

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose

Open space land is a limited and valuable resource which must be conserved wherever economically and physically possible. The purpose of the Open Space Element is to promote the preservation of natural and scenic open space land which contributes to the economy, general welfare, and quality of life of the residents of Kings County.

Seven classifications of open space are used in the General Plan: agricultural resources, scenic resources, outdoor recreation, historic and archeological resources, community separators, areas for future urban expansion, and areas affording access to light and air.

### B. Consistency with Other Elements

The Open Space Element is coordinated with the Land Use and Resource Conservation Elements, which reinforce and are consistent with the preservation of open space land.

### C. Scope and Organization

The Open Space Element includes policies for the preservation of open space land. It also includes maps identifying designated open space areas which consist primarily of agriculturally zoned lands, including those protected from urbanization under the Williamson Act; scenic areas; community separator areas; recreation areas; and historical sites.

## II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

The agricultural land use categories described in the Land Use Element are an important economic and visual resource for Kings County. The preservation of agricultural land in large open tracts provides jobs and income, food, and fiber. Land Use Element policies for maintaining open

agricultural land and reducing conflicts between agricultural and nonagricultural uses help assure a continued strong agricultural presence in this county.

<b>GOAL 22:</b> Preserve agricultural land as open space.
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**Objective 22.1:** Protect agricultural land as an important component of the Kings County economy.

**Policy 22a:** Pursuant to the Land Use Element, preserve agricultural land in open and economically sized parcels for farming or widely dispersed agricultural processing facilities unless specifically designated for other uses.

**Policy 22b:** Maintain all agricultural land as open space when not necessary for other uses which promote the economy, public welfare, or quality of life for Kings County residents.

**Policy 22c:** In order to limit the potential effect of jet aircraft noise on nearby land uses, and to ensure the preservation of large and sparsely developed parcels for public safety purposes, designate the area within three miles of the Lemoore Naval Air Station for exclusive agricultural use, at a minimum parcel size of 40 acres.

## III. SCENIC RESOURCES

The scenic resources of Kings County reflect the local climate, topography, land use, and lifestyle. The landscape consists primarily of cultivated land including orchards, pasture and grazing land, vineyards, and great expanses of cropland. Interspersed among the agricultural acreage are natural accents of rivers, hills, and other open spaces, and manmade features including urban and rural communities and parks.

The County's single most scenic natural asset is the Kings River, which forms part of the county's northern border. Other local scenic areas include the Coast Ranges to the southwest, with the interesting formations of the Chalk Buttes-Reef Ridge portion of the Kreyenhagen Hills, the Pyramid Hills, Cottonwood Pass, and Sunflower Valley.

## A. Scenic Highways

Many residents of Kings County value the variety and subtle beauty of the county as viewed from rural roadways, along which it is possible to travel from urban centers to orchards, open fields, or rolling hills. Preserving these landscapes is important to the character of the county.

The Kings County portion of the scenic highways map published by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) shows a portion of State Highway 41, commencing at its intersection with State Highway 33 and proceeding to the southern county line, where it continues into San Luis Obispo County, as eligible for designation as a scenic highway. Official designation of state scenic highways is accomplished through local request to Caltrans' Transportation Advisory Committee, which forwards its recommended designations to the department director for action.

Figure 12 indicates state highways and county roads which afford especially scenic views.

<b>GOAL 23:</b> Ensure that future land uses are compatible with the preservation of scenic highways.
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**Objective 23.1:** Protect and enhance those roadways which cross scenic areas or serve as scenic entranceways to cities and communities.

INSERT FIGURE 12  
SCENIC AREAS

**Policy 23a:** Secure designation of State Highway 41, from State Highway 33 south to the Kern County line, as an official state scenic highway. The County may pursue similar state status for other scenic corridors.

**Policy 23b:** Designate the route for a self-guided "Spring Blossom Tour" through orchards in the northern part of the county, and a "Valley Oak Tour" in the vicinity of the Kings River. Cooperate with local Chambers of Commerce, the County Agricultural Commissioner, County Parks Department, the local University of California Agricultural Extension office, the California Native Plant Society, and other interested parties in publicizing these tour routes.

