



DEVELOPING TRAILS AND RECREATION

CONSIDERATIONS

Which publicly owned lands within the Laguna should be open to the public, and what considerations should be used to guide our decision making regarding public access questions? These were the basic questions that were put to the stakeholder advisory committee convened to discuss public access in the Laguna.

The discussions which occurred around this topic revealed sentiments both for and against public access. Eventually a common understanding, of both the opportunities and the potential pitfalls of opening public lands to unsupervised use emerged through these discussions. Many of the sentiments expressed were based on direct experience with managing existing public spaces within the Laguna; other sentiments were derived by inference to similar situations.

What emerged from these considerations were specific recommendations grouped into four thematic categories. Trails and interpretive facilities are grouped into the theme *Wetlands and wildlands*; multi-use transportation and recreation right-of-ways are grouped into the theme *Laguna community corridor*, recreation along urban and suburban flood control channels are grouped together as *Greenways and creekways*, and roadside interpretive and scenic sites are organized into the proposal for a signed *El camino de los pájaros*.

At the present time, a cautious approach to public access is being recommended for most elements of the *Wetlands and wildlands* theme. Over time, as experience accumulates, this caution will likely give way to greater certainty. At that time, a reconvening of the advisory committee and a reevaluation of our recommendations might be warranted. On the other hand, most elements of the *Laguna community corridor* and the *Greenways and creekways* themes should be aggressively pursued. The *El camino de los pájaros* idea appears to be an easily implemented project without large funding requirements.

Cautious approach for
Wetlands and wildlands

Aggressive pursuit of
Laguna community corridor,
Greenways and creekways,
and *El camino de los pájaros*

ADVISORS TO THE PLAN

The committee members who participated in the formulation of these plans and proposals sought the advice of others who were connected with land use planning for the region. Over time, through consultations and field trips, our ideas became more clear, and the hopes and desires of the wider community were added to the committee's work.

Concurrent with this committee's discussions a separate group was convened, by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, to develop plans for trails on the four farms owned by the City of Santa Rosa and managed by the Laguna Subregional Wastewater Treatment Facility. These four farms are used for the purpose of discharging treated water, during the summer months, onto hay fields. This separate committee carefully developed potential trail alignments on the four farms with a plan to construct the first of these on Kelly Farm beginning in 2007.

SCAPOSD trail plan

The farmers who operate the city farms were consulted outside of the formal committee structure and their comments and concerns were integrated with the consolidated findings of the committee. Some of the nearby private land owners also provided important insight and suggestions outside of this committee structure directly to the authors of this report.

Farmer consultations

GEOGRAPHIC EXTENT

The Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed, at more than 250 square miles, is host to many publicly owned properties which could have been considered by the committee's work. Indeed, almost all other aspects of this plan have considered the study area to be the entire Laguna watershed. Nevertheless, this committee chose not to consider any of the public areas away from the nearby areas of the Laguna's main water bodies, its immediate tributaries, and the Santa Rosa Plain. Specifically, all of the urban parks, state parks, and Open Space District holdings in the Taylor Mountain, Sonoma Mountain, and the Mayacamas were excluded from the committee's considerations.

Plan elements restricted to the Laguna's immediate tributaries

The public lands that were considered by the committee are presently being managed by a long list of city, county, and state departments, including:

- California Dept. of Fish and Game
- California Dept. of Parks and Recreation
- Sonoma County Regional Parks Department

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Sonoma County Water Agency
Sonoma State University
Santa Rosa Subregional Wastewater Reclamation System
City of Cotati
City of Rohnert Park
City of Santa Rosa
City of Sebastopol
Town of Windsor



WETLANDS AND WILDLANDS

The core of the Laguna, which for purposes of public access planning is considered to be the lakes, waterways, shallow wetlands, floodplain, and immediate upland areas of the Santa Rosa Plain, is the object of the *Wetlands and wildlands* theme. We considered several factors in our plans: the concept of passive recreation, the need for basic facilities and infrastructure, the requirement for patrolling, trailhead design and the visitor's experience, and hiking trail design guidelines.

PASSIVE RECREATION

Assumptions about the suitability of various types of recreation and nature-oriented activities within the Laguna naturally led our discussions in one direction, that is, in general, we discussed passive modes of recreation. Nevertheless we tested the limits of our assumptions by exploring our preconceived definition of *passive recreation*.

Initially we explored the suitability of activities which had three characteristics: first, activities which have little or no impact on native habitats; second, activities which do not permanently disturb the area's wildlife; and third, activities which require little permanent infrastructure. While most of the final list of suitable activities matched these three criteria, there were a couple of exceptions, which were based on historic precedence and tradition: specifically hunting and fishing.

The types of recreational pursuits that fit these three characteristics have been lumped into trail-oriented activities, water-borne activities, and roadside activities.

The list of suitable trail-oriented activities that fits this profile includes: hiking, mountain biking, and back-country horseback riding. It is envisioned that each of these would take place on developed, but un-

Trail-oriented activities

paved, trails; no accommodation for in-line skates, skateboards, or other such smooth-surface recreational activities are planned.

The list of suitable water-borne activities includes: kayaking, canoeing, and similar non-motorized watercraft. No accommodation is planned for paddlewheel boats, jet-skis, watercraft with outboard or inboard motors, or other vessels that cause wakes. Notwithstanding this general prohibition against such vessels, it is accepted that efficient management of the wetlands areas of the Laguna, by management agencies, will need to use such craft from time to time.

Water-borne activities

The list of roadside and trailside activities includes: birding, wildlife viewing, kiosk-style education, and picnicking.

Roadside activities

Beyond these passive pursuits, two “active” recreational pursuits were discussed: hunting and fishing. Both of these have historically occurred at designated spots along the Laguna, and will continue as such, even though they do not fit into the normal profile for passive recreation. Advocates for these activities believe that, with a modest amount of tolerance on the part of other outdoorsmen, they can pursue these activities safely and without conflict.

Several additional types of activities were discussed, but were considered to be unsuitable for the Laguna; these include: camping, swimming and dog-walking.

Camping was excluded from the list of activities, on public lands, both because no suitable space was found to be available, and because no public agency expressed any interest in managing a public campground. This could change in the future if both of these limitations were overcome. In the meantime, it is noted that camping already exists at a family-run campground in Sebastopol located along the Laguna channel.

No camping, swimming,
or dog-walking within
Wetlands and wildlands areas

Swimming was also excluded from the list of activities. Factors considered for this decision included lack of a suitable site, the disturbance to wildlife usage, the need for too much new infrastructure, and the cost of establishing public safety patrols, the current public perception of water quality in the area, and the probability of further water contamination by swimmers.

Both on-leash and off-leash dog walking were excluded from the list of suitable activities, beyond what already occurs on Sonoma County Regional Parks Department lands. This guideline comes after years of first-hand experience by the area’s land managers; it has become clear that the presence of dogs in the wild areas of the Laguna is inappropriate for several reasons: the presence of dogs, even on-leash dogs, threatens native songbirds and waterfowl, frightening them off, disturbing their feeding

Why dogs are
inappropriate in wild areas

patterns, and preventing them from pursuing their normal activities. Furthermore, off-leash dogs can destroy ground-nesting sites, and in a matter of minutes wipe out next year's nascent population. Despite existing strictures against allowing dogs to roam off-leash, some dog owners have stridently asserted claims to be above the law, souring current land managers on any proposal to allow access to dog-walkers.

From time to time suggestions for other types of activities have surfaced and have been ruled to be inappropriate. Just to be clear: it is not the intent of anyone who served on the public access committee to support activities that require the development of dedicated ball fields, paved courts, golf courses, or other high-impact recreational activities.

FACILITIES

Even though the type of recreational activities proposed by this committee does not include large infrastructure investments, they nevertheless require basic adherence to good engineering principals and sound public safety guidelines. Just what public facilities need to be put in place, where they should be sited, and who should manage them is an important topic to be addressed. Due to time constraints however, the public access committee did not fully take up these questions; the authors address these topics here by falling back to our own best judgment and experience.

The types of facilities which need to accompany the proposed recreational activities include trailhead parking, restrooms and watercraft put-ins.

Trailheads with parking facilities for eight to twenty automobiles are needed at four locations: one in the south, possibly at the Laguna Subregional Wastewater Treatment Facility; a second one in the middle, possibly either at the Department of Fish and Game's *Laguna Ecological Reserve* (Llano Rd at Todd Rd), or at the City of Santa Rosa's Brown Farm; and two in the north, at both the southern and northern ends of City of Santa Rosa's Kelly Farm. The existence of parking facilities in Sebastopol, at the Laguna de Santa Rosa Ecological Preserve, is assumed as an integral part of this plan.

Trailheads with parking facilities

In addition to these four Laguna-centric trailheads a special equestrian trail head, with spaces designed for horse trailers, is proposed for the Hall Road site at Countryside Estates. This trailhead will provide access to the Santa Rosa Creek trail, approximately three miles upstream from its confluence with the Laguna. Plans for this site were prepared by Tom Whitson in 2000 and formed the basis for the City of Santa Rosa's 2005 renewed interest in the site. These plans call for a trailhead with special

Horse trailers

manure-bunkers and horse watering troughs; the plans do not call for restroom facilities. It should also be noted that this site is directly adjacent to the Wright Preservation Bank and would make a good assembly area for special docent-led tour groups visiting the vernal pools there.

