

Subject: GVPAC Meeting Summary of December 17, 2008

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Hello and Happy New Year!

The following summarizes the general issues discussed during the last GVPAC meeting.

Meeting Notes (2008-12-17):

1. Next Meeting:
 - a. *Date:* January 21, 2009
 - b. *Location:* Planning Commission Hearing Room.
 - c. *Agenda:* Public Services and Facilities
 - i. Fire: Urban and Wildfires
 - ii. Law Enforcement
 - iii. Schools
 - iv. Other Facilities
2. GVPAC Van Tour: The tour of Goleta Valley has been scheduled for January 24. We will meet at 9:00 am at the Goleta Valley Coffee Company (144 S. Turnpike Road, Goleta. Turnpike Shopping Center). A map of the tour is available at the County website:
<http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/goleta/documents/GCP/Van%20Tour/Guidebook.pdf>
The public is welcome to join us. The County will be providing transportation or you can follow the convoy on your own.
3. Main Overview. The primary purpose of this meeting was to learn about specifics of the Environmental Resources and Constraints Super Element of the 1993 Goleta Community Plan (GCP). In particular we reviewed:
 - a. *Biological Resources:* Resources are species and ecological communities of particular value as defined by Federal or State Law.
 - i. Unique, endangered, threatened species, or species of local concern.
 - ii. Examples relevant to Eastern Goleta Valley include:
Southern Tarplant (rare, Federal protection, marshy areas); Belding Savannah Sparrow (Goleta Beach/Slough), Western Snowy Plover (use to nest at Goleta Beach), Burrowing Owl (Federally protected and listed by State, More Mesa), White-tailed Kite (More Mesa), Steelhead Trout (Federal and State protection, Goleta Slough), and others. Monarch Butterfly is of local concern.
 - iii. Ecosystems provide habitats for sensitive species and require protection: Coastal saltmarsh, bluffs, grasslands, vernal pools, streams, scrub and chaparral, including Goleta Slough, More Mesa, Campus Point, More Mesa, San Jose Creek and others.
 - iv. Biological resources need protection from new and existing developments, pollution, human use, and other invasive species. Examples include erosion due to human use, off-road vehicles, trash, Eucalyptus, iceplant, quagga mussel, etc...
 - v. Biological resources can be protected through avoidance, mitigation, restoration, low-impact development, and the use of good ecological and watershed planning principles in land-use planning.
 - b. *Ecological and Watershed Land-Use Planning:* Different ecosystems provide different services to human populations: Food, fiber, water, recreation, flood regulation, timber, biofuels, medicine, etc... It is important to recognize and protect these services.
 - i. Ecology ties together hydrology, geology, habitat, resource usage and artificial and natural environments. The health of an ecosystem directly relates to the health of the species (including humans) that live in that ecosystem.
 - ii. A watershed is an ecosystem. A healthy watershed is important for water quality, habitat, ecology, flooding, drainage, erosion, aesthetics and recreation.

- c. *Ecological Planning*: Need to understand the interconnection between different components of the ecosystem: changes in one spurs changes in others.
 - i. Ecological planning guidelines can be applied to any land-use decision:
 - Understand impacts of local decisions in a regional context
 - Plan for long-term change
 - Preserve rare landscape elements/species
 - Avoid land-use that depletes biological resources
 - Retain large contiguous/connected areas
 - Minimize introduction/spread of nonnative species
 - Avoid/Compensate for effects of development on ecological processes
 - ii. Conservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan identifies:
 - A number of ecosystems, species and habitats in Goleta Valley
 - Requires that preserves be as large as possible to minimize extinction of particular species
 - Minimizes the “edge” of an area (avoid long, narrow preserves)
 - Clusters preserves, increasing likelihood of re-colonization from neighboring preserves
 - Preserves should be surrounded by buffer zones
 - iii. GCP recognizes:
 - Biologic interdependence
 - Habitant connectivity and wildlife corridors
 - Large, connected, bio-diverse habitat areas
 - Dependence of water quality, noise, air quality, geology on habitat health
 - iv. GCP policies/standards include:
 - General Environmentally-Sensitive Habitats (ESH) and Riparian Corridor (RC) policies
 - Specific habitat protection policies for native woodlands, Monarch Butterfly habitats, riparian woodlands/corridors, native grasslands, etc...
 - v. Species/Habitats are protected in GCP and Coastal Land-Use Plan through:
 - Overlays that designate ESH and RC areas
 - Policies/Development standards (like buffers)

4. Public Comment:

- a. *Protect our Watersheds*: Brian Trautwein works for the Environmental Defense Center and stressed the importance of maintaining the health of Goleta Valley watersheds. He noted that Goleta Valley is a biological diversity hotspot. Stressed that impervious pavement is highly damaging, increases flood hazards, erosion, and increases non-point source water pollution, decreases ground-water recharge. Noticed increased grading, which damages watersheds downstream. Non-native plants invade mountains due to grading. He asked that we focus on redevelopment while preserving agricultural land. Maintained that current water use is causing species extinction and that conservation is necessary. He suggested that high efficiency washers should be required. Stated that the local Coastal Plan is stronger than GCP and should be adopted. He believes that the Conservation Element should be updated. He requested that the GVPAC replace “should” language with “shall.” He mentioned that Plovers are still at Goleta Beach, but no longer nest there. He believes that permanent nesting grounds for Plovers at Goleta Beach can be recovered through proper policies and standards.

5. Committee Discussion:

- a. Can we make a paradigm change in the way we incorporate watershed planning into the updated community plan?
- b. What is the balance between fire hazard prevention and watershed protection and improvement?
- c. What is a “cumulative” effect? How do we definite it?
- d. Should the word “reasonable” be removed from use? It seems very open-ended. Can we further define what “reasonable” is?
- e. Balance between redevelopment and density/height.
- f. An actual case study would be useful to demonstrate the planning process and its impact on biological resources.
- g. Some areas are inefficiently utilized. How can we better utilize areas of existing development?

For additional information, the official minutes, and the meeting audio, please see the county website:

<http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/goleta/gvpac.php>

Once again let me know if you do not wish to receive these e-mails, and feel free to forward them to others.

Thank you!

-Kenan (Kenan.Ezal@cox.net)

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