

PUBLIC COMMENT – Kirks – Posted 05 09 24

I am resubmitting this comment, per your request. Please post to the CAC online agenda upon receipt. Please ensure the attachment, which reflects the Paula Lane Wildlife Inventory, accompanies my comment. Please provide this updated comment to each Climate Action Commissioner as well.

I'd also like to note, for larger context, the two framework items that should be brought before the CAC first, given that Environment and Equity, were the lenses through which all other Elements were to be viewed and integrated, would be

Natural Environment

Health, Equity, Environmental Justice

Why is the Senior Advisory Committee reviewing Health, Equity, Environmental Justice on Thursday morning at their meeting?

Why isn't the CAC reviewing this Element?

Please observe how lengthy the Transportation section is the CAC will be reviewing, compared to the paucity of information, much of it inaccurate, in the Natural Environment section.

My experience with this relates to the City Council appointment of GPAC members, many of whom have little to no environmental experience, and denying appointments to applicants, or at least one, whose environmental contributions to Petaluma, Sonoma County and our Region were needed in order to craft a solid framework for at least one of the two highest priorities.

This makes the General Plan Update work rag-tag and incomplete. Yes, transportation and transit are important, but every other Element, especially the two highest priorities, is equally important.

Also, please note the people-centered, "we are so great" theme carried with the General Plan Update process - the constant compliments of how special Petaluma is. We will only be special if we bring substantive, solid information, are inclusive and rely on actual experts in various areas and fields, and make ourselves smaller in the larger context of the Natural Environment and Health, Equity, Environmental Justice.

To achieve this, we need elected officials who are leaders and make appointments to commissions and committees who are community servants and leaders in the areas of the actual General Plan Update process. This includes some of us who were present and participated in every meeting of the current General Plan 2025 update process years ago.

Our community deserves better.

Susan Kirks

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** Susan Kirks <[susankirks@sbcglobal.net](mailto:susankirks@sbcglobal.net)>

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**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 at 03:21:36 PM PDT

**Subject:** Public Comment - May 7, 2024 - Agenda Item 3

Dear Members of the Climate Action Commission,

I remain very concerned about paucity of information related to Natural Environment, one of two identified cornerstones of the General Plan Update process. The other is Equity.

The GPAC's approach to our Environment has not been holistic or comprehensive, but a compilation of a lot of information combined with consultants who appear to have searched the internet to try and formulate information about Petaluma's Natural Environment.

I've endeavored to contribute to almost every CAC meeting from the beginning on the area of our Environment, Habitat Protection, Species who rely on our habitat areas, and wildlife corridors - my areas of specialty from 24 years of direct involvement in environmental life here in Petaluma. As the General Plan is updated, the climate crisis is specifically related to our next several years of community life and planning for our future.

I'm unable to attend your meeting on May 7 due to participating in a regional 3-day meeting Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The inability to contribute to meeting input by Zoom

continues to limit what I believe is valuable input to you and other Commissions and Committees.

Following is my input on agenda item 3:

### **May 9, 2024 - Staff Report - P. 4 - "Natural Resources"**

Existing Conditions - Natural Resources

Why isn't this section entitled Natural Environment or

Natural Environment - Parks, Parks with Habitat, Open Space

Parks with active recreational amenities would not be included in this assessment. Parks with habitat and species would be included in this description. Total # of acreage as well as locations within Petaluma, south, east, west or north, could be included.

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Open Space or parks with conservation easements, including Paula Lane, should be described in another group.

The 953 acres description of City-owned and privately owned open space appears to refer to the non-built environment. This is too nebulous and, instead, the actual open land with described types such as grassland, should be quantified in east, west, north and south quadrants and then a total # of acres given. Privately owned open space is not relevant unless there is no development potential. The approach here should instead be identifying via the Natural Environment where the actual natural features and species are and how a whole picture of open space can then be calculated.

The Urban Separator description is adequate.

### **Existing Conditions: Biological Resources**

The CA Department of Fish and Wildlife has often instructed that the CNDDDB can be accessed as a resource, but cannot be a sole or often even reliable resources. The consulting group or whomever has been working on trying to put together the Natural Environment section, including Biological Resources, is failing in a significant way.

The reference to 14 special status plant and animal species within the Petaluma Planning Area is incorrect. On the Paula Lane conserved open space land alone, 14 special status species have been identified. American Badger is one of these and a critically important keystone species for grassland and coastal prairie ecosystems. The only badger sanctuary in California, conserved with a large Open Space public funds investment, advocated for and achieved by Paula Lane Action Network, is in West Petaluma. This needs to be included in the General Plan Natural Environment or Natural Resources discussion.