Restroom facilities are an integral part of the public access equation. At least one of the four suggested trailheads along the Laguna should be earmarked for having permanently open restrooms. Without these facilities, the problem of human wastes polluting the wildland areas will almost certainly become a problem. At the present time, even with a very low level of docent-led field trips and group-sponsored activities, the lack of public restrooms presents a difficulty for planners of long day-trips. The present alternative, of resorting to the use of nearby private commercial establishments, is not a good long term solution.

Kayaks and canoes presently embark at one of two sites: the first, on Santa Rosa Creek at Willowside Road, provides access only during the short period immediately after a winter storm; the second, directly into the Laguna at Occidental Road, provides nearly continuous access throughout the rainy season. Although this second embarcadero adequately serves the current low level needs of the light-craft community, it is recommended that a larger and safer site be selected and developed. The best possible location for a kayak put-in would be near the deep water areas of the Laguna somewhere in the Occidental Road vicinity, to either the north or the south of the bridge. The steep slopes of the Laguna's western bank would provide a more ideal setting than the flat gradient of the eastern side, simply because a small rise in the wintertime water level tends to quickly spread out on the eastern floodplain, thus making it difficult to situate a put-in that is accessible at all water stages. It is noted however that, at the present time, no parcels are in public ownership that fit these ideal conditions. Suitable alternatives in the private sector should also be considered.

Trash cans should be provided at each trailhead and should be adequately sized to support the anticipated visitor population. Oversized containers should not be used so as to discourage the dumping of household garbage. Separate waste and recycling bins should be considered mandatory. Although we no longer have grizzlies in the Laguna, we do have birds and mammals that will be attracted to these facilities; thus, appropriate tamperproof containers designed to withstand roving raccoons should be employed. Trash pickup should occur at least twice a week in order to prevent them from overflowing and to keep odors to a minimum;

ideal trash pickup days would be Fridays and Mondays in order to accommodate the expected surge of weekend visitors.

Trash cans should not be placed along trails; visitors should learn to “pack-it-in and pack-it-out”, a common practice in wildlife areas.

PATROLLING

To what extent does patrolling and policing need to be considered, how much of this can be done voluntarily, and who should provide the funds for public-sector patrolling?

Throughout our committee discussions “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” of human behavior tempered our hopes and fears. On the one hand, there is a significant portion of the county’s population that holds to the belief that the more intimately connected we are with the natural environment, the more careful and sensitive we will be in our own environmental ethic. On the other hand, there are real consequences to human intrusion into wildland areas that need to be carefully weighed.

The general sentiment expressed by the optimists is that public appreciation of the Laguna will naturally build public support for its restoration and long term preservation. In support of this hopeful sentiment, is the unquantifiable but very real, “quality of life” argument: part of our humanity is our connection to the vitality of the earth, and this vitality nourishes us in ways that calm our anxieties and rejuvenate the routines of our daily lives. Although this difficult-to-define argument in favor of greater accessibility may appear to lack strength, it is nevertheless so self-evident, that statistical study seems to be unnecessary. Simply put, people who experience nature first hand and on a regular basis are more grounded and healthy in their attitudes, perceptions and social interactions.

Quality of life

In contrast to this optimistic sentiment, a strong dissenting voice can also be heard on this topic. Opponents of the plan to allow unsupervised access to public lands cite several very real types of problems that accompany recreation on public lands. Almost all of these problems are associated with “bad actors”, but at least one seems to be unavoidable even with the most sensitive and caring of individuals, as we’ll see below.

Bad actors

The spoils of the bad actors are well known: litter, camping, illegal activities, habitat destruction and wildlife disturbance. These problems are well documented: the City of Santa Rosa and the Sonoma County Water Agency pick up and annually dispose of hundreds of tons of accumulated debris along the city’s and county’s creeks. Tires, mattresses, large appliances, discarded clothing, water bottles, and much more, all end up in our waterways. Categorizing this wayward trash as merely “litter” belies

the magnitude of the problem. Volunteer efforts in the Laguna, through such groups as the LagunaKeepers “swamp dogs” patrol, go a long way towards keeping this problem in check, but the need for this effort only underscores the reality of the problem.

Ad-hoc campgrounds set up within the public areas of the Laguna are a pernicious problem as well. Each year illegal campsites are established in the low-lying remote parts of the Laguna. As a consequence, the surrounding area is trampled and compacted, discarded personal belongs are found strewn about, hauled-in furniture is set up and begins to decay and rot, and the unpleasant odor of human habitation hangs about. The extent of this problem is well documented, with cases tracked by the Sebastopol police and the Sonoma County Sheriff’s office. But as bad as it may seem, illegal camping seems to be largely confined to a few habitual troublemakers. Keeping on top of this problem is mostly a matter of maintaining regular patrols and remaining in good communication with enforcement officers.

Illegal camping

But if increased traffic is to be supported within the Laguna, a more formal mechanism for patrolling will need to be established to prevent some of these negative effects from taking hold. This patrolling effort will need to be supported with regular trash removal, periodic wildland cleanup efforts, trail maintenance, and so forth. Because of the multi-jurisdictional nature of the Laguna’s public lands, a coordinated approach to these patrolling activities will need to be created. The details of this coordinated effort, including cost sharing, designation of responsibility, and coordination with other wildland-management activities, will need to further explored.

Multi-jurisdictional patrol

Just how much of this patrolling effort could be done through a volunteer corps, was a question discussed by the public access committee. Past experience shows that even the most die-hard enthusiasts eventually loose interest in picking up after others. The “burn-out” factor among volunteers is very real and a regular recruitment effort needs to be put in place to attract new trail-walkers. As with all volunteer efforts, a paid volunteer coordinator is a necessity in order to keep this effort functional; professional paid staff will be required in whatever scenario is developed.

Volunteer trail walkers

This leaves the fiscal question to be explored. If general public access to the Laguna is desirable, and if it is to occur on public lands, and if some of these public lands are used simultaneously for non-recreational purposes, who should pay for the coordinated patrols necessary for such an endeavor? A discussion among all of the state, county and city officials

Who pays for patrols?

whose property's are under consideration should take place to explore the need for a cost sharing program supporting these patrols.

THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

Trailheads can and should be much more than simply a point of departure. Over and beyond simply accommodating our basic human needs, trailheads also provide an opportunity to set the stage for visitors. An important consideration in this regard is the general tone of the place or the overall impression which greets the newcomer. This consideration deserves a few words because it helps to clarify both the intent behind our public access goals, and a few specifics about how trailheads should be designed.

The underlying question is this: "What unwritten message should be expressed, to visitors who are about to enter the Laguna, by the trailhead itself?" Several thematic messages have emerged as possibilities in this regard; these themes involve the concepts of active participation, "discovery and wonder", and reverence or deep respect for the land.

Unwritten message to the visitor

The idea behind *active participation* is to bring the visitor into the community of people that care about the Laguna and its natural resources. The idea is simple and has positive consequences: people who actively participate in something Laguna-related will be psychologically involved; this will in turn feed back towards positive Laguna-related benefits.

Active participation

Several ideas for ways that people can participate were explored by the public access committee. Trailhead related suggestions included: erecting bulletin boards that can be used to record recent wildlife sightings; providing a suggestion box or other easy ways to communicate with wildland managers; and encouraging litter pickup and disposal as a trailside ethic, whereby visitors instinctively get in the spirit and keep the public areas litter-free. The trailheads envisioned with this in mind would provide just enough clues and just enough infrastructure to make participation a natural part of every visit. Wildland managers will benefit from this because they will find an extra pair of eyes keeping watch; visitors will benefit from the more rewarding and self-fulfilling experience.

The idea behind the second thematic message, *discovery and wonder*, is to engage the visitor in an experience of discovery and critical thinking. A trailhead can help to set the tone for this type of experience by providing materials and exhibits that ask questions. There is little that is more suspenseful than an unresolved question mark, and a pamphlet or kiosk that asks a couple of intriguing questions is perhaps of greater service than one which provides a dozen answers. "Can you help us to better understand .

Discovery and wonder

..?” This is both a direct challenge and an indirect invocation to wonder. It sometimes takes more than one visit for the uninitiated to catch the subtleties of the Laguna. Visitors that leave with more questions than answers may be the most satisfied visitors in the long run because they will be the ones who finally, after repeated visits, will understand the deeper gestalt of the Laguna.

The idea behind *reverence*, or deep respect for the land, is that visitors will intuitively know that they are entering a place that deserves special care. As visitors are about to depart the hubbub of commerce and enter the tranquility of flora and fauna, the trailhead acts as a type of portal. The message to convey is deep: respect this wildland for what it is and meet it on its terms, leave behind suburban notions of tidiness, manicured landscapes, and horticultural balance. This sounds like a tall order, but fortunately we have a whole symbology that supports this effort; specifically, those ubiquitous little brown nature signs with white iconic representations for “trail”, “scenic spot”, “ranger”, “wildlife area”, etc. These well known designs clearly indicate to the visitor that the place they are about to enter is not an urban park but a wildland area.

