

VEGETATIVE, WATER, FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES POLICIES

The County will:

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Conserve, Enhance, Protect, Maintain and Manage Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Promote the conservation, enhancement, protection, maintenance and managed use of the County's Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources.

1.2 Protect Sensitive Habitats

Protect sensitive habitats from reduction in size or degradation of the conditions necessary for their maintenance.

1.3 Protection and Productive Use of Economically Valuable Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Protect the availability and encourage the productive use of the County's economically valuable vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources in a manner which minimizes adverse environmental impacts.

1.4 Access to Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Protect and promote existing rights of public access to vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources for purposes of study and recreation consistent with the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners and protection and preservation of such resources.

DEFINITIONS

1.5 Definition of Vegetative Resources

Define vegetative resources as plants and plant communities, including timber but excluding agricultural crops.*

* Agricultural crops and additional discussion of timber resources are presented in the Rural Land Use Chapter.

1.6 Definition of Water Resources

Define water resources as all surface water bodies, groundwater bodies and recharge areas, including perennial and intermittent streams.

1.7 Definition of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Define fish and wildlife resources as all non-domesticated animals.

1.8 Definition of Sensitive Habitats

Define a sensitive habitat as any area where the vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources provide especially valuable and rare plant and animal habitats that can be easily disturbed or degraded. These areas include but are not limited to: (1) habitats containing or supporting rare or unique species; (2) riparian corridors; (3) marine and estuarine habitats; (4) wetlands; (5) sand dunes; (6) wildlife refuges, reserves, and scientific study areas; and (7) important nesting, feeding, breeding or spawning areas.

1.9 Definition of Rare or Unique Species

Define rare or unique species as any plant or animal that is determined to be rare, endangered, threatened, unique to the County and adjacent areas or protected by Federal or State law and State and County EIR guidelines.

1.10 Definition of Riparian Corridors

Define riparian corridors as the vegetative and wildlife areas adjacent to perennial and intermittent streams and other freshwater bodies, such as lakes, ponds, and reservoirs. Delineate these riparian corridors by the "limit of riparian vegetation," i.e., a line determined by the existence of plant species normally found near streams, lakes, and other freshwater bodies.

1.11 Definition of Marine and Estuarine Habitats

Define marine and estuarine habitats as habitats of any marine-dependent plant or animal located in or near the Pacific Ocean or San Francisco Bay, including beaches, offshore reefs, kelp beds, tide pools, sea caves, islets and offshore rocks, sea cliffs, bays and estuaries.

1.12 Definition of Wetlands

Define wetland as an area where the water table is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to bring about the formation of hydric soils or to support the growth of plants which normally grow in water or wet ground. Wetlands include

fresh or salt water marshes, mud flats, brackish, tidal or seasonal wet areas and can occur along the margins of streams, lakes and ponds.

1.13 Definition of Wildlife Refuges, Reserves, and Scientific Study Areas

Define wildlife refuges, reserves, and scientific study areas as those areas designated by public and/or owned by private agencies for the purposes of protecting, maintaining, and studying important vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.

1.14 Definition of Buffer Zones

Define Buffer Zones as those areas adjacent to sensitive habitats which are necessary to allow for periodic, seasonal, or ecological changes, including the impacts of climate change, which could affect the boundaries of sensitive habitats.

1.15 Definition of Climate Change

Define climate change as a term to imply a significant change from one climatic condition to another, including natural changes in climate.

1.16 Definition of Productive Uses of Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Define productive use as any activity involving the use, removal or alteration of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources from their natural environment for human use or economic purposes.

1.17 Definition of Economically Valuable Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Define economically valuable vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources as those resources which are important to the economy because they:

1. Provide income, employment or tax benefits accruing to the landowner or operator;
2. Support experimental or research and development activities which hold future commercial potential;
3. Are essential to the continuance of other economic activity;
4. Are significant components of the scenic quality and uniqueness of San Mateo County which add to the value of property or attract visitors.

1.18 Definition of Incompatible Vegetation, Fish and Wildlife

Define incompatible vegetation, fish and wildlife as any plant, fish, or animal, or concentration of plants or animals which are found to be harmful to the surrounding environment or pose a threat to public health, safety and welfare.

