

## **OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

*reflects Wetlands and Creeks Committee modifications adopted 11.15.22*

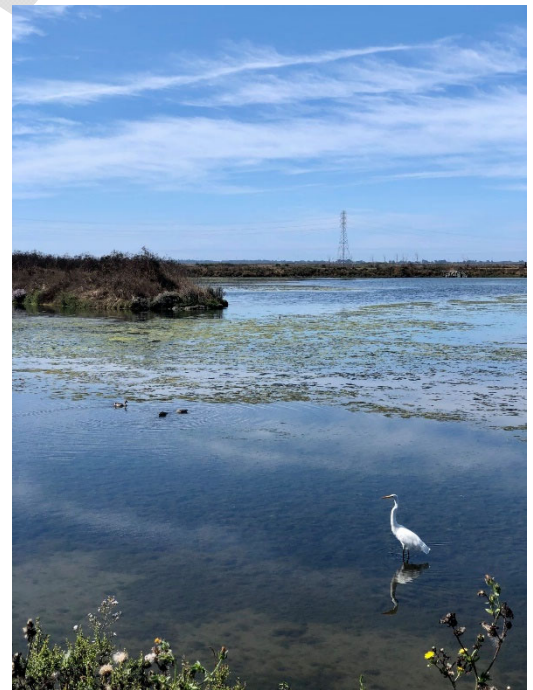
### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

**Overview of Arcata's Open Space Resources.** Arcata's open spaces take many forms and serve a variety of functions. Open space contributes to the community's character and provide natural, recreational, and visual resources for community use and enjoyment. Open space is valuable for both passive and active uses. Designating or otherwise protecting lands as open space provides for: protection of natural habitats and species; managed production of natural resources such as agricultural and forest products; recreational uses; coastal access; scenic, aesthetic resources; and avoidance of development on such areas as steep slopes, faults, and flood zones. Open space is also valuable for preserving scenic views and other aesthetic considerations. Open space networks are enhanced when natural biological corridors, greenways, easements, parks and other connections are linked. Open space categories are described in more detail below and mapped on Figure OS-a.

**Open Space for natural resource maintenance and enhancement** protects plant and wildlife habitat, especially in areas where rare, endangered, or threatened species exist. Arcata's creek watersheds and watercourses, McDaniel, Gannon, Butcher and Mad River sloughs, Arcata and Aldergrove Marshes, wetlands, baylands and tidelands, and ecological and scientific study areas, may also be included in this category.

**Open space for the managed production of resources** includes forest lands on the west slopes of Fickle Hill, agricultural lands in the Arcata Bottom and Bayside areas, aquaculture areas in Arcata Bay, and the aggregate deposits along the Mad River. These areas are important for their production of agricultural, forest, and mineral resources, as well as for recharge of groundwater basins. Open space management also enhances surface water supplies for Arcata Bay, McDaniel Slough, Arcata Marsh, the Mad River, and the multiple streams that flow through the area, maintaining water quality and other ecological functions.

**Open space for outdoor recreation** includes both active and passive recreation uses in City parks and recreation areas, such as Redwood Park and the Community Center; cultural and special use areas such as the Arcata Ball field, Skate park, and Plaza; neighborhood parks such as Sunny Brae and Stewart Parks; and natural areas such as the Arcata Marsh and Shay Park.



**Open space for public health and safety** includes earthquake fault zones, liquefaction areas, steeply sloped hillsides, and 100-year floodplains. Vegetation in open spaces provide habitat, sequester carbon and reduce air pollution, wetlands filter contaminants. Linked open space can accommodate trails, which are part of alternative transportation routes that aid in reducing greenhouse gases, by promoting cycling and walking.

Open space lands address public health by providing accessible and low-cost public recreation opportunities to all, regardless of income, age or ethnicity. Active recreation facilities have beneficial effects on reducing obesity and illness in youth and adults; and common areas accessible to all improve equity for the community. Open spaces support community gardens where food production increases access to fresh local produce for farm to table connections.