Reverence, or deep respect for the land

Nature preserve signage

As a starting point, this type of symbology is simple and effective, but little brown signs alone won't convey the respect and reverence that we aspire to. And this is where information kiosks can serve an important role. A trailhead kiosk that is well designed can convey to the visitor enough background material to place their mindset into a Laguna-oriented posture, and if done well this mindset will carry with it the idea that the Laguna is a treasure to be cared for. Fresh and rotating exhibits that touch on important Laguna-specific topics would be valuable in this regard. These exhibits might include, for example: brief explanations about the natural wetland and floodplain processes that occur; displays that demonstrate the area's role in annual bird migratory patterns; exhibits that help visitors to identify common plants and animals likely to be seen during their visit; exhibits that explain ecological concepts such as habitat fragmentation or native versus exotic species; or other exhibits that provide visitors with enough background material to prepare them to meet their trailside adventure with respect. It is hoped that this message, if artfully conveyed, will prevent some of the potential problems associated with dogs, camping, litter, and off-trail activities, from occurring.

Information kiosks

If these and other similar thematic messages are effectively conveyed at trailhead portals, we can be hopeful that the visitor's experience will be deep, and we can also be hopeful that a voluntarily mitigation of our human impacts will occur. The bottom line is simple: visitors would be

less inclined to stray off designated trails. This would translate into fewer wildlife disturbances, less habitat destruction, a reduced need for management intervention, and the ability to simultaneously support a healthy ecology and a caring tourist population.

HIKING TRAIL DESIGN

Trail design is a well defined civil engineering discipline which can proceed on its own with a minimal set of guidelines. Our suggested guidelines are provided here with the intent of emphasizing some of the expected usages and some of the not-so-obvious design problems.

First, trails should be developed which fit the personality of the Laguna, that is, surfaces should not be paved with concrete or asphalt. Nevertheless, trails should be hard-packed and can even be impervious if suitable adjacent areas are designed to receive their runoff. All trails should be designed to withstand repeated floodwater conditions and special attention should be given to floodwater drainage across, and not under, the trail. Visitors who encounter muddy trails will stray from the compacted area and will exacerbate the situation so special attention to raising, leveling, and crowning will be important.

Unpaved trail surfaces

The counterpoint to the idea behind placing infrastructure and information at the trailhead is the idea of having little or no signage along the trails themselves; so the second guideline is: keep interpretive signs and kiosks at trailheads, and do not place them along the trails themselves. On the other hand, discrete number- or letter-keyed posts that correspond to printed guidebooks and brochures should be a part of the interpretive effort. In general, design trails to maximize the visitor's connection with nature.

Number-keyed
interpretive signposts

"Stay on the trail signs", in particular, can be intrusive, but their message is too important to leave to trust and goodwill; perhaps a softer sign, and one that suggests to the visitor that he is part of the solution, not just part of the problem, would be a sign that reads "Habitat restoration area: help us by remaining on designated trails."

Habitat restoration
signage

Third, allow the visitor to have waterside vistas. Many of the trails will be aligned parallel to waterways, but will not be close enough to provide fish and waterfowl viewing. To provide this opportunity to visitors in a controlled way, special cul-de-sac side trails that end at the water's edge should be placed at strategic and discrete spots. Platforms that extend up to the water's edge (or even over the water's edge) may be appropriate for some of these side trails. Because the Laguna's water level varies so

Cul-de-sac trails to water's
edge

greatly and its vast floodplain becomes so widely inundated, this type of infrastructure will need to be carefully engineered.

Fourth, consider the use of boardwalks when crossing the annual floodplain. Although expensive, boardwalks provide two important functions: one is the simplicity of governing where people go—there's no need to remind visitors to remain on the trail—the other is the sense of excitement: for some inexplicable reason children and adults alike enjoy boardwalks, especially when crossing directly over a watered area.

Boardwalks

Finally, design fences to be effective management devices but to also be unobtrusive to the visitor's experience. Since the use of livestock as a grassland and vernal pool management technique is being contemplated, fences will be mandatory in some places; nevertheless they can and should be designed to fit the character of the site.

Fences



LAGUNA COMMUNITY CORRIDOR

Members of the Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee have joined with the Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition to investigate the possibility of establishing a community corridor, running north-south approximately parallel to the Laguna, which would become a safe and scenic route through the area. The proponents of this idea suggest that the value of this community corridor would be measured in fewer bicycle-related accidents and greater commuter access between Sebastopol and points south (Cotati-Rohnert Park area), and between Sebastopol and points north (Santa Rosa Creek trail and its network of connected trails). Nearly all of this community corridor could be established using existing publicly owned lands. The few privately owned lands that interrupt the trail's continuity would be skirted using nearby roads. The alignment of this Community Corridor is laid out in the proposals below.

North-south bicycle corridor



GREENWAYS AND CREEKWAYS

The cities of Rohnert Park and Cotati are presently situated, for the most part, east of Highway 101. However, portions of both the cities extend westward towards the farm land and rural residences of the Santa Rosa Plain. Many of the public access proposals for the southern Laguna nicely dovetail with community ideas for an enhanced set of trails in this future urban growth area. In particular, the greenbelt land purchased by the Open Space District and the levee-protected waterways owned by the So-

Connectivity to urban greenbelt areas

noma County Water Agency are the focus of a series of recommendations related to recreation in this area. The proposals in this series all benefit from the potential they have for habitat enhancement as well as protected biological corridors. The character of these proposal all follow a modified approach from that taken by the Wetlands & Wildlands proposals. In recognition of the nearby urban setting, trails, bridges and underpasses in this area may be suitable candidates for concrete or asphalt. Proposals in this series should be aggressively pursued in order to secure these urban frontiers before they are encroached upon.








EL CAMINO DE LOS PÁJAROS





Not every Laguna experience needs to be accompanied by long hikes and muddy boots. In fact most of the Sonoma County's citizenry has developed an appreciation for the Laguna from the comfort of their automobile: great floodplain vistas occur along many of our back country roads. One simple way to capitalize on this opportunity is to develop road waysides specifically designated for scenery- and bird-viewing.

Experiencing the Laguna
by automobile

The existing ad hoc experience of the automobile-bound nature lover is reasonably safe and acceptable along low-volume roads like High School Road, but is potentially dangerous and should be discouraged on high-speed roads like Occidental Road. As a formal and safer alternative, waysides should be situated along roads where safe clearances, both entry and exit, are maintained (i.e. not at blind turns or near intersections). Of course the location for these waysides should be chosen with a naturalist's eye for where good wildlife viewing spots occur.

Safe waysides

We have organized some of the best roadside wildlife- and scenic-viewing areas into two circuits: one loops around the Laguna/Santa Rosa Plain south of Sebastopol; the other loops around the Laguna/Mark West complex north of Sebastopol. Together these two loops are called *El Camino de los Pájaros*, in recognition of the outstanding bird viewing possibilities of the area. The southern loop proceeds as follows, with the symbols  indicating the direction of travel (north, south, east, west) and the symbol  used for points of interest.

-  Laguna Learning Center, corner of Sanford and Occidental
-  Proceed east on Occidental to Irwin
-  City of Santa Rosa's Kelly Farm
-  Turn right on Irwin going south to Highway 12

El Camino de los Pájaros
southern loop

- ↙↓ Turn right on Highway 12 heading east and immediately left onto Llano heading south
- ↓ Proceed south on Llano to Ludwig
- ✱ City of Santa Rosa's Brown Farm
- Turn left on Ludwig proceeding east to Stony Point
- ↓ Turn right on Stony Point proceeding south briefly to Butler
- ← Turn right on Butler heading east to Philips
- ↓ Turn left on Philips proceeding south to Todd
- Turn left on Todd proceeding east to Stony Point
- ✱ Colgan Creek trail
- ↓ Turn right on Stony Point proceeding south to Scenic
- ← Turn right on Scenic heading west to Arlington
- ✱ Santa Rosa Plain overlook
- ↓ Turn left on Arlington proceeding south to Millbrae
- Turn left on Millbrae heading east to Sunland
- ↓ Turn right on Sunland proceeding south to Wilfred
- ✱ Southern Laguna floodplain overlook
- Turn left on Wilfred proceeding east to Stony Point
- ↓ Turn right on Stony Point proceeding south to Rohnert Park Expressway
- Turn left on Stony Point proceeding east to Labath
- ↓ Turn right on Labath proceeding south briefly to Laguna Drive
- Turn left on Laguna Drive proceeding east to Redwood
- ↓ Turn right on Redwood proceeding south to Helman
- ✱ Copeland Creek trail
- ← Turn right on Helman proceeding west to Lowell
- ✱ Old Washoe Creek trail
- ← Turn left on Lowell proceeding west to Stony Point
- ✱ Gossage Creek trail
- ↓ Turn left on Stony Point proceeding south to Highway 116
- ← Turn right on Highway 116 proceeding northwest to Llano
- ↑ Turn right on Llano proceeding north to Todd
- ✱ Laguna Treatment ponds and wetlands
- ← Turn left on Todd proceeding west
- ✱ City of Santa Rosa's Alpha Farm, off Llano Road
- ✱ CDFG Laguna Ecological Preserve—Todd Road



- ↓↙ Continue left on Todd proceeding south and again west
- ↑ Turn right on Old Gravenstein Highway proceeding north to Highway 116
- ↑ Turn right on Highway 116 proceeding north to Cooper
- ↑ Turn right on Cooper proceeding north
- ⊛ CDFG Laguna Wildlife Area—Walker Ranch
- ↙ Continue on Cooper proceeding west returning to Highway 116
- ↑ Turn right on Highway 116 proceeding through Sebastopol north towards Highway 12
- ⊛ Laguna Uplands on Palm Ave
- ➔ Turn right on Highway 12 proceeding east briefly to Morris
- ↑ Turn left on Morris proceeding north to Sunset
- ⊛ Sebastopol's Laguna Wetlands Preserve
- ↓↙ Turn left on Sunset proceeding south and west to Taft
- ↓ Turn left on Taft proceeding south to Wallace
- ↙ Turn right on Wallace proceeding west to N Main Street
- ↑↑ Turn right on N Main Street and immediately right again at High School Road proceeding north to Occidental
- ➔ Turn right on Occidental ending at Sanford