**Objective 23.2:** Preserve roadside landscapes which have high visual quality and contribute to the local environment.

**Policy 23c:** Assure that overhead utility lines located along scenic routes are placed underground whenever feasible.

**Policy 23d:** Design public works projects to minimize tree damage and removal along scenic corridors.

## **B. Community Boundaries**

In order to maintain the identity of communities, specific boundaries or open space corridors are designated. Such open space may not be particularly scenic, but it can provide visual relief from continuous urbanization and can serve as an open border area. Community boundaries are well worth preserving for their ability to maintain a community's visual and geographic identity.

Designating community boundaries also helps cities and special districts to coordinate their ability to

provide water and sewer services, thereby keeping their costs down by avoiding duplication of services. This is a worthwhile goal, since development located at the outer edges of communities, beyond the range of sewer and water lines or in excess of system capacity, presents severe service delivery problems.

Figure 13 shows community separator areas, including agricultural lands, open space areas, and community boundaries.

Insert Figure 13  
COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

**GOAL 24:** Preserve the visual identities of cities and communities by maintaining open space areas and boundary lines between them.

**Objective 24.1:** Preserve open space, maintain rural character, and prohibit development in community separator areas.

**Policy 24a:** Use zoning to maintain open space around the cities.

## 1. Hanford/Armona

**Policy 24b:** Control growth and open space between the communities of Armona and Hanford by maintaining the following boundary line between them:

Between Lacey Boulevard and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, the boundary line between the Hanford and Armona Planning Areas runs approximately one eighth of a mile east of 13th Avenue; at the Southern Pacific railroad tracks the line runs west to the Last Chance Ditch; at the Last Chance Ditch the line runs south along the canal to the easterly extension of Hood Avenue, as shown in Figure 13.

At the Hood Avenue alignment the boundary line runs west to 13th Avenue where the line splits and runs south and west as follows: One line runs west along Hood Avenue to Mussel Slough, then southwest along Mussel Slough to 14th Avenue, then south along 14th Avenue to Houston Avenue. The other line runs south along 13th Avenue to Houston Avenue. The purpose of the split is to surround and protect the Armona Community Services District sewer treatment plant and ponds from encroaching development.

**Policy 24c:** Retain existing land use designations between the communities of Hanford and Armona as follows (see the Land Use Element, Figure 7):

Along both sides of 13th Avenue, from the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks north to Lacey Boulevard, the land is under Williamson Act contracts. The contracts were not protested by the City of Hanford. Therefore, nonagricultural development cannot occur for at least the next ten years, the year 2003. These parcels will retain a "Limited Agriculture" designation as long as Williamson Act restrictions are imposed on the territory.

Along the east side of 13th Avenue, from 13th Avenue to the new Hanford campus of the College of the Sequoias, and from the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks south to Hanford-Armona Road, the land is substantially developed or zoned for large-lot residential and commercial use, and is so designated by the Hanford General Plan. The existing land use designations in this area are retained. The only exception is the area between 13th Avenue and the Last Chance Ditch from the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks south to State Highway 198. This area should be designated for large-lot residential use only (rather than for commercial use), to reflect existing use.

Between 13th Avenue and a line approximately 1200 feet east of the Last Chance Ditch, from State Highway 198 to Hanford-Armona Road, retain the existing Commercial designation.

On the east side of 13th Avenue, from Hanford-Armona Road south to Hood Avenue, the land use designation should be changed to "Rural Residential" to reflect the existing use of several 2-1/2 acre parcels in the vicinity.

Land use designations should be changed southwest of the intersection of Last Chance Ditch and Hanford-Armona Road (near 13th Avenue and Freeway 198) as follows:

Along the north side of the frontage road that runs between 13th Avenue and Mussel Slough, change the land use designation to "Rural Commercial" to stimulate commercial growth at that location.

On either side of 13th Avenue, between Mussel Slough and the Last Chance Ditch, and from the frontage road described in the preceding paragraph south to the Hood Avenue alignment; and along the east side of 13th Avenue, from the frontage road alignment north to Hanford-Armona Road, change to a large-lot residential designation to reflect an ongoing change to more rural residential use in that area.

