

**Napa County Parks
and Open Space
Advisory Committee**



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November 29, 2004

Napa County Board of Supervisors
Honorable Chair Luce
1195 Third Street Room 310
Napa, CA 94559

Re: Interim Report


Dear Honorable Chair Luce:

Enclosed you will find our interim report. We are making recommendations regarding

- * the distribution of \$293,312 in Proposition 40 funds,
- * approval of a Napa County specific financial feasibility study for a parks and open space district, to be conducted gratis by the Trust for Public Land,
- * expansion of our mandate and extension of our term through 2006, and
- * creating a full time parks and open space professional-level position, with appropriate administrative support.

Three of our members, John Hoffnagle, Cheryl Harris, and myself, will be available to present the report to you on December 7, 2004 and to answer any questions. We look forward to discussing our work with you.

Sincerely,

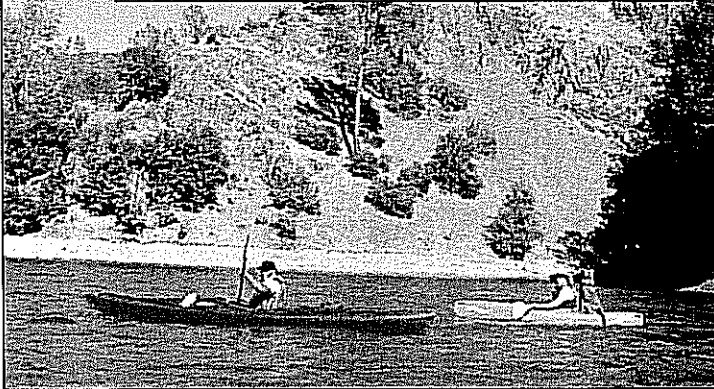
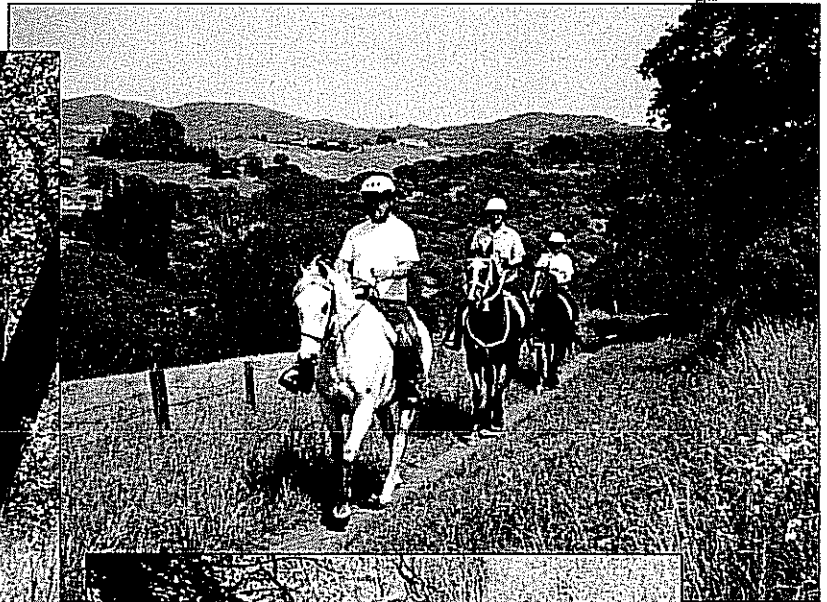

Carol Kunze
Vice-chair

cc: Board of Supervisors



Napa County Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee

**Interim Report to the Board of Supervisors
December 7, 2004**



**NAPA COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
INTERIM REPORT TO THE NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

The Need for Parks and Open Space

Napa County has long cherished its rural character and has served as a leader in the regulatory protection of its agricultural and watershed lands. From the creation of the Agricultural Preserve in 1968 to the present day, Napa County has been a leader in the protection of agriculture and by virtue of that protection, watersheds and open space.