The northern loop proceeds as follows:

- ⊛ Laguna Learning Center, corner of Sanford and Occidental
- ↙ Proceed west on Occidental to Highway 116
- ↑ Turn right on Highway 116 proceeding north to Frei
- ➔↑ Turn right on Frei proceeding east then north to Guerneville
- ↙ Turn left on Guerneville proceeding west briefly to Laguna Road
- ↑ Turn right on Laguna Road proceeding north to Trenton
- ⊛ Mark West riparian floodplain vista, off Trenton Road
- ↙ Turn left on Trenton proceeding west to River Rd
- ↙ Turn left on River Rd proceeding west to Wohler
- ↑ Turn right on Wohler proceeding north to Eastside

El Camino de los Pájaros
northern loop

- ☆ Mark West/Russian River confluence vista
- ➔ Turn right on Eastside proceeding east to Trenton-Healdsburg
- ↓ Turn right on Trenton-Healdsburg proceeding south briefly to Mark West Station Rd
- ➔ Turn left on Mark West Station Rd proceeding east
- ☆ Geysers pipeline mid-point pond
- ↗ Continue left on Mark West Station Rd proceeding north and east to Slusser
- ↓ Turn right on Slusser proceeding south
- ☆ Charles Schultz Airport vista
- ↓ Continue south on Slusser to River Rd
- ← Turn right on River proceeding west briefly to Old Trenton Road
- ➔ Turn left sharply on Old Trenton Rd proceeding east briefly to Oakwild
- ↓ Turn right on Oakwild proceeding south to West Olivet
- ☆ Former Lake Ballard vista
- ➔ Continue left on West Olivet proceeding east to Olivet
- ↓ Turn right on Olivet proceeding south to Piner
- ➔ Turn left on Piner proceeding east to Willowside
- ↓ Turn right on Willowside proceeding south
- ☆ Santa Rosa Creek Trail
- ↓ Continue south on Willowside to Hall Road
- ← Turn right on Hall proceeding west to Sanford
- ☆ CDFG Laguna Wildlife Area
- ↓ Turn left on Sanford proceeding south ending at Occidental
- ☆ City of Santa Rosa's Stone Farm



PROPOSALS

Here are the specific proposals for open and closed access to public lands within the Laguna. The geographic location for proposals P1 through P78 are shown in the accompanying maps (Plates 11–13).

Note: In the proposals below, the terms “right bank” and “left bank” are defined by a traveler moving downstream, with the flow of the water. The mileage reference points, such as ~46.25, are taken from the Laguna Foundation's GIS database of creeks and water bodies: they represent

Right bank and left bank

the distance from an arbitrary fixed point near Jenner where the Russian River meets the Pacific Ocean.

P1. Cotati Reach: This stretch of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, from ~ 46.25 to ~ 44.41 , has an existing urban creekside trail on one side of the channel connecting several Cotati parks. The trail is hard surfaced, in some places being asphalt and in others chip-stone, and is suitable for bicycles and pedestrians. It runs alternately along the right bank and the left bank with two pedestrian bridges used for crossovers. A short section of the trail is missing near East Cotati Avenue; it is proposed that this gap in the trail be closed.

P2. Highway 101 crossing: Between ~ 44.41 and ~ 44.27 the Laguna crosses under Highway 101. This missing trail connector, which could be either a bridge or a tunnel, would provide a link between the existing one and three quarter mile long multipurpose trail on the eastern side of the highway and the planned trails towards the west. No convenient pedestrian alternative exists: the nearest cross point to the south, at Gravenstein Highway (Hwy 116), is a one mile detour; while the nearest cross point to the north, at Rohnert Park Expressway, is a two and a quarter mile detour. Community input should be solicited before choosing between the bridge and tunnel alternatives; even though a tunnel might occasionally flood, a trail that accommodates this could be designed following the same concepts used with the Prince Memorial Greenway.

P3. Upper Helman Reach: Both sides of this 3600' stretch of the Laguna de Santa Rosa channel, from ~ 44.27 to ~ 43.59 , is levee-protected and is suitable for the development of urban creekside trails. Because this reach is within an urban area, one or both sides would be good candidates for asphalt paving. The preferred usage would be to have bicycles along the right bank and pedestrians along the left bank, and this is assumed in proposals "P7" and "P8", below, for the bridge and at-grade crossings.

P4. Laguna Reach of Copeland Creek: Both the left and right banks of Copeland Creek, between ~ 44.10 and ~ 43.57 , have existing channel maintenance access roads which serve as ad hoc pedestrian and bicycle paths. Connection with the existing Copeland Creek trail system on the east side of Highway 101 should be via the proposed connector described in "P2" above. No access across Highway 101 is proposed for Copeland Creek.

- P5. Old Washoe:* This 1400' stretch of creek, between ~ 43.85 and ~ 43.59 , has an existing maintenance road along its left bank which would make a good bicycle and pedestrian feeder-connector from Helman Lane to both the Laguna trail and the Copeland Creek trail.
- P6. Laguna crossover at Portal Street:* A pedestrian bridge across the Laguna de Santa Rosa main channel near its confluence with the two creeks, Copeland and Old Washoe, at ~ 43.57 and ~ 43.59 , is proposed. A good place for this would be approximately 600' upstream of the confluence where strong revetments could secure the embankments and support the weight of the bridge.
- P7. At grade crossing of Old Washoe Creek:* In order to connect the two trail segments along the left bank of the Laguna channel, which are interrupted by the entry of Old Washoe Creek, an "at grade" crossing of Old Washoe is proposed. This crossing could conveniently be placed about 300' upstream of the confluence. The design of this might include medium-sized boulders, placed firmly in the substrate, spaced close enough for pedestrians to hop across, but far enough apart to allow summertime flows to trickle between. Winter storms would make this crossing impassible for a few hours at a time. The approach to the crossing would need to allow safe pedestrian passage down the slopes of both levees, possibly using either stairs or ramps.
- P8. Copeland Creek bridge:* A pedestrian-bicycle bridge across Copeland Creek is proposed near its confluence with the Laguna channel. A good site for this would be about 400' upstream of the confluence. If bicycles are to use the right bank of the Laguna upstream and downstream of Copeland's entry, this bridge will be the most essential of the three crossings in this vicinity.
- P9. Lower Helman Reach of the Laguna de Santa Rosa:* From ~ 43.57 to ~ 42.82 , the Laguna's channel is protected by levees which have maintenance roads atop. It is proposed that the right bank's surface be paved with asphalt for bicycle use and the left bank's surface be opened to the public and maintained with chip-stone. Trail users will use the Rohnert Park Expressway bridge to cross Hinebaugh Creek and connect to the downstream portion of the Laguna trail, along its right bank.
- P10. Lower Hinebaugh Creek:* This man-made channel, from Redwood Highway at ~ 43.96 to the Laguna de Santa Rosa confluence at ~ 42.79 , near Rohnert Park Expressway, is protected by levees

on both sides. It is proposed that a bicycle path be established along the left bank, and a pedestrian path be established along the right bank, both having designs similar to those proposed along Copeland and the Laguna. The pedestrian crossing of Labath Creek at ~ 43.23 would be at-grade; no similar obstacle is encountered on the left bank so the proposed bicycle path would be unimpeded. The length of each path would be about one mile long. A pedestrian crosswalk should be painted on Rohnert Park Expressway and safety signs installed to allow trail users to connect from this trail to the Laguna trail.

P11. Gossage Creek: The lower one and three quarter miles of Gossage Creek, from Stony Glen at ~ 44.66 to the Laguna's confluence at ~ 42.82 is protected by levees on both sides. Only the left bank is immediately suitable for a trail throughout the entire distance, the right bank having brief sections without road base. The crossing of Stony Point Road presents a safety challenge and should be further investigated before options are considered. The entry of Washoe Creek, from the south at ~ 44.14 , further supports a left bank alignment to eliminate the need for a bridge. Nevertheless, a right-bank alignment would be possible from Derby Road north to the Laguna confluence at ~ 42.82 and might be developed into pedestrian-only access.

P12. Laguna bridge: About 600' downstream of the Laguna-Hinebaugh-Gossage confluence, which occurs at ~ 42.82 , a bicycle-pedestrian bridge is proposed that would span the Laguna de Santa Rosa. Bicycle traffic would switch sides at this point. To the east (on the north side) is the right bank Laguna trail; to the east (on the south side) is the left bank Gossage Creek trail; to the west (on the south side) is the continuation of the Laguna trail which now proceeds downstream on the left bank.

P13 and P14. Hunter Lane Creek and Bellevue-Wilfred Channel: Hunter Lane Creek, beginning at ~ 45.29 , at South Moorland Avenue, and continuing south for eight-tenths of a mile to ~ 44.47 , where it joins the Bellevue-Wilfred Channel, is protected by levees with a maintenance road on both sides, of which the left bank, as far as Scenic Ave is already paved. Continuing in a southwest direction, from ~ 44.47 to ~ 42.31 , the Bellevue-Wilfred channel crosses Millbrae and Wilfred Roads before meeting up with the Laguna de Santa Rosa near the Rohnert Park Expressway. A two and a quarter-mile long bicycle and pedestrian trail is

proposed along these two channels. They could be aligned on either of the two sides without prejudice, or even on both sides if public support warranted it.