Open spaces are important environmental sustainability considerations for the City. Natural systems managed and even expanded as open space, provide active public stewardship opportunities for aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity. This significantly contributes to watershed health and implements environmental, ecological and conservation policies.



Open space offers economic benefits as well. City investments in parks, ballfields, sport courts recreation equipment, benches, picnic tables and landscaping make the City's private lands more desirable for investment, help attract and expand local businesses, and can increase tourism.

Open space can provide multiple benefits, such as Agricultural lands in the Arcata Bottom and forested lands on the western slopes of Fickle Hill are important for their natural and resource production capabilities. These lands also retain natural drainage systems, sustain natural habitats, enhance the community's viewshed and provide an aesthetic resource. Designating these and other open spaces in the General Plan documents their value to the community. It also allows City decision-makers to identify open space as an important resource when

considering proposed changes in community form.

Within the city and surrounding Planning Area, natural resource lands that are part of a broader open space system include: ocean beach; sand dunes; back-dune woodlands; Arcata Bay; Mad River; Mad River Slough; and buffer corridors along the Mad River, and Jacoby, Jolly Giant, Janes, Sunset, Grotzman, Beith, and Campbell Creeks.

The Open Space Element is closely linked with General Plan Resource Conservation and Management, Public Safety, Health, and Parks and Recreation Elements . These linked elements contain policies for the protection, management, enjoyment, and access to and appropriate use of identified open space areas. The Open Space Element identifies natural and productive resource areas, parks, coastal access, outdoor recreation, and hazard areas that should be considered for their open space values.

### **Guiding Principles and Goals.**

- A. Protect open space lands with native biotic resources as a natural legacy for future generations.
- B. Protect and manage public trust lands to sustain plant and animal species and ecosystem health.
- C. Recognize that the value of natural resources lands of all sizes and shapes are significantly enhanced when linked together in an open space system.
- D. Designate as open space, resource lands capable of producing agricultural, forest, mineral, and aquaculture products; and manage those lands for sustained production as well as habitat, hydrological, mineral, recreational, and aesthetic values.
- E. Preserve sufficient lands, for both active and passive recreational activities, and coastal access to serve the present and future needs of the community.
- F. Protect lands that, due to instability, flooding, high fire hazards, or seismic risks, pose potential human health and well-being risks.
- G. Provide additional entryways to the Community Forest to promote greater accessibility from Arcata's adjacent neighborhoods.
- H. Recognize open space as an important feature that impacts individual and community health. Manage open space access equitably and with accessibility considerations to ensure underserved areas are included.

## 4.2 POLICIES

The Open Space Element includes the following policies:

- OS-1 Overall Open Space System
- OS-2 Natural Resource Protection and Enhancement
- OS-3 Open Space for Managed Production of Resources
- OS-4 Open Space for Outdoor Recreation/Coastal Access
- OS-5 Open Space in Health and Safety Hazard Areas

### POLICY OS-1 OVERALL OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

**Objective.** Designate, maintain, and enhance the quality, and increase the amount of permanently protected open space in the Arcata Planning Area, including: natural resource areas; resource production areas; outdoor recreation areas; and areas subject to health and safety hazards. These areas are to be protected, linked together ~~in a network~~ wherever practical for habitat connectivity~~accessibility~~, managed for resource production, and maintained for enjoyment by City residents and visitors.