Almost as notable, however, is Napa County's lack of regional parks and publicly accessible open space for enjoying nature and pursuing recreational opportunities. Napa is one of only three counties in California that has no county parks department and is the only county in the Bay Area with no open space district. According to the Bay Area Open Space Council, all of our neighboring Bay Area counties dedicate a wide range of funding to regional parks for their local residents to enjoy.

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA
DEDICATED PARKS FUNDING**

Alameda County	\$47,653,000
Contra Costa County	31,316,000
Marin County	4,081,000
Napa County	- 0 -
San Francisco County	23,775,000
Santa Clara County	37,359,000
Solano County	1,067,000
Sonoma County	4,509,000

Napa County demographics have changed dramatically during the last 30 years from a rural county population base to a population that is predominately located in urban areas. We have chosen to concentrate residential growth within our cities as a means of protecting our agriculture lifestyle and rural character. The resulting increasing density in our cities needs to be supported and relieved by increased opportunities to access public land outside our urban centers.

County parks and open space could add substantially to the quality of life for Napa residents by creating opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in solitude or with friends and family, to be in contact with nature, and to engage in hiking, horseback riding, biking and paddling. There is, however, a greater benefit to the entire community. The more access residents have to our natural resources, the greater their interest in protecting our wild lands, habitat, forested lands, watersheds and open spaces. As a smaller and smaller percentage of our population is actively engaged in agriculture, it becomes more and more important that residents have opportunities to access and enjoy public lands in a manner that will foster appreciation and respect for our natural resources.

This appreciation is even more vital to Napa County because the continued protection of our agricultural lands depends upon succeeding generations valuing the natural resources that make Napa special and upon which our agricultural heritage depends.

Formation of the Advisory Committee:

The Napa County Board of Supervisors formed the Napa County Parks and Open Space Committee in August, 2003 with a twofold purpose regarding parks and open space. The Committee was appointed to serve from November 2003 through December 2005 and asked to report back to the Board of Supervisors by December 31, 2004 with a specific set of recommendations on:

- distribution of \$1,200,000 in State Park Bond Act of 2002 (Prop 40) funds allocated on a per capital basis to Napa County, and
- the structure and organization of a park/open space agency.

Work of the Advisory Committee:

The Advisory Committee worked diligently throughout its first year to gather information, conduct research, interview and solicit feedback from the community at large. In addition to monthly Advisory Committee meetings, a working retreat and occasional special meetings, four working groups were formed to accomplish the following:

1. Needs Assessment

This work group sought input by holding public hearings in Napa and St. Helena in April, 2003. Information and guidance was also sought in American Canyon through its existing City Parks and Recreation Commission. Published notices and written invitations to interested organizations and agencies to attend the hearings also encouraged responses from the public at large via the Internet and through the mail to an informal survey. Hikers, cyclists, equestrians, bird watchers and naturalists, as well as representatives of the various organized sports groups, attended the hearings or otherwise provided input.

The verbal response at the public hearings, as well as the survey results demonstrated that there is substantial need in the unincorporated area of Napa County for more opportunities for walking and hiking trails (mirroring the results of a recent State of California parks survey), while recognizing the need for habitat and open space protection and conservation. People want to get out into the natural world to exercise and enjoy nature, but opportunities within the unincorporated area of Napa County are extremely limited. There was strong support for a parks and open space entity to own and manage publicly accessible land.

2. Inventory of Public Lands

This group compiled an inventory of public lands within Napa County, including holdings by Federal, State, and County agencies and municipalities, as well as non-profits such as The Land Trust of Napa County. Included in the inventory is a summary description of the current use of the site, its acreage, state of development and accessibility. This inventory may be found under the Department of Public Works on the Napa County website (www.co.napa.ca.us). Review of the inventory suggests that more than 40,000 acres of public land already owned by public agencies in Napa County are not readily available for recreational use due in part to lack of management resources. These areas are either inaccessible (fenced, or otherwise "off-limits") or undeveloped (no parking, developed trails, or restroom facilities) and their existence is generally by the public!

3. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure group spent a great deal of effort contacting county parks departments and open space districts. Our primary resource was Darla Guenzler of the Bay Area Open Space Council who utilized existing inventory information regarding parks and open space agencies, primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition, the group contacted all of the entities in Napa County (Cities of Napa, St. Helena, American Canyon, Calistoga, and Town of Yountville) to obtain the park, recreation and/or open space element of their General Plans in order to examine their approach to parks and open space within these communities.

After its initial work, the learning process was expanded to the entire Committee. On July 8, 2004, the Advisory Committee met with David Hansen of the Marin County Open Space District, Bob Doyle of the East Bay Regional Parks District and Sandy Elles of the Napa County Farm Bureau. Sandy was the mayor of Cotati in 1989 when the residents of Sonoma County enacted a 20 year ¼ percent sales tax and created the Sonoma County Agricultural Land and Open Space District. On August 5, a second panel discussion was held with Lisa Kilough of the Santa Clara County Parks Department and Craig Britton on the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District. The panels freely discussed the benefits of creating an Open Space District, which include dedicated funding, staffing and governance, when compared to creating a county parks department, and responded to numerous questions.

Following intensive discussions in the work group and full Committee meetings, including a half day retreat on May 8 devoted to exploring our thoughts and goals for a Napa County parks and open space agency, the following was agreed. The direction of such an agency should be to benefit all Napa County residents of every age and socio economic status, with the priority being the development of more trails and greater access to public lands, while conserving and protecting wildlife habitat. Therefore, the goal of the new entity should be to provide passive recreational opportunities throughout the county, leaving the development and maintenance of more active recreation and sports facilities primarily to each individual city, as was recommended in *Napa County's Park and Recreation Plan* of 1976. In addition, following consultation of those involved in both departments and districts, it was agreed that a *parks and open space district* would best meet the needs of Napa County residents for recreational opportunities and the interest in protecting open spaces.

4. Distribution of Proposition 40 Funding

A fourth group developed a procedure for recommending distribution of the County's \$1.2 million share of the Proposition 40 Per Capita Grant Program. As a starting point, the Committee decided to recommend distribution of the first 25% of the funds (\$300,000) for projects in urbanized areas, according to the cities own priorities. The Committee intends to recommend distribution of the remaining funds (\$906,688) on projects which have unincorporated area or regional significance.

An application form was developed and provided to interested organizations, agencies and cities. With the exception of the town of Yountville, applications were received from organizations or agencies in all of the cities within Napa County.

A second subgroup reviewed and discussed the nine applications that were received. The subgroup's recommendation to fully or partially fund six of the requests was adopted and accordingly, the Committee hereby recommends that \$293,312 be distributed for projects in urbanized areas as indicated in the charts below.

RECOMMENDED DISTRIBUTION				
Submitted by	Project	Amount requested	Total Project Cost	Amount Recommended
Skyline Park Citizen's Association	Bridges	18,312	36,623	18,312
City of St. Helena Community Pool	New pool	25,000	2,709,894	25,000
City of American Canyon	Public access to view marsh habitat	70,000	201,000	70,000
City of St. Helena	City park play equipment	35,000	615,000	35,000
Napa Youth Sports Council	Ball fields at Silverado Middle School	200,000	1,900,000	25,000
City of Calistoga	Stabilizing riverbank for bike path bridge	20,000	55,400	20,000
SUBTOTAL		368,312		193,312
City of Napa	*	100,000		+ 100,000
TOTAL				293,312

REQUESTS & RECOMMENDATIONS BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA		
City	Requested	Recommended
Napa**	*323,312	*143,312
American Canyon	70,000	70,000
St Helena	125,000	60,000
Calistoga	40,000	20,000

* Includes \$100,000 committed to the City of Napa as part of the City-County housing agreement.

** Includes Skyline Park, which is outside city limits.

Financial Feasibility Study by Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization whose purpose is the conservation of "land for people". TPL has a Conservation Finance division through which they provide technical information and assistance to local communities. During the November 2002 election, for example, they were involved in thirty-eight local ballot measures related to parks and open space across the country. Thirty of these passed and will generate upwards of \$2.2 billion for parks and land conservation efforts.