## 2. Lemoore/Armona

**Objective 24.2:** Preserve agricultural land in community separator areas.

**Policy 24d:** Maintain the existing separation between Lemoore and Armona by preserving the predominantly General Agriculture and Rural Residential uses between 14-1/2 and 17th Avenues.

## IV. OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreational open space, which includes parks and fishing access points, provides pleasure and enjoyment for Kings County residents.

Kings County presently owns and maintains three parks--Burriss, Hickey, and Kingston--which are regionally oriented and located in the northern half of the county apart from urban concentrations (see Figure 14). The County also maintains the Stratford community park, while the Kettleman City and

Armona Community Services Districts maintain parks in each of their communities.

Existing local commercial recreational activities include golf courses, exercise clubs, gun clubs, various forms of racing, and airplane flying. Swimming, boating, fishing, and picnicking are publicly, privately, and commercially available on the Kings River.

### **Goal 25: Maintain the existing County park system.**

**Objective 25.1:** Provide parks in locations that are convenient to urban areas and as near as feasible to the Kings River, in order to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the population.

**Policy 25a:** Apply the "Outdoor Recreation," "Agriculture," or "Public/Quasi-Public" land use designation to County parks.

FIGURE 14  
MAP OF RECREATION AREAS

## V. HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Despite increasing interest in history on the part of the general public in recent years, the preservation of sites of historical or archeological significance can be difficult to achieve. Some sites disappear through neglect while others are deliberately razed. Much of the work of finding and preserving the history of Kings County is being accomplished through the cooperative efforts of private individuals and groups with an interest in the county's history.

There are three sites in Kings County (all in Hanford) which are listed on the National Register

of Historic Places: the Taoist Temple, the old County Courthouse building, and the Carnegie Library building. Kings County also has three officially designated California Historical Landmarks, all located in outlying rural areas: the Mussel Slough Tragedy Site, the Kingston Townsite, and El Adobe de los Robles Rancho. The county also contains a number of sites of local historic significance (see Figure 15 for historic sites in unincorporated areas).

**Goal 26:** Preserve significant historical and archeological sites and structures which represent the ethnic, cultural, and economic groups that have lived and worked in Kings County.

**Objective 26.1:** Promote the rehabilitation or adaptation to new uses of historic sites and structures.

**Policy 26a:** List historic sites and structures designated, or proposed for designation, as County landmarks in specific or area plans or local area development guidelines.

**Policy 26b:** Designate the existing Kings County Museum Advisory Committee, a subcommittee of the Kings County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, or its successor to review proposed development which may affect proposed or designated historic sites or County landmarks.

**Policy 26c:** Refer applications which involve the removal, destruction, or alteration of proposed or designated historic sites or County landmarks to the Kings County Museum Advisory Committee or its successor for recommended mitigation measures.

FIGURE 15  
MAP OF KINGS COUNTY HISTORIC SITES

## VI. ACCESS TO LIGHT AND AIR IN DEVELOPED AREAS

The designation of open space preserves agricultural land, scenic vistas, and natural and cultural resources. It also ensures that residents of

developed areas have access to light and air in order to promote their physical and mental health.

**Goal 27:** Ensure that urban land uses have adequate access to light and air.

**Objective 27.1:** Require that development preserve access to light and air.

**Policy 27a:** Implement yard and building setback requirements through the Zoning Ordinance.

## VII. IMPLEMENTATION

### Open Space Program 1:

With the cities, explore the desirability of open space easements in the fringe areas. Such easements would consist of contractual use restrictions for a specified period, such as five years, for the purpose of timing urban development and preventing discontinuous growth.

### Open Space Program 2:

To ensure the compatibility of uses allowed within the Outdoor Recreation ("O") zone, eliminate those uses permitted without review. Require at least site plan review of all "O" zone uses except agriculture (crops, trees, and vines).

### Open Space Program 3:

Coordinate open space considerations into the Regional Biodiversity Study identified in Resource Conservation Program 6.