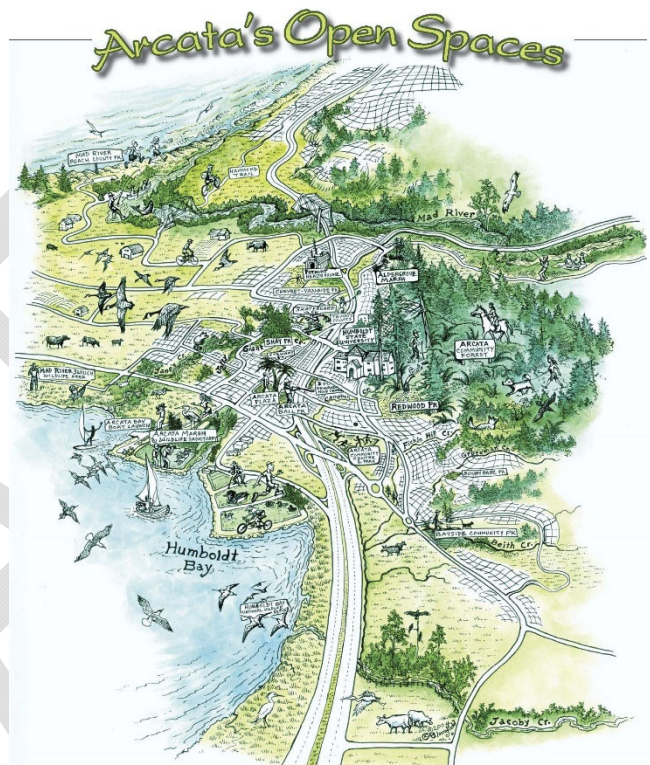
- OS-1a **Designation of open space lands with native biotic resources and ecosystems.** The native biotic resources of the forested western slopes of Fickle Hill, river and creek riparian zones, the Arcata and Aldergrove Marshes, and Arcata Bay tidelands and sloughs are unique ecosystems that have important habitat values in addition to their other open space values. These areas as designated on Map OS-a shall be protected as open space for their resource values.
- OS-1b **Open Space Plan Map.** The areas designated as open space are shown on Figure OS-a. Generally, these lands have Agriculture-Exclusive (A-E), Natural Resource (NR), or Public Facility (PF) land use designations. Other lands, where identified open space resources have been preserved through easements or other means, are also subject to this element's policies.
- OS-1c **Relationship to Resource Conservation and Management and Public Safety Elements.** Identified hazard areas shall be maintained as open space for the benefit of the community. The policies of this element and Public Safety Element policies provide common direction for hazard area designation and avoidance. The natural open space features of these areas, such as vegetation, shall be retained, except where they contribute to instability or increased hazards.
- OS-1d **Linkages between open space areas.** Open space links, especially in biological



corridors and greenways, is important for wildlife migration, non-motorized vehicle transportation, and community recreation, and shall be encouraged. Trails along levees or adjacent to railroad tracks and street rights-of-way can serve as links to parks, open space, and natural areas. Easements shall also be considered as a lower cost alternative to preserving links between open space. The City shall preserve or create corridors in underserved areas, such as the Valley West neighborhood, to prepare for future linkages.

**OS-1e Appropriate uses and development limitations within open space lands.**

Certain open space areas contain wetlands and other critical habitat, and must be preserved in a natural condition and enhanced. Other areas can accommodate managed activities such as mining and timber harvesting, subject to sustainable yield policies RC-6 and RC-8 in the Resource Conservation & Management Element, while other areas shall be designated for interpretive and recreational use. Each designated open space area shall be evaluated by the appropriate City advisory board (e.g., Wetlands & Creeks Committee, Forest Management Committee) to determine resources present, acceptable use levels, and appropriate management. Open space area management and use are guided by applicable Resource Conservation and Management and Land Use Element policies.



**OS-1f Designation of lands with scenic, aesthetic, historic, and cultural value.** The City has scenic routes, including Highway 101 and State Route 255 - Samoa Boulevard; vistas, including the forested slopes of Fickle Hill, the Arcata Bottoms; and areas of historic and cultural value, such as the Plaza. The open and natural characteristics of these areas shall be maintained. Policies for retaining scenic vistas and landscape features are included in the Design and Arcata Gateway Area Plan Elements.