TPL has offered, upon Napa County's request, to provide a basic feasibility study of potential parks and open space financing, at no cost to the county. The study will review the county's fiscal capacity, recent funding measures and any other measures in the pipeline, as well as voter and election history. It will provide examples of the level of funding that alternative mechanisms might generate. Based on the results of this demographic, fiscal, legal and election research, TPL's expert staff will help us determine the optimal financing mechanism (e.g., sales tax, general obligation bond, benefit assessment, parcel tax). In short, it will conduct a feasibility study of the revenue side of the equation for creating and maintaining a regional park system. The Advisory Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors request that TPL undertake this fiscal analysis of Napa County.

Completing our Work

In order to assist us in finishing the details of a parks and open space district proposal, and to move the county toward development of such a district while we do so, the Committee recommends that a full time staff position be created and the mandate of the Committee expanded.

Full time staff position. During the past 15 years, specifically since 1990 and the passage of Proposition 70, Napa County residents have seen funds from successive bond acts go disproportionately to counties that have parks and open space agencies and the professional capability to seek funds. The recent approval of an increase in Napa County's transient occupancy tax provides additional funds to the General Fund that the Board can use for any purpose. This increase in General Fund revenue may provide an excellent opportunity to fund a full-time position to assist in the development and creation of a parks and open space district.

Modest funding that would support creation of a full time professional staff position would assist the Advisory Committee in completing its work and build technical expertise and momentum toward creation of a parks and open space district. Additionally, such a position would allow the county to devote attention to competitive state bond funding, and foundation and grant programs to begin protection of important lands within Napa County. The creation of a full-time parks and open space position would easily accrue net benefits in terms of Napa County receiving competitive funds which would exceed the cost of the position.

The Committee therefore recommends that a full-time professional-level position be created, with appropriate administrative support, dedicated to working on parks and open space issues, including assisting the Advisory Committee to complete its tasks and driving the process to create a parks and open space district to its successful conclusion.

Expanded mandate. Our introduction emphasized that parks and open space are not only a quality of life issue, but vital to ensuring the continued appreciation of our natural resources that is at the heart of our agricultural preserve and rural character.

With this heightened importance in mind, the Advisory Committee recommends that now that the initial data gathering has been completed, our mandate be expanded by the Board to enable us to become engaged in park and open space issues now, and eventually district implementation aspects. In so doing, the Committee will be better placed to complete the work needed to finalize our recommendation and mount a campaign that will ultimately lead to a successful parks and open space district ballot measure.

Toward that end we ask the Board of Supervisors to:

1. Expand the mandate of the Advisory Committee to include:
 - a. development of the details of a District and its formation, including its financing plan;
 - b. development of a conceptual master plan for parks and open space to provide the community with some idea of the benefits and opportunities that a parks and open space district would afford;
 - c. following development of the conceptual plan, recommendation for the distribution of the remaining Prop 40 Napa County per capita allocation;
 - d. pursuit of further grant opportunities with matching revenue, as appropriate;
 - e. provision of input to the Board of Supervisors on parks and open space issues relating to federal, state and local areas of regional recreational interest, including but not limited to, Lake Berryessa, Skyline Park, Bothe-Napa State Park, South Wetlands Opportunity Area, and regional trail organizations such as the SF Bay Trail and the SF Bay Area Ridge Trail;
 - f. community outreach to generate support for a parks and open space district; and
 - g. provision of input on appropriate elements of the General Plan affecting recreational opportunities, parks and open space; and
2. Extend the life of the Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee to the end of 2006.

Conclusion

While the Advisory Committee has made great initial strides, we are even more excited about the potential that we have in the near future to accomplish what has been a dream for Napaans over many decades – the creation of a parks and open space district. The Advisory Committee is enthusiastic about moving toward the creation of such a district during the next 24 months and is very committed to making this a reality. We ask for the Board of Supervisor's support and financial commitment to bring this exciting potential to fruition. Thank you once again for your wisdom in creating this opportunity and your ongoing and future support for the successful creation of this district.