It is noted that east of Highway 101, Wilfred Creek is suitably maintained for the first one and a half miles and could easily be converted to public bicycle trails. Similarly, Hunter Lane Creek could easily be opened to bicycles for a length of one and two-thirds miles, and Todd Creek could easily be opened for bicycles for about a mile.

The Bellevue-Wilfred channel, which is man-made, carries the waters of Moorland, Todd, Hunter Lane, and Wilfred creeks across the former Cotati Marsh, and is situated at the northern frontier of Rohnert Park and the southern frontier of Santa Rosa. The Sonoma Count Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has strategically acquired a string of greenbelt pearls along the Bellevue-Wilfred channel (west of Highway 101) and Wilfred Creek (east of Highway 101). These include the 27-acre Archdiocese property at Wilfred and Whistler; the 21-acre Haroutunian property south of Scenic Ave and west of the SMART Rail corridor; the 13-acre Brown property; the 46-acre Young/Amos property, and the 78-acre Oken property. Also notable along this corridor is the California Dept. of Fish and Game's 9-acre Arshi Mitigation Site situated at the confluence of the Bellevue-Wilfred channel and Hunter Creek. Although management plans for these open space lands call for restricted public access, their presence along this creek corridor provides a scenic backdrop that the nearby urban population could enjoy from the proposed trail network.

- P15. *Sunland Reach of the Laguna*: The two-mile long stretch of the Laguna channel from ~42.31 at Stony Point Road to ~40.39 at Llano Road is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency. This is the first part of the Laguna, east of Cotati, that doesn't have high, above-the-plain, levees to confine its waters; rather, it has a well-confined, and wide, channel that has at-grade embankments level with the Santa Rosa Plain to the north. A hiking and mountain biking path is proposed for this stretch along the right bank. This would be the southern leg of the Laguna Community Corridor. This area is well outside the Rohnert Park-Cotati urban sphere. The urbanized emphasis on bridges and paved paths, proposed for the trails east of here, should

yield to a more rugged and natural set of paths here. The proposed trail for this reach should be built on a compact substrate, but it should not be covered in asphalt: a chip-stone path would nicely fill the middle ground here between hard pavement and back-country dirt trail. Interpretive signs at each end of this long stretch might highlight the natural history and resources of the adjacent Santa Rosa Plain.

- P16. Demonstration wetlands:* A small demonstration wetlands and a short trail are situated adjacent to the administrative offices of the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Facility. This is open to the public.
- P17. Holding ponds:* The Laguna channel, from Llano Road at ~40.39 to Todd Road at ~39.14, follows a re-routed course around the treated water holding ponds. While a hiking trail through this area is a possibility, a more tractable public access policy would be to continue to manage these ponds with an eye toward waterfowl habitat. While in the long term a trail through this reach might make sense, it should be done in conjunction with land acquisitions and trail planning to the east, some of which is not in public ownership.
- P18. Colgan Creek connector:* Colgan Creek east of Stony Point Road has an existing bicycle-pedestrian trail that connects to Elsie Allen High School. Colgan Creek west of Stony Point Road at ~41.79, to Llano Road at ~39.76, is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency. While on the map, this corridor would look like a logical extension to the existing bicycle trail, it has not been properly explored as a possibility by the public access committee. In its favor are several simple ideas: first, an alignment here would extend the existing one and a half mile long trail; next, it would make use of a levee-embanked flood control channel; and additionally, it would leave the trail user only a short distance away from the Laguna (either directly south along Llano Road or west along Colgan Creek itself. Nevertheless, before any proposal is put forth for this alignment, the adjacent land owners should be consulted to determine what impact any such trail might have on their lands.
- P19. Southwest Santa Rosa Vernal Pool Preservation Bank:* This 146-acre spot is owned by the California Wildlife Conservation Board and is administered by the California Dept. of Fish and Game as seasonal wetlands. It is not open to the public.

- P20. Community Corridor–Llano Road:* From the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Facility north to Todd Road, the Community Corridor would run along Llano Road for a distance of 1.4 miles.
- P21. DFG Laguna Wildlife Area:* Tucked away in an inaccessible spot between Todd Road and Highway 116, is a 19-acre parcel owned by the California Dept. of Fish and Game. This wetland is part of the wide floodplain formed by the confluence of Blucher Creek and the Laguna. There is no nearby parking; access is by permission only, through private property at the end of Morse Road; no unsupervised public access is recommended for this site.
- P22. Cunningham Marsh:* An 18-acre conservation easement, held by the California Dept. of Fish and Game, is located along an upper tributary to Blucher Creek, near the end of Big Cedar Lane. It consists of a 15-acre main parcel which straddles the tributary and a 3-acre supplemental parcel situated about 500 feet to the south-west. This site is managed by the California Native Plant society. It is closed to the public.
- P23. Community Corridor–Laguna Ecological Reserve:* This section of the proposed community corridor could use either the existing Todd Road right-of-way, or possibly the interior edge of the Department of Fish and Game's Reserve. It would extend from the corner of Todd and Llano Roads to the elbow of Todd Road; from the elbow the corridor would traverse northward across the preserve to connect with the proposed trails on Alpha Farm.
- P24. Laguna Ecological Reserve:* This 72-acre spot is owned and managed by the California Dept. of Fish & Game. It shares a common border, along its northern edge, with Alpha Farm for a linear distance of about one mile. It is proposed that this site could become one of the trailheads for the Laguna, with a parking lot constructed either on Llano Road or on Todd Road. Trails here could help act as a link in a continuous Laguna trail. It is noted that the proposed Sunland Reach Trail ("P15") is one and one-third miles directly south of this reserve along Llano Road. Alternately, if a trail were eventually to be developed through the Laguna treatment holding ponds ("P17"), this spot would be only three-quarters of a mile distant. Any trail plans for this site should be tempered by the plans that are eventually adopted for Alpha Farm, which is six times its size, and which has both

wild and cultivated land uses. For the present, this spot is left as a wildcard; much will depend on the experience gained from opening Kelly and Brown Farms to the public. While there is no doubt that this spot could provide an interesting wildland experience to outdoor enthusiasts, its proximity to some of the more sensitive habitat areas of the Laguna also make it a logical candidate for remaining as a closed reserve.

- P25. FEMA site:* The 69-acre FEMA site, owned by the Wildlife Conservation Board and managed by the California Dept. of Fish & Game is situated near the crosshairs of the former Santa Rosa Air Center. Of interest to the naturalist is the presence of several vernal pools. Along the northern and western boundaries of the site is Roseland Creek, which is owned and managed by the Sonoma County Water Agency. This area is currently closed to the public; no special public access has been proposed one way or the other for this site.
- P26. FEMA Reach of Roseland Creek:* The two and a quarter mile stretch of Roseland Creek beginning at ~43.21 near Burbank Avenue and continuing to ~40.96 near Ludwig Avenue is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency. It skirts the edge of the FEMA site. This segment is identified in the Santa Rosa Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan of August 2001 as part of the Roseland Creek Trail.
- P27. Barretta Reach of Roseland Creek:* The one and three quarter mile stretch of Roseland Creek beginning at ~40.96 near Ludwig Avenue and continuing to ~39.28 near Llano Road is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency. This stretch is levee-protected and has an adjacent maintenance road. Despite these favorable factors, which would suggest the straightforward development of a public trail, such a proposal will need to proceed only with the full communication and cooperation of adjacent landowners. Most of the area traversed is an active dairy operation with hay fields and pasture on both sides. Both the expense for fencing and the potential interruption to this farming operation present challenges that suggest that this part of Roseland Creek be developed at a later phase. This segment was identified in the 1997 Sonoma County Bikeway's Plan.
- P28. Alpha Farm:* This 429-acre working farm, owned by the City of Santa Rosa, and managed by the Department of Utilities, is largely used as an irrigated pasture. The area between Roseland Creek

and the Laguna de Santa Rosa is managed as a nature preserve and is not farmed. The pocket corner of the property south of Roseland Creek, which contains seven constructed ponds, is also part of the nature preserve. The trail plans developed by Wolfe Mason Associates in 2005, for SCAPOSD, in cooperation with the City of Santa Rosa and other knowledgeable outdoor recreation community members, calls for trails on Alpha Farm to consist of two loops. One loop in the southeast quadrant of the farm, would be 1.7 miles in length, and would follow the perimeter of the property and the edge of Roseland Creek. The other loop would be aligned through the core of the property and would be 2.0 miles long; it would run closely parallel to the U-shaped Roseland Creek while connecting across the top near the northern property boundary. This configuration of trails would remain entirely outside the sensitive habitat areas of the property, and would instead provide the visitor with a close experience of a working farm.

