

Planning Commission Agenda Item 2 Comment April 9, 2024

Susan Kirks [REDACTED]

Mon 4/8/2024 9:16 PM

To: Orozco, Uriel <uorozco@cityofpetaluma.org>

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.

Slide 28 - Key Constraints

Wildlife Corridors/Habitat

Dear Commissioners,

During the GPAC meetings, I have offered to share Petaluma Valley Wildlife Corridors information. I have reached out to the GP Administrator. No one has ever indicated an interest in the factual and experiential based information that is available for our local wildlife corridors mapping.

I am completing a 3-part corridor series for Sonoma and Marin Counties. Petaluma Valley is part 1. It is completed in rough draft, so the information about the 6 wildlife corridors in Petaluma Valley is available.

Ignoring the fact that local wildlife corridors in Petaluma Valley exist will result in inaccurate/insufficient information about the Natural Environment and Land Use sections of the General Plan Update.

Earlier in the General Plan Update process, the General Plan consultants incorrectly claimed that Petaluma is adjacent to the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor and that's the corridor in our area. This is 100% inaccurate. The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor is a small corridor in southeast Sonoma County that extends northward to north Sonoma County and the Mayacamas Mountains.

Petaluma Valley is a broader and more significant connecting location for wildlife movement, not the Sonoma Valley. Petaluma Valley's local wildlife corridor mapping relates to a larger segment of regional Critical Linkages named the Blue Ridge-Marine Coast segment. Often, an incorrect claim is made that Sonoma Valley's Wildlife Corridor connects to Blue-Ridge Marine Coast all the way to the Marin County coast (Pt. Reyes National Seashore). This is incorrect.

In fact, the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor connects to a small segment of Blue Ridge-Marine Coast, and Petaluma Valley is the connector to Marin County and to the Marin County coast - not Sonoma Valley.

Locally, 6 wildlife corridors that exist in Petaluma Valley reflect the significance of our Petaluma geographic location - with local wildlife movement areas and extended corridors that connect:

- West Petaluma to Valley Ford to Bodega Bay to the Sonoma County coast
- West Petaluma to Nicasio to Pt. Reyes National Seashore
- Southwest Petaluma to Marin County southward
- South Petaluma to southeast Petaluma to Sonoma Valley
- West Petaluma to northwest Petaluma to Cotati and Sebastopol
- East Petaluma to Sonoma Valley southward and to Penngrove northward

My question to you as a Planning Commission, why wouldn't we require accurate local information, based on observed and documented wildlife movement patterns over a period of 24 years to be included in Petaluma's General Plan update?

At some point, if anyone is interested in our actual Environment in Petaluma, the locally based information needs to be requested and included in the Petaluma General Plan Update.

As for habitat, there is much more information available about local habitat types and areas as base mapping with the wildlife corridor mapping overlaid.

In Petaluma, we have American Badger, a land-based, fossorial mammal, a special status species, with the only conserved open space land in California specifically for badgers. The Paula Lane open space land is centrally located in one of the above-described wildlife corridors. This land has been severely damaged by the City of Petaluma, and efforts continue to be dedicated for a property title transfer away from the City, with expert conservationists returning to restore habitat and assure safety for the adult female badger there in her natal territory. At some point, someone needs to care about the misguided actions, the severe habitat damage, and the benefit to our Environment and our wildlife of a change in circumstances. It is clear that only politics and disinterest are most prevalent. Our Environment is much more multidimensional than is the Petaluma norm of tree planting and sheet mulching to remove lawns for water conservation as the two "mainstays" for environmental actions in Petaluma.

It cannot be denied, and is fact, that over 24 years, I, along with the nonprofit Paula Lane Action Network and multiple observers and reporters, have literally observed and documented movement patterns in Sonoma County for American Badger, a terrestrial mammal, along with other terrestrial mammals (such as mountain lions). The information is now available for optimal land use decisions to ensure conservation of corridors,

We can't just select California based data or regional mapping data for the Petaluma General Plan Update. Well, "we" can, except such information would be inaccurate and insufficient. And it is important information for us to have and include - locally. We need to respect the Environment and the species who, in a climate crisis no less, are endeavoring to survive and trying to move to support biodiversity of species.

At some point, I continue to be hopeful that someone, a Commissioner, an elected official, a staff member who becomes enlightened, will direct the General Plan consultant and staff team to reach out to obtain and understand our local information - for the Petaluma General Plan Update.

There is such an emphasis on the river and riparian corridors, which are relevant and part of the Natural Environment in Petaluma. But, we often ignore and certainly are uninformed about terrestrial habitat (LAND) and movement areas in Petaluma.

Here's my contact information if anyone on the Planning Commission would like to request of the City staff and/or consultants to collaborate and obtain accurate information for our City of Petaluma General Plan Update.

Susan Kirks

[REDACTED]
Naturalist, Paula Lane Action Network
President, Madrone Audubon, Sonoma County