1.19 Definition of Development

Define development as the construction, reconstruction, conversion, relocation or enlargement of any structure; the division of a parcel of land into two or more parcels; any mining, excavation, landfill or land disturbance including grading; and changes in land uses.

DESIGNATIONS

1.20 Designation of Sensitive Habitats

Designate as sensitive habitats those areas which meet the definition of sensitive habitats. Recognize the Sensitive Habitats Map (dated December 1984) or subsequent updates or refinements as indicative of the distribution of sensitive habitats within San Mateo County, based upon the best and most current information available.

GENERAL POLICIES

1.21 Importance of Sensitive Habitats

Consider areas designated as sensitive habitats as a priority resource requiring protection.

1.22 Importance of Economically Valuable Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Consider Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources which are economically valuable as a priority resource to be enhanced, utilized, managed and maintained for the needs of present and future generations.

REGULATION OF DEVELOPMENT

1.23 Regulate Development to Protect Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

- a. Regulate land uses and development activities to prevent, and if infeasible mitigate to the extent possible, significant adverse impacts on vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.

- b. Place a priority on the managed use and protection of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources in rural areas of the County.

1.24 Regulate Location, Density and Design of Development to Protect Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Regulate the location, density and design of development to minimize significant adverse impacts and encourage enhancement of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

1.25 Protect Vegetative Resources

Ensure that development will: (1) minimize the removal of vegetative resources and/or; (2) protect vegetation which enhances microclimate, stabilizes slopes or reduces surface water runoff, erosion or sedimentation; and/or (3) protect historic and scenic trees.

1.26 Protect Water Resources

Ensure that development will: (1) minimize the alteration of natural water bodies, (2) maintain adequate stream flows and water quality for vegetative, fish and wildlife habitats; (3) maintain and improve, if possible, the quality of groundwater basins and recharge areas; and (4) prevent to the greatest extent possible the depletion of groundwater resources.

1.27 Protect Fish and Wildlife Resources

Ensure that development will minimize the disruption of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

SENSITIVE HABITATS

1.28 Regulate Development to Protect Sensitive Habitats

Regulate land uses and development activities within and adjacent to sensitive habitats in order to protect critical vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources; protect rare, endangered, and unique plants and animals from reduction in their range or degradation of their environment; and protect and maintain the biological productivity of important plant and animal habitats.

1.29 Establish Buffer Zones

- a. Establish necessary buffer zones adjacent to sensitive habitats which include areas that directly affect the natural conditions in the habitats and

areas expected to experience changing vulnerabilities due to impacts of climate change.

- b. As part of Countywide efforts to foster resilience and adapt to impacts of climate changes, establish wildlife corridors in appropriate locations to maintain a functional network of connected wildlands, to support native biodiversity, and to encourage movement of wildlife species.

1.30 Uses Permitted in Sensitive Habitats

Within sensitive habitats, permit only those land uses and development activities that are compatible with the protection of sensitive habitats, such as fish and wildlife management activities, nature education and research, trails and scenic overlooks and, at a minimum level, necessary public service and private infrastructure.

1.31 Uses Permitted in Buffer Zones

Within buffer zones adjacent to sensitive habitats, permit the following land uses and development activities: (1) land uses and activities which are compatible with the protection of sensitive habitats, such as fish and wildlife management activities, nature education and research, trails and scenic overlooks, and at a minimum level, necessary public and private infrastructure; (2) land uses which are compatible with the surrounding land uses and will mitigate their impact by enhancing or replacing sensitive habitats; and (3) if no feasible alternative exists, land uses which are compatible with the surrounding land uses.

1.32 Regulate the Location, Siting and Design of Development in Sensitive Habitats

Regulate the location, siting and design of development in sensitive habitats and buffer zones to minimize to the greatest extent possible adverse impacts, and enhance positive impacts.

1.33 Performance Criteria and Development Standards

Establish performance criteria and development standards for development permitted within sensitive habitats and buffer zones, to prevent and if infeasible mitigate to the extent possible significant negative impacts, and to enhance positive impacts.