- P29. Community Corridor—Marino Road:* Diverging from the other SCAPOSD-proposed trails for Alpha Farm, this one-quarter mile stretch of the community corridor would lead from the ponds on Alpha Farm towards the northeast along Marino Road (the farm's internal access road) to Llano Road. If this proposal were to be found unacceptable, the alternative route would be to remain on Llano Road.
- P30. Community Corridor—Ludwig area:* For six-tenths of a mile the community corridor, between Marino Road and Doyle Road, would run along the western side of Llano Road. This proposal would skirt the existing privately owned farmland situated between Alpha and Brown Farms.
- P31. Community Corridor—Doyle Road:* The community corridor would use either Doyle Road or the internal edge of Brown Farm to traverse the first one-quarter mile of distance east from Llano Road. It would then turn north to skirt the edge of Brown Farm's holding pond before connecting to the SCAPOSD-proposed multiuse trail. If this proposal were to be found unacceptable, the alternative route would be to remain on Llano Road.
- P32. CDFG Wildlife Area:* The 224-acre wildlife area, formerly called the Walker Ranch, but now owned and operated by the California Dept. of Fish and Game, is situated at the heart of the Laguna's southern wetlands. Directly adjacent to this site, to the east,

is the Carinalli conservation easement; to the south is Alpha Farm; to the north is Brown Farm. Access to the site is currently restricted: it is not generally open to the public, except for research or education, pending the development of a management plan.

Although a southeast-northwest hiking trail through the area would provide a logical connector from Alpha Farm to Brown Farm, support for this idea is again dependant upon the City of Santa Rosa's plans for its wildlife preserves and its active farming operations. But regardless of the City's plans for its adjacent properties, a short unimproved loop trail from the Cooper Road entry to the Laguna's left bank, would provide bird-watching opportunities; the spring-time vernal pool displays would also be of interest to native plant enthusiasts. Over and beyond a simple, non-intrusive, wildland hiking trail, no other unsupervised access is recommended, other than the possibility of winter-time kayaking. It is noted however, that no publicly available kayak put-in is proposed. In particular this site should not be available to hunting, fishing, bicycling or dog walking. The area east of the Laguna channel, which abuts the Carinalli conservation easement, should remain closed to all public access.

- P33. Pleasant Hill Conservation Easement:* On the eastern edge of the Laguna's watershed, in Sebastopol at the headwaters to Calder Creek, a 4-acre conservation easement is held by the California Dept. of Fish and Game near Robinson Road. There is no public access to this site.
- P34. Community Corridor–Brown Farm:* Using the SCAPOSD-proposed multiuse trail running along the eastern edge of Brown Farm, almost adjacent to Llano Road, the community corridor would proceed from Brown Farm's holding pond north to the Joe Rodota Trail. It would then use the Joe Rodota Trail for two-thirds of a mile until it diverged north to the proposed Highway 12 crossover (see "P45").
- P35. Brown Farm:* The 487-acre Brown Farm is located south of Highway 12, east of Llano Road, north of the Carinalli property and directly adjacent to two otherwise discontinuous parts of the Department of Fish and Game's Laguna Wildlife Area. The majority of this acreage is in active hay production. The Joe Rodota Trail bisects the farm leaving a small slice of land, from

200- to 600-foot wide and about one mile long, separated from the main portion. Gravenstein Creek also cuts across the land, running at first along the farm's northern boundary near the Joe Rodota Trail, then after swinging south running along the farm's southern boundary near the Laguna Wildlife Area. The SCAPOSD proposal for trails on this property includes 2.0 miles of unpaved multiuse trails and 1.7 miles of pedestrian-only trails. These would be aligned principally to follow the contours of Gravenstein Creek; a short section is aligned along the property's edge at Llano Road, and a second short section is aligned along the western end of the mid-axis farm access road. The SCAPOSD plan also suggests the potential for picnicking at a site along the Joe Rodota trail near its closest tangent with Gravenstein Creek.

All of these proposals have been put forth with the intention that they would minimize the potential for disrupting the active farming operations of the property. However, the placement of trails so near the waterways should also be done with a careful eye towards conservation, so as to forestall the possibility of foot traffic causing erosion, habitat destruction, and wildlife disturbance. Restoration along Gravenstein Creek in the recent past will eventually turn it into a high quality nature area and the intrusion of hikers here should be properly weighed against their potential impacts.

P36. The Joe Rodota Trail: This is a 6.25-mile long multipurpose trail extending from Petaluma Avenue in Sebastopol to the Prince Memorial Greenway near West 3rd Street. This important multipurpose trail is heavily used. It's nearby, but unfinished, connection to the West County Trail affords the intrepid bicyclist a nearly uninterrupted Class I bikeway from Forestville to Santa Rosa. This important backbone is the focal point for feeder trails and connections to the county's trail network; as a commuter route its potential is increasingly being tapped by the local community.

Because the Joe Rodota Trail is already in place, the need for a second multipurpose trail through the middle of Brown Farm is not as great, and the SCAPOSD plan might be adjusted to downgrade all trails on Brown Farm to "pedestrian only".

P37. Laguna Uplands Preserve: This 9-acre site is owned by the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation and has a conservation easement in place

with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. Access is via Palm Avenue and limited parking is available nearby. This site has a short loop trail. It is open to the public and is principally used for nature viewing. One small corner of the property is contiguous with the Railroad Forest and could provide a summertime link to any trails that are to be developed on lower Brown Farm.

- P38. Railroad Forest–DFG Laguna Wildlife Area:* This 17-acre site contains one of the last remnants of the thick riparian corridor that once blanketed the Laguna's floodplain. Its importance to the Laguna's ecosystem as a habitat refuge should not be underestimated. Any trails through this area should be designed to minimize the intrusiveness to this important bird and mammal refuge. The southern half of this property, which has a more sunny and open aspect, is a more appropriate area for any potential hiking trails. It is also noted that this area has repeatedly been the site of ad hoc summertime campgrounds set up by the area's transient and homeless population.
- P39. Railroad Forest–Sebastopol's Laguna Preserve:* This 10-acre segment of Sebastopol's "Laguna de Santa Rosa Preserve", is south of Highway 12 and north of the Joe Rodota Trail. Because it is part of the heavily forested riparian zone adjacent to the former Santa Rosa to Sebastopol railroad line, its colloquial moniker is "The Railroad Forest", a nickname that it shares with the adjacent DFG Laguna Wildlife Area and with the corner pocket of Brown Farm. A recently constructed trail which connects the Joe Rodota Trail with Morris Street, to the north, has been cut through this dense forest. Further trail development in this area is not warranted.
- P40. West County Trail:* This 2 mile-long multi-use trail extends from High School Road at Analy High School west to Highway 12 and north to Occidental Road. It is part of the trail system that connect Santa Rosa to Forestville. It is used by bicycles and pedestrians; no change to this usage is proposed.
- P41. Zimpher Creek Area–Sebastopol's Laguna Preserve:* This 10-acre parcel, just north of Highway 12, and west of the Laguna's main channel, is a dense riparian area noted for the abundance of black crowned night herons and double crested cormorants that frequent its shores. In an unusual display of imperturbability, these and other members of the heron family are frequently found in

this remaining remnant of high-quality habitat. A trail through this area has been constructed by AmeriCorps workers, up to Zimpher Creek. A bridge across Zimpher is proposed. When installed, this new bridge would allow hikers to circumnavigate the Laguna in a short loop which would begin at the nearby Community Center, proceed to the Highway 12 Bridge and across, and then return via the Meadowlark Field trail and the summertime pontoon bridge. No other unsupervised access is desirable in this area; in particular, it is proposed that dogs are to be kept out of this zone.

P42. Community Ponds—Sebastopol's Laguna Preserve: Sebastopol's 33-acre parcel, which includes the Community Center and its ball fields, is the showcase for two ponds that provide habitat to a diversity of water-loving birds. A couple of short loop trails provide easy access for the outdoor enthusiast and for the nearby urbanite looking for a few minutes of respite. A large parking area easily supports large groups, making this an ideal starting point for docent-led tours. Interpretive kiosks situated on two entryway pergolas enhance the visitor's experience. Of the four parcels designated by the City of Sebastopol as the "Laguna de Santa Rosa Preserve", this is the only one which currently allows dog walking. No change to this policy is recommended.

P41 and P42: It is noted that the Laguna channel north of Highway 12, described in "P41" and "P42" is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency, but because the City of Sebastopol's Laguna de Santa Rosa Preserve flanks it for the entire half-mile long extent, it is not considered separately for purposes of this discussion. Although kayakers have used this area for recreation from time to time, it is not proposed that any formal support be provided to this ad hoc activity; because of its narrow width and because of the abundance of nesting birds along its shores, kayaking and canoeing is to be discouraged here.

P43. Meadowlark Field—Sebastopol's Laguna Preserve: The 58-acre Meadowlark Field is home to a perimeter trail constructed with the fiscal support of the California State Coastal Conservancy. At the present time this trail is open to hikers only, and with the exception of the easternmost segment of this perimeter loop, no change in usage is proposed. The easternmost segment would handily form an extension to the Kelly Farm multi-use trail proposed by the Open Space District. It is proposed that

that portion of the perimeter trail from the Chevron Service Station to the Balletto-Kelly-Meadowlark corner be fortified with sufficient addition road base material (but not pavement) to safely support bicycles and horses.

In addition to this change in the perimeter trail, a picnic area is proposed for an area midway along this easternmost edge. It is proposed that dog walking be restricted from the entire Meadowlark Field because of the importance the field plays in providing ground-nesting songbird habitat. It is also noted that the southwestern corner of this field is inundated with water during every winter storm; thus, as a precautionary measure to prevent trail damage, access to this part of the perimeter trail should be restricted during wet weather.