**OS-1g Public and private ownership and management of open space.** Open space resource areas are owned and managed by the City, state agencies, tribal governments, land trusts, corporations, and private individuals. The City shall set the standard for responsible resource land stewardship through its management of the Community Forest, marshes, parks, and other resource lands, and encourage other public and private entities, entrusted with the ownership and management of similar resource

areas, to consider natural resource values to the community in all long-term use decisions.

- OS-1h **Greenbelts.** “Greenbelt” is a general term that refers to natural, undeveloped, and/or agricultural lands that surround urban areas. Preserving greenbelts of agricultural and other open space lands is an effective method of defining urban development limits. The City shall encourage the County to preserve agricultural lands and designations in the City’s Planning Area. The City also supports greenbelt preservation through land and conservation easement acquisition.

These measures will help preserve visual and associative links to nature and reinforce the distinction between the City and adjacent communities.

- OS-1i **Additional open space area identification and acquisition.** There are land parcels, including forested property on the west slopes of Fickle Hill, and lands around Arcata Bay which would contribute significantly to the City and regional open space systems. The City shall continue to pursue, or coordinate with land trusts, for acquisition, from willing sellers, to expand the amount of open space and also for conservation easements to preserve open space values of private parcels. Joint land acquisition funding will be coordinated with County, regional and state agencies. Community Forest acquisitions and acquisitions to benefit sea level rise adaptation will continue to be a priority. Other acquisition priorities shall be based on capital, operation and maintenance costs, accessibility, resource preservation, ability to complete or enhance an existing open space linkage system and unique environmental features. Lands acquired outside of the City Limits should be annexed pursuant to the Growth Management Element.

## **POLICY OS-2 NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT**

**Objective.** Designate, maintain, and enhance natural resource areas, including sensitive habitat areas, necessary to sustain plant and animal life and native biological diversity.

- OS-2a **Open space plan map designations for natural resource protection.** Publicly held lands containing creeks, sloughs, wetlands, other open water, ~~marsh~~, sensitive habitat, forests, and other important natural resources are designated on the Open Space Map (OS-a). While this map is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive. Additional natural resource lands suitable for protections may be identified through site specific studies and or develop in new areas due to changing environmental conditions.
- OS-2b **Development limitations and management for maintenance of biotic resources and diversity, including aquatic resources and sensitive habitats.** Creeks, ~~marshes~~, and wetlands are significant components of Arcata’s natural open space system. The City shall restore and maintain this system for the benefit of tribal members, residents,

visitors, fish, and wildlife.

The Arcata Bay and tidelands represent an important natural edge and open space feature of the City. Buildings, landform alterations, or access routes in this area shall be of a design and scale that preserves open space and natural characteristics and maintains public views to the Bay.

Local creeks which flow openly through the developed portion of the community shall have biological corridors and greenways established and shall be maintained as visual assets to any developments which adjoin them. Daylighting of channelized or culverted creeks is encouraged where feasible, with a special emphasis on Jolly Giant Creek.

The natural features of the Mad River corridor, Arcata's creeks and adjacent areas, marshes, and other wetland areas, shall be retained.

Unique vegetation and wildlife areas shall remain in a natural condition. Such areas include sand dunes and backdune woodlands, eel grass areas, salt marshes, and special habitats (tern and osprey nesting areas, cormorant, night heron and egret rookeries, and harbor seal resting areas and egret roost). The policies of this element shall also call for protection for habitat of species that become threatened in the future.

### **POLICY OS-3 OPEN SPACE FOR MANAGED PRODUCTION OF RESOURCES**

**Objective.** Designate and conserve resource areas, including forest and agricultural lands, fisheries and aquaculture, groundwater, and mineral resources, for their sustainable, long-term productive capabilities.

- OS-3a **Designations for forest, agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, groundwater, and mineral resource uses and management.** All publicly held lands, and some privately held lands adjacent to the Community Forest and east of Aldergrove Industrial Park, actively managed for production of forest, fisheries, aquaculture and mineral resources are designated as Natural Resource [NR] on the General Plan Land Use Element map. Productive agricultural lands are designated on the Open Space Map.



