

## ***OPEN SPACE ELEMENT***

### **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 areas represent a significant and desirable component of the community's character and maintain natural, recreational, and visual resources for future 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 that are potentially hazardous to the community. Open space is also valuable for preserving scenic views and other aesthetic considerations. The overall system is also enhanced when open space lands are linked by natural biological corridors, greenways, easements, and other types of connections. Open space categories are described in more detail below, and mapped on Figure OS-a located in the map pocket at the end of this chapter.

**Open Space for the maintenance and enhancement of natural resources** protects plant and animal 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.

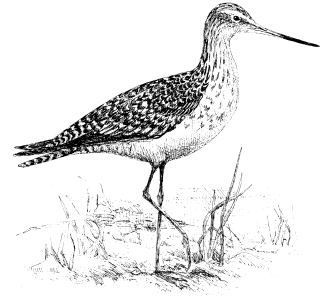
**Open space for the managed production of resources** includes forest lands on the west slopes of Fickle Hill, agricultural lands in the Arcata Bottom and Bayside areas, aquaculture areas in Arcata Bay, and the aggregate deposits along the Mad River. These areas are important for their production of food, wood, and mineral products, as well as for maintaining water quality and other ecological functions.

**Open space for outdoor recreation** includes City parks and ballfields, 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.

In many cases, open space can provide multiple benefits. 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 the open space system include: ocean beach; sand dunes; back-dune woodlands; Arcata Bay; Mad River; Mad River Slough; and buffer strips along the Mad River, and Jacoby, Jolly Giant, Janes, Sunset, Grotzman, Beith, and Campbell Creeks.

The Open Space Element is closely linked with the Resource Conservation and Management, Public Safety, and Parks and Recreation Elements of the General Plan. 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

#### **General Plan Parks and Recreation Element Goals:**

- To provide a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities for Arcata residents of all ages.
- To provide all residents with a wide assortment of parks and related facilities.
- To promote sharing of facilities and programs with other entities.
- To emphasize fiscal efficiency in the provision of parks and recreation programs.
- To provide aesthetically pleasing parks and recreational facilities which are compatible with their environment.
- To bring park and recreation facilities into compliance with changing federal and state laws, and encourage user safety.

- coastal access to serve the present and future needs of the community.
- F. Protect lands that, due to instability or seismic risks, pose potential risk to human health and well-being.
- G. Provide additional entryways to the Community Forest to promote greater accessibility from Arcata's adjacent neighborhoods.

## 4.2 POLICIES

### POLICY OS-1 OVERALL OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

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

**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 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 are designated as A-E, NR, or PF on the land use map. 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.** This element identifies hazard areas that shall be maintained as open space for the benefit of the community. The policies of this element and policies found in the Public Safety Element provide common direction for the designation and avoidance of hazard areas. The natural open space features of these areas, such as vegetation, shall be retained, except where they contribute to instability or increase hazards.
- OS-1d Linkages between open space areas.** Linkage of open space lands, especially along biological corridors and greenways, is important for animal 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.
- 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 of the City shall be evaluated by the appropriate City advisory board (e.g., Creeks & Wetlands Committee) to determine the resources present, the acceptable level of use, and appropriate preservation. The management of, and development in, open space areas are subject to applicable policies of the Resource Conservation and Management and Land Use Elements.
- OS-1f Designation of lands with scenic, aesthetic, historic, and cultural value.** The City has scenic routes, including State Route 101 and Samoa Boulevard; vistas, including the forested slopes of Fickle Hill and 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 Community Design Element of the General Plan.
- OS-1g Public and private ownership and management of open space.** Open space resource areas are owned and managed by the City, state agencies, 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.** 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 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.

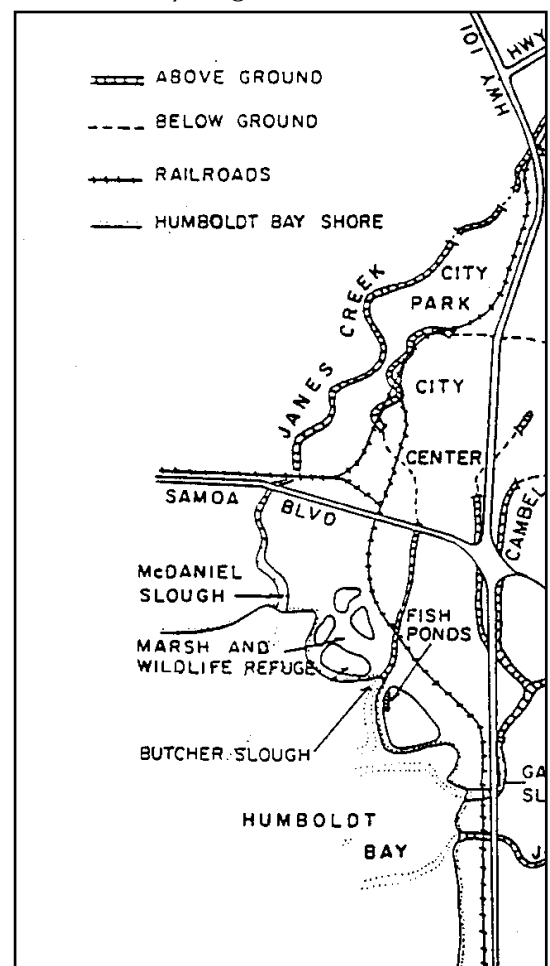
- OS-1i **Acquisition of open space areas.** There are several privately held land parcels, including forested property on the west slopes of Fickle Hill, which would contribute significantly to the City's open space system. The City shall pursue acquisition of these parcels, from willing sellers, for their open space values. Joint funding for land acquisition will be coordinated with County, regional and state agencies.

## 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, wetlands, other open water, marsh, sensitive habitat, forests, and other important natural resources are designated on the Open Space Map.

- 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 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.

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 area, salt marshes, and special habitats (tern and osprey nesting areas, cormorant rookery, harbor seal area 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 management of open space resources 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. 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 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.** The policies of the Public Safety Element 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.



### 4.3 IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

| #    | IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | RESPONSIBLE PARTY                                | TIME FRAME |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------|
| OS-1 | <p><b>Open Space Preservation</b></p> <p>Preserve existing and acquire additional open space lands identified in this element through the following measures:</p> <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> <p>An appointed Open Space Advisory Committee will be responsible for implementing the Open Space Element and making relevant recommendations to City Council, including possible funding through bond measure approval. The advisory body is to participate in the next County General Plan update and promote incorporation of the City's open space goals, policies, and implementation measures in the County community plans covering the Arcata Planning Area.</p> | Community Development Dept./ Planning Commission | Year 1     |