PRODUCTIVE USES

1.34 Regulate Productive Uses of Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Regulate resource productive uses which are subject to local control in order to prevent and if infeasible mitigate to the extent possible significant adverse

impacts on vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources and to maintain and enhance the (1) productivity of forests and other vegetative resources; (2) productive capacity and quality of groundwater basins and recharge areas, streams, reservoirs, and other water bodies; (3) productivity of fisheries and other fish and wildlife resources; and (4) the recreational value and aesthetic value of these areas.

1.35 Protect Productive Uses of Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Regulate development in order to protect and promote the managed use of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.

1.36 Protect the Productive Use of Timber Resources

Ensure that land uses and development within timber harvesting areas will not significantly detract from or inhibit the use of the property for the growing and harvesting of timber.

1.37 Protect the Productive Use of Water Resources

Ensure that land uses and development on or near water resources will not impair the quality or productive capacity of these resources.

1.38 Encourage Aquaculture

Encourage the development of aquacultural uses in a manner which minimizes adverse environmental impacts on surrounding vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources and sensitive habitats.

CONTROL OF INCOMPATIBLE VEGETATIVE, FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

1.39 Control Incompatible Vegetation, Fish and Wildlife

Encourage and support the control of vegetation, fish and wildlife resources which are harmful to the surrounding environment or pose a threat to public health, safety and welfare.

1.40 Minimize Adverse Impacts of Programs Controlling Incompatible Vegetation, and Fish and Wildlife

Minimize the negative impacts and risks of programs controlling incompatible vegetation, fish and wildlife.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COORDINATION

1.41 Encourage Coordinated, Countywide Management of Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources

Encourage all Federal, State, regional, County, and city agencies with jurisdiction in San Mateo County to cooperate and coordinate the management and protection of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.

ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF SENSITIVE HABITATS

1.42 Encourage Public Agencies and Private Groups to Acquire Significant Sensitive Habitats

Encourage public agencies and private groups to acquire and manage significant sensitive habitats because of the (1) biological and scientific significance of the habitat, (2) degree of endangerment from development or other activities, and (3) accessibility for educational and scientific uses and vulnerability to overuse.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF THE COUNTY

1.43 Develop a Sensitive Habitat Information Base

Develop and maintain clear, detailed and comprehensive maps and other information identifying sensitive habitats in the unincorporated area of San Mateo County.

1.44 Develop Standard Mitigation Measures

Develop mitigation measures which could be the basis for measures recommended to protect sensitive habitats, vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources and their productive uses from development activities in the County.

1.45 Improvement of Damaged Resources

Encourage programs which repair and/or enhance damaged vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources and sensitive habitats, with the goal of returning them to their natural condition.

1.46 Consolidate Regulations Protecting Sensitive Habitats in Rural Areas

- a. Consolidate existing performance criteria and development standards to regulate all development in sensitive habitats in rural areas.

- b. Consider using the consolidated regulations as an overlay zoning district.

1.47 Develop Performance Criteria and Development Standards for Sensitive Habitats in Urban Areas

- a. Develop a set of performance criteria and development standards to protect sensitive habitats in urban areas.
- b. Consider using the regulations as an overlay zoning district.

1.48 Develop Guidelines for Vegetation and Debris Control in Riparian Corridors

Develop guidelines for vegetation and debris control in riparian corridors. Such guidelines should set forth clear direction on procedures to: (1) facilitate the abatement of avoidable flood hazards and (2) minimize adverse impacts on riparian communities.

1.49 Encourage the Management of Riparian Corridors

Encourage and, to the maximum extent feasible, reward the efforts of those responsible for managing riparian corridors in a manner that is consistent with County and State guidelines.

ROLE OF OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES

1.50 Support Resource Management Efforts of Other Agencies

Recognize, encourage and cooperate with the efforts of public agencies and private groups which are consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of this chapter.

1.51 Develop Programs to Adapt to the Impacts of Climate Change

- a. Integrate advances in research of the impact of climate change into the assessment of vulnerabilities of sensitive species, sensitive habitats, and vegetative, fish, and wildlife resources.
- b. Protect sensitive habitats and resources from the impacts of climate change.
- c. Coordinate with other local, State, and national agencies to understand and respond to new, exacerbated, or changing vulnerabilities that result from the impacts of climate change.