- OS-3b **Development limitations and management for productive resource areas.** The



policies of the Resource Conservation and Management Element shall be followed for the development and management of productive resource lands. This includes policies for: Natural Biological Diversity; Streams Management; Wetlands Management; Baylands and Tidelands; Agricultural and Forest Resources; and Water, Energy, Soils and Mineral Resources. The City shall require that open space resource management be consistent with these and other applicable General Plan policies.

#### **POLICY OS-4 OPEN SPACE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND COASTAL ACCESS**

**Objective.** Designate and secure public access to a sufficient supply of land and water areas with recreation resource value, including parks, forests, coastal areas, baylands, and stream corridors, to meet the outdoor recreation needs of Arcata residents and visitors.

**OS-4a Designations for park lands and outdoor recreation areas.** All publicly held park lands and outdoor recreation areas are designated as Public Facility [PF] on the General Plan Land Use Element map. The natural resources present on these lands are also subject to the applicable policies of the Resource Conservation & Management Element. Recreation areas are mapped on Figure OS-a.



**OS-4b Coastal access policy.** The City shall maintain coastal access corridors to Arcata Bay and other public use areas and public trust lands within the coastal zone.

Coastal access routes include:

1. Access from Samoa Boulevard to Arcata Bay via South "I" and "G" Streets.
2. Access to Mad River Beach via Mad River Road.
3. Access to Manila Dunes via Samoa Boulevard.

**OS-4c Relationship to the Parks and Recreation Element.** This element contains policies for management of open space lands designated for outdoor recreation. The Parks and Recreation Element contains goals and policy direction for: providing a range of recreation opportunities; sharing facilities; park and recreation program efficiency; environmental compatibility; and user safety.

#### **POLICY OS-5 OPEN SPACE IN HEALTH AND SAFETY HAZARD AREAS**

**Objective.** Designate health and safety hazard areas such as seismic fault and liquefaction zones, unstable soils or slopes, floodplains, areas susceptible to wildland fire, and watershed/reservoir safety zones for risks such as dam and tsunami inundation. Provide appropriate protections, or restrictions, to minimize unnecessary exposure of people and



property to health and safety hazards.

**OS-5a Designation of open space for public safety.** Designated open space for public safety is shown on Figure OS-a. Setbacks for seismic faults and liquefaction zones, unstable soils or steep slopes, mapped Flood Hazard Zone A, areas susceptible to wildland fire, and watershed/reservoir safety zones, shall be established as part of the development review process. Where severe safety considerations exist (e.g., within the Alquist-Priolo Zone), open space easements shall be granted to the City to protect people and property from health and safety hazards.

Open space ~~lands~~areas, with slopes 15% or greater shall retain their natural landform features; excavation shall be restricted, according to the City's adopted grading ordinance, and removal of vegetation shall be limited to selected thinning of timber stands and removal of hazard trees.

Open Space areas that are flood-prone may be used for agricultural and recreational purposes but shall be kept free from urban development. A flood plain overlay zone shall be applied to all Natural Resource [NR] and Agricultural [AE] areas subject to inundation according to the Flood Insurance Rate Map (Flood Hazard Boundary Map) developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Federal Insurance Administration.

**OS-5b Development limitations and management for health and safety hazard areas.** Public Safety Element policies shall be followed for all development activity in areas with known or suspected safety hazards. In particular, seismic hazards, other geologic hazards, and flood hazards policy topics are applicable. Areas of high fire risk shall also be subject to defensible space, non-flammable materials and suppression measures as applicable.

### 4.3 IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
OS -1	<b>Open Space Preservation</b> Preserve existing and acquire additional open space lands identified in this element through the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of open space lands in fee.</li> <li>• Secure easements by negotiated agreement.</li> <li>• Maintain open space designations on City and County planning maps.</li> </ul>	Environmental Services / Community Development  Dept./ Planning Commission / City Council	Ongoing