,000 feet), and consequently more expensive, than those north of the Pine Flat area.

Some 1970s-1080s temperature data indicate that steam might be encountered at depth in parts of the study area and exploratory permits were issued for two wells in the mountains northeast of Knights Valley. However, published reports by the current Geysers operator suggest that the area to the southwest of Big Sulphur Creek, including Pine Flat, has a very low potential for commercial-scale steam production compared to the existing steam producing areas at The Geysers. There is a potential for a hot water resource to be found in Knights Valley, but generally speaking, the areas southeast of Big Sulphur Creek are considered non-prospective for new steam field developments.

Drill pad and road construction is supported by thorough geotechnical investigations to locate stable drill sites and road locations and to minimize erosion and sedimentation. Coverage under

the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), and General Permit for Storm Water Discharges associated with Construction Activity (General Permit) is required for construction of geothermal drill pads and access roads. Individual Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) are developed which include Best Management Practices to reduce any potential for transport of sediment into the watershed.

Site specific botanical and biological surveys, prepared consistent with California Department of Fish and Game protocols, shall be completed to identify pads, roads, pipelines to minimize impacts; and to identify mitigation measures.

Because of the tremendous biological diversity of the Franz Valley area and the presence of rare and endangered species, the sensitivity of the area to geothermal development remains extremely high.

Two boundaries are established in this plan that relate to geothermal development (see Land Use Plan Map). The Secondary Geothermal Resource Permit Area has been established where exploratory drilling is not likely, based on a consensus of the experts in the field. Permits for production wells for field development and power plant construction are contingent upon adequate mitigation of all environmental effects.

## **Minerals**

Much of the plan area was explored for precious metals prior to the turn of the century. Adits were constructed along St. Helena Road with extensive diggings along Ida Clayton Road. Cinnabar has been mined in commercial quantities from the area but foreign supplies of mercury and a greatly reduced demand has closed all such mines in the County.

The Mark West Shale Pit provides a major portion of the road rock for private roads and driveways in the area, as well as nearby areas in Napa County. This quarry produces approximately 100,000 tons per year and is expected to continue beyond the life of this plan. Environmental impacts of the operation will be mitigated by future reclamation requirements. No residential uses are close enough to the pit to be affected. Surrounding roads are adequate for haul purposes.

Both the Franciscan and the Sonoma Volcanic formations provide some rock types suitable for use in construction and future demand may result in additional limited mining activities in the area.

## **Groundwater Recharge Areas**

In addition to the valley recharge in the alluvial soils and the stream gravels of Franz and Knights Valleys, the more permeable and fractured areas in the Sonoma Volcanics are of major importance for groundwater recharge. Two areas along the upper reaches of Mark West Creek are responsible for maintaining summer flow and the high quality of the riparian vegetation and the fishery habitat of the creek.

Construction activities, changes in drainage, and impervious surfaces should be avoided or minimized within these areas.

## **Resource Conservation Areas**

Despite the remoteness and appearance of wildness of the majority of the Franz Valley study area, no portion remains unaffected by recent human utilization. At the very least, grazing and ranch roads have reached even the most distant portions of the area. However, relative to other areas of Sonoma County, the Franz Valley area remains of major importance as an area of resource conservation.

Large blocks of lands of limited access and marginal economic productivity are extremely important for maintaining and building soil, recharging groundwater, producing oxygen and consuming carbon dioxide, moderating climate, and sustaining biological diversity and genetic adaptability to future change. An additional human benefit resulting from resource conservation areas is the preservation of some of the County for tranquility, the freedom from urban noise and congestion necessary for spiritual growth and artistic exploration. Scientific and educational uses of these areas are also important. The mitigation of the cumulative effects of development in urban areas depends upon the protection and enhancement of these often overlooked resource conservation values in rural areas.

OPEN SPACE PLAN MAP