P44. Kelly Farm trail head at Highway 12: Just east of the Chevron Service Station, a 7-acre corner pocket of Kelly Farm has been proposed, by the Open Space District, as the site of a trail head. Although careful examination of this area may yield a suitable spot for parking, it is noted that much of this field is low-lying and subject to occasional flooding. A better alternative for parking would be the high, artificially built-up area, just to the north; that area is presently under private ownership and is being used by an arbor company as a staging area. If neither of these two areas are found to be both suitable and available, an alternative might be to consider placing a trailhead south of Highway 12 on Brown Farm directly across from the Sebastopol Grange Hall.

P45. Highway 12 crossover: A significant safety hurdle for any trail system on the Brown-Kelly-Sebastopol complex, is getting across Highway 12. Given that a significant degree of outdoor recreation will be occurring in this area, and that a trail head will be situated somewhere along Highway 12, it is prudent to plan for some type of crossover that will safely accommodate prospective visitors. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any viable option that is both inexpensive and accessible year-round.

The proposal by Wolfe Mason Associates, consultants to the Open Space District, would be to make use of the existing bridge that crosses the Laguna at Sebastopol's eastern city limits, to construct a simple passage under Highway 12. But because of the regular storm water inundation of Meadowlark Field and the western parts of Brown Farm, an underpass would be viable only if it were situated east of Sebastopol Grange, where

the elevation is sufficiently high to keep the cross point out of water. Although an alternative might be to construct an overhead bridge across the highway, this would preclude the use of the trail system by horses, and that would not be in keeping with the other extant plans for the area.

After careful consideration of the other public access plans for the nearby areas, the best proposal appears to be the construction of a tunnel passage situated somewhere between the Sebastopol Grange and the eastern edge of Kelly Farm (near where the Cotati-Intertie crosses.)

P46. Kelly Farm multi-use trail: A one-mile long trail has been proposed by the Open Space District which would extend from the northeast corner of Meadowlark Field to the proposed trail head on Kelly Farm at Occidental Road. This trail would run adjacent to the farm's property boundary where it would have the least impact on the day-to-day tilling and harvesting activities on the farm's hay fields. The midpoint of this trail would be the Kelly Wetlands. This trail would be open to hikers, bikers and equestrians.

P47. Laguna Trail on Balletto Easement: The 66-acre Balletto easement consists of two parts: a lower field, which is entirely within the annual floodplain, and a slender ribbon of land, adjacent to the Laguna, which extends north almost to Occidental Road. The Open Space District plan for this area calls for a hiking-only trail to traverse this conservation easement near the Laguna channel. This hiking trail would connect Sebastopol's Meadowlark Field with the Fishing Hole at Occidental Road. The full length of this trail, from the northern edge of Meadowlark Field to Occidental Road, following the Laguna's channel, will be about one and two-thirds miles.

P48. Duer Creek Trail on Balletto Easement: A second hiking trail is proposed for lower Balletto field; it would run adjacent to Duer Creek and would connect the Laguna hiking trail with the Kelly Farm multi-use trail. It would be about one-third of a mile long.

P49. Kelly Wetlands: Kelly Farm, which is owned by the City of Santa Rosa and managed by the Department of Utilities, is 397-acres in size. Most of this property is actively farmed using treated water from the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Facility. One part of the property, about 9 acres in size, has been reserved as a wildlife area: this is the Kelly Wetlands, which is home to three

constructed ponds fed with water from the Treatment Facility. Up until 2006, this area has been closed to the public and has been opened only by special appointment. The principal visitors to the site have been third and four grade students participating in the Learning Laguna program, a Laguna Foundation docent-led education program. Under this proposal the Kelly Wetlands would become open to the general public and accessible via both the Kelly Farm multi-use trail and the Duer Creek Trail (“P46” and “P48”). It is further proposed that a walk-in picnic area be established at the Kelly Wetlands.

- P50. Kelly Farm trail head at Occidental Road:* A trail head is proposed for the northwestern corner of Kelly Farm in a finger of the property that is flanked by two private homes. This trail head should be designed to provide adequate parking spaces for 16 to 24 cars. It should also provide at least two spaces large enough to accommodate horse trailers. Of all the proposed trail heads this one, at a minimum, should have restroom facilities and a full set of garbage and recycling bins. This would also be a good site for an interpretive kiosk, possibly highlighting the natural resources of upland habitats. A possible alternative site for this trailhead would be the area 1000 feet to the east, at the existing farm entrance.
- P51. Highway 12 cross point at Sebastopol Road:* If the proposal for a trail around the perimeter of the Wright Preservation Bank (“P52”) is accepted, the long sought after opportunity of connecting the Santa Rosa Creek Trail with the Joe Rodota Trail would be within grasp. Such a north-south connection corridor would be possible starting at the Hall Road equestrian path, continuing south through the Wright Preservation Bank and ending a stones throw from the Joe Rodota Trail. This last 300 feet of the trail could be constructed across Highway 12, near the terminus of Sebastopol Road, on land owned by CalTrans. If horses were to be permitted on the Wright Preservation Bank, there would be a strong preference for this cross point to be constructed as an underpass. If horses were not to be part of the plan, there no longer appears to be a bias toward either an overpass or an underpass at this site; cost and aesthetics may be the determining factors instead.
- P52. Wright Preservation Bank:* This site is owned by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District; it has a con-

servation easement in place with the California Dept. of Fish and Game. It is 173 acres in size and is of interest because of its vernal pools. It also has been under study as a potential breeding ground for the rare California Tiger Salamander. At the present time no public access is available on this site. Nevertheless, with careful planning and thoughtful alignment a trail could be constructed around the perimeter and away from the high-quality vernal pools. There are very few places available for the public to see and appreciate the flora of vernal pools. With nearby parking potentially available at "P53" (Hall Road equestrian trail head) such an opportunity would be easily fulfilled.

P53. Hall Road equestrian trail head: A small site, which measures only 220' by 220' and which is situated on Hall Road just west of Countryside Circle, is proposed for the creation of special equestrian trail head, with spaces designed for horse trailers. A slender 45-foot wide path extends from the trailhead north to the Santa Rosa Creek trail; this path is approximately one-half mile long. Both the path and the Hall Road site have been deeded to the City of Santa Rosa which will construct and manage the site.

This trail head could also serve a moderate number of visitors to the Wright Preservation Bank which is located directly across Hall Road.

P54. Third Street Ponds: Three ponds, situated on the western half of the 73-acre "A Place to Play", are owned by the City of Santa Rosa. These ponds are currently closed to the public except by appointment. They are chiefly of interest to the outdoor enthusiast interested in birding. Automobile access to the site is via Third Street near Fulton Road. Trail access could be provided via the Santa Rosa Creek Trail, which shares a common boundary for about a quarter of a mile, but only if a management plan were to be adopted that would provide for the patrolling and protection of the area from vandalism.

P55. Santa Rosa Creek Trail: This seven-mile long trail, known in the downtown area as the Prince Memorial Greenway, begins at ~38.53 at Santa Rosa Avenue, and proceeds west uninterrupted to Delta Pond at ~31.25. A connected network of urban creekside trails are in place and open to the public above ~34.49, including segments along Steele, Piner, Paulin, and Russell Creeks. (Additional creekside pathways within the city, on property managed by the Sonoma County Water Agency, are

situated east of Highway 101, but are not documented here). Bicycle traffic is supported on the right bank for most of the trail's length, while pedestrian traffic is available along most of the left bank. Three bridges, across Piner Creek, Peterson Creek, and Abramson Creek, are being installing in 2006. These new bridges will establish a bicycle thruway along the right bank that will no longer require riders to switch to the left bank between Fulton and Willowside. With the construction of the Hall Road Equestrian trail head, horse traffic will have direct access to the entire length of the Santa Rosa Creek Trail and its entire network of feeder trails.

- P56. Youth Community Park:* The City of Santa Rosa owns a 74-acre parcel directly west of Piner High School; 22 acres of this parcel are designated as the Youth Community Park, and it contains recreational facilities appropriate for the neighborhood's teenagers. Part of this property is blanketed in a dense riparian forest which flanks the headwaters to Peterson Creek. The western two-thirds of the property are undeveloped. No changes to the public access of this site were discussed.
- P57. Peterson Creek Trail:* Beginning at the Youth Community Park, the banks of Peterson Creek are lined by levees. The right bank has a maintenance road which could be improved so as to provide a one and a quarter-mile long multiuse trail connecting with Santa Rosa Creek at ~34.22. A safety light for pedestrian crossing at Guerneville Road would be required.
- P58. Abramson Creek Trail:* The one-mile stretch of Abramson Creek owned and managed by the Sonoma County Water Agency, presents a tempting opportunity for increased public access, but accomplishing this presents several challenges. Its immediate connectivity to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail suggests that it would make an easy addition to the trail network. And its proximity to the rural neighborhoods of Oak Farm Lane, Sunny View Lane, and Jahn Drive, suggests that it would be used by the area's residents. But its traversal of an active dairy farm between Guerneville Road and Santa Rosa Creek requires some special care: this operation straddles Abramson Creek and its owners have constructed, and regularly use, two bridges with exclusionary fences which prevent trail-bound traffic from going though. A set of bollards across the trail at these two points might be the best way to allow both public access to the

trail and livestock access across the bridges. The dairy's owner should be consulted to see if this is possible. The northern terminus of this trail, falls 500 feet short of Oak Farm Lane, with all possible connection points held in private ownership; unless an easement is secured, this end of the trail may end up being a cul-de-sac for trail-goers.

- P59. Fishing Hole:* Situated south of Occidental Road and directly next to a deep stretch of the Laguna, is a 13-acre parcel owned by the County of Sonoma. A pull-out on Occidental Road affords parking space for three or four cars at this spot. It has been in use as an ad hoc fishing spot for many years, and it is proposed that this casual use be continued. No special support for this activity is envisioned at this time.
- P60. Community Corridor–Occidental Road cross point:* An under-the-bridge crossing is possible during the dry season, but would not be possible during the wet seasons. Occidental Road has good visibility east and west making an at-grade crossing a viable option.
- P61. Laguna Learning Center:* The Laguna Foundation has developed plans for the restoration of the historic Stone family residence, situated on "Old Occidental Road". This spot will become the Laguna Learning Center, a place to house the offices of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, and to eventually be home to interpretive facilities which will emphasize the Laguna's past, present and future as it relates to the three themes of agriculture, history, and natural resources. Parking at this Center will be limited to what the center itself needs; parking will not be available for the area's trail users.
- P62. Community Corridor–Stone Farm:* The community corridor would proceed through Stone Farm, along the eastern property boundary, on the existing maintenance roadbed extending from Occidental Road to Irwin Creek.
- P63. Community Corridor–Irwin Creek:* The community corridor would proceed from the eastern edge of Stone Farm, along a new trail running parallel to Irwin Creek, to Sanford Road.
- P64. Stone Farm:* The 112-acre Stone Farm, which lies north of Occidental Road and is bisected by Sanford Road, is in active agricultural use for both pasture and hay production. The western half of the farm is subject to regular inundation through-out the wet season. It is excellent egret and heron habitat and is a source of

delight for birders. A perimeter trail for this western half of the farm has been proposed by Wolfe Mason Associates, design consultants for the Open Space District. While a fence-hugging trail here would follow the general guidelines in place for the farms, (guidelines that are designed to enable a type of peaceful coexistence between trail visitors and the farms' agricultural workers,) it is probably not strictly speaking the best alignment for a trail system here. An alternative proposal for trails here would be to hug the Laguna's right bank from Occidental Road north to the Laguna Wildlife Area, and to hug the Irwin Creek riparian area from the Laguna, across Sanford Road to the very eastern edge of Stone Farm proper, then to connect this Irwin Creek Trail with the north-south access road that runs from the creek south to the Laguna Learning Center.

- P65. Watercraft put-in:* At the present time no good put-in is available for canoes and kayaks. This is a long-hoped-for opportunity of the county's outdoor recreation community. Because kayaking and canoeing is mostly a wet-season sport in the Laguna, and because the water level varies so dramatically from day to day during winter storms, finding a good site is problematic. The ideal conditions would favor both a dry firm pad for cars and a nearby deep water port for shoving off. Short of digging a channel or building a long pier, which are both intrusive enough to lack general support, the best solution appears to involve a long portage. One proposal might be to use the northwest corner of Stone Farm as a compromise. More investigation needs to be done to determine the viability of this site. In the long term, an embarkation point from the western side of the Laguna would be a better option, perhaps somewhere accessible from Frei Road, Scotts Right of Way or Barcaglia, but this will need to be delayed until some public entity purchases such a site.
- P66. Community Corridor—Sanford Road:* The community corridor would use Sanford Road itself from Irwin Creek north to Hall Road.
- P67. Laguna Wildlife Area:* The Department of Fish and Game owns the 132-acre Laguna Wildlife Area, a wetlands area situated west of Sanford Road, south of Hall Road and north of Occidental Road. The Department is also responsible for the 28 acres which comprise the artificial channel that carries the Laguna's summertime water from Occidental Rd to Guerneville Road. At the present time no new trails are proposed for this site.

During the eleven week waterfowl hunting season, which extends from November through January, this area is open to licensed hunters. Because this same area is of interest to other outdoor enthusiasts at the same time, notably those in kayaks and canoes, all visitors to the area during hunting season should follow standard safety procedures.

- P68. Community Corridor—Delta Pond:* The community corridor would connect to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail and extend into the Delta Pond area for the first 1000' along its southern embankment. The connectivity between this part of Delta Pond and Sanford Road needs to be further explored: ideally a trail would be situated through the existing farmland, along a fenceline, such that the agricultural operations are not impacted.
- P69. Aggjo wetlands:* This 9-acre wetlands is home to a rich diversity of birds. The site is owned privately, but is held in preserve status through an exchange agreement with the Santa Rosa Wastewater Treatment Facility. No public access is proposed for this sensitive wetlands area.
- P70. Delta Pond:* The 90-acre Delta Pond, used by the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Facility as a storage area and pressure head for the clean water destined for the area's irrigation fields, is situated on a 127-acre parcel. This parcel is elevated above the floodplain with a perimeter dike that is topped by a maintenance road. Because of its proximity to the wildlands of the nearby Santa Rosa Creek and the floodplain of the Laguna this area is an excellent area for wildlife viewing. It is presently open to the public only by permission. The only suggested change to this policy is the proposal by the bicycling community to possibly open the first half of the southern perimeter road for use as a connector between the Santa Rosa Creek Trail and points south (this proposal is spelled out more fully below.)
- P71. California Dept. of Water Resources:* A 9-acre parcel, north of Guerneville Road, inaccessible except via Timber Hill Road, is owned by the California Dept. of Water Resources. It is near this site G. Bolander recorded his observations of 232 bird species over a 20 year period. The site encompasses the low land and the Laguna's secondary channel at the base of Timber Hill's steep slopes. It is not open to the public. No change to this policy has been proposed.

- P72. Timber Hill Preserve:* The 48-acre Timber Hill Preserve, a conservation easement on private property, is split into two pieces, a larger 44-acre piece and a smaller 4-acre piece. This easement is held by the California Dept. of Fish and Game. No public access is sought for this area.
- P73. Piner Road Vernal Pools:* Little is know about this 1-acre vernal pool conservation easement held by the California Dept. of Fish and Game. It is located at Abramson Creek on the north side of Piner Road. No public access is recommended.
- P74. Alton Lane Vernal Pools:* This 41-acre vernal pool mitigation bank owned by Cobblestone Development is located just east of Abramson Creek on the south side of Alton Lane next to the Piner Road extension. There is a 6-acre conservation easement held on this site by the California Dept. of Fish and Game. There is no public access to this site.
- P75. CNPS Manzanita Preserve:* This 1-acre parcel on Vine Hill School Road is owned by the California Native Plant Society. It is closed to the public.
- P76. Laguna channel at Ballard Lake:* Approximately three-fourths of a mile of the Laguna channel, centered on Ballard Lake, is owned by the Sonoma County Water Agency. This area is landlocked. No public access is sought for this area.
- P77. Indian Valley:* The 23-acre Indian Valley conservation easement held by the Open Space District, is situated at the confluence of Clark Creek and the Laguna channel, near Maryannis Drive. It is adjacent to rich riparian forests to the south, and may over time be restored to a similar condition. Public access on this site is a wild card. More information should be sought.
- P78. Geysers pipeline mid-point pond:* A 35-acre site, managed by Santa Rosa Wastewater Treatment Facility as part of the Geysers pipeline, is situated on Mark West Station Road east of Trenton-Healdsburg Road. It is near Windsor Creek and partially surrounded by a large oak woodland forest. The site has excellent potential for high quality habitat, and this potential is enhanced by the large storage pond on the site. Although it is presently closed to the general public, some access may be desirable if this can be done without affecting the pond's principal utility.

PROPOSAL ASSESSMENT

These plans and proposals are far reaching and some will take a long time to implement. Also, some of these ideas have yet to be fully developed; they will require additional community effort to determine the best balance of their merits. Admittedly there are a large number of specific proposals for bicycles and multi-use trails in this plan: these flow from the general advice provided by the county's leadership community which has expressed the desire for many more miles of safe bike trails, both for recreation and for transportation. It should be underscored however that this emphasis on bicycles does not extend to the wild and sensitive areas of the Laguna's core public lands.

Some ideas need more development

SENSITIVE WILDLIFE AREAS

One very special consideration has taken precedence over others throughout our planning efforts: some areas of the Laguna contain sensitive wildlife habitats which could easily be disturbed by too much human intrusion.

Tucked between the bustle of our urban population and the traffic of our rural roads are small pockets of high quality habitat. These remaining spots are the final refuge for some of the most sensitive species that live in the Laguna. As biologically rich areas it is important that they not be disturbed by over-enthusiastic visitors. All of us appreciate the fact that we may never see some of what we are trying to protect, but if we've done our work well, just knowing that they are still here is reward enough. We all realize therefore that some areas of the Laguna need to remain closed to the public.

Biologically rich areas

Although much of what is proposed in this discussion about public access appears to be saying that everything should be open to the public, this is not what any of the public access committee members suggested. On the contrary, as a whole, the plan's advisors and specialists are committed to opening selected parts of the publicly owned lands of the Laguna to the general public, but only so long as proper safeguards are in place to protect the remaining sensitive wildlife areas.

Protection of sensitive wildlife areas

And even beyond this specific recommendation regarding existing sensitive wildlife areas, it behooves us to plan our public access in such a way as to allow for a greater amount of this high quality habitat in the future. Other parts of this restoration and management plan focus on activities and guidelines for enhancing ecosystem functions: each of the public access guidelines for specific sites needs to be evaluated against a "sensitive habitat" rule that considers both the current and the future

Planning ahead for new habitat

habitat potential of a site. Some sites recommended for open access to the unsupervised public are currently in a degraded condition and in need of restoration; these sites will become the next generation of high-quality habitat: they should not be too hastily opened to the public.