One reason it's not is the intentional avoidance by the City Management of the open space land on Paula Lane. The City has destroyed habitat and caused displacement of the badgers from their habitat, specifically, the adult female badger from her natal territory. I have been focused on a property title transfer from the City of Petaluma to a qualified entity for the last few years and continue on that path, as it is both necessary and also what is optimal for the City of Petaluma. The sanctuary still exists in Petaluma and would only mean 11 acres of open space less in the City's property totals, but would literally mean restoration and environmental protection plus provision of an amenity of a Nature Preserve promised to the community.

Petaluma Wetlands Alliance should be asked to provide the list of special status species at Alman Marsh, Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek. There are multiple.

The reference to California Red-legged Frog and California Tiger Salamander is in need of significant adding.

Friends of the Petaluma River and United Anglers should be asked to provide any special status fish species in the "Petaluma Planning Area."

There are more than two areas of critical habitat in the Petaluma Planning Area and accurately identifying species will help guide the connection to areas of critical habitat.

Description of the wetland ecosystems fails to mention habitat for birds - which is critically important and needs expansion.

The description, once again, of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor leaves me shaking my head. The Sonoma Land Trust has no expertise related to the Petaluma environment, species or species movement. The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor is a small corridor (which has received quite a bit of attention related to grant funding and reporting) that serves the Sonoma Valley.

Is the Sonoma Valley the Petaluma Valley? I hope the response to that is obvious.

The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor serves a small area of southeast Sonoma County and has the potential to connect to the eastern area of Sonoma County moving northward to the Mayacamas Mountains.

In Petaluma Valley, we have six identified and documented wildlife corridors. My wildlife corridor 3-part series documents these corridors, and Petaluma Valley is, in fact, geographically located to facilitate connections to Marin County, to southeast Sonoma County, to West Sonoma County, to north Sonoma County, and to the Sonoma County coast via West Petaluma.

I have offered to share and explain this information with the consultants and staff, but it's my impression, because of the City's terrible actions and situation with the Paula Lane open space land, they do not want to acknowledge or engage with my depth of expertise, accrued through direct observations and network reporting over 24 years. The understanding of our Petaluma Valley habitat areas and natural movement patterns of wildlife, including American Badger and Mountain Lion, over these years have resulted in the ability to document wildlife corridors.

In addition, the Petaluma Valley wildlife corridors, not the Sonoma Valley wildlife corridor, connects to the larger Blue Ridge-Marin segment of the macro mapping Critical Linkages regional wildlife movement mapping.

If your Climate Action Commission believes the Petaluma Valley Wildlife Corridors should be included in the General Plan Update - Natural Environment section, I encourage you to request that.

The Sonoma County and Marin County wildlife corridors mapping project is one of the 30x30 projects listed on the Together Bay Area (regional open space coalition) website for Sonoma County projects, seeking grant funding. The Petaluma Valley corridors portion, part 1 of the 3-part series, is complete in rough form.

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The slide presentation you will see on Thursday evening appears to reflect the information contained in the staff report.

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If we are to evaluate and share in the General Plan Update a holistic view of our Natural Environment, with an ability to understand natural areas of Petaluma and the ability for members of the public to appreciate our Natural Environment and help to protect it, the approach to this part of the General Plan Update ***must be different***.

For Natural Environment Goals, I implore your Commission to consider and support the following instead of what has been presented, and to request a work group of the GPAC be activated to re-work this important contextual part of our Petaluma life.

ENV-5 Native American Heritage

should be

ENV-1 Indigenous History and Connections

ENV-2 Healthy, Protected and Productive Natural Lands

should be changed to

ENV-2 Protected Habitat, Open Space and Wildlife Corridors

ENV-4 Green Infrastructure

should be

ENV-3 Restoration and Enhancement, Green Infrastructure

ENV-4 should be Water Resources, Health and Conservation

ENV-1 Community Integrated With Nature

should be

ENV-5 Community Support of Nature

Thus,

**ENV-1: Indigenous History and Connections**

**ENV-2: Protected Habitat, Open Space and Wildlife Corridors**

**ENV-3: Restoration and Enhancement, Green Infrastructure**

**ENV-4: Water Resources, Health and Conservation**

**ENV-5: Community Support of Nature**

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ENV-1 Indigenous History and Connections

Document and include Coast Miwok and Pomo history of land and relevant information to support protection and awareness of historical lands and connections, as well as approaches to care for the Natural Environment.

ENV-1.1 - Consult with and learn from local Indigenous tribes.

ENV-1.2 - Provide appropriate historic education in environmental areas.

ENV-2 Protected Habitat, Open Space and Wildlife Corridors

ENV-2.1 Document and protect habitat areas and species

ENV-2.2 Document and conserve open and green spaces, seeking connectivity where possible

ENV-2.3 Preserve and monitor Petaluma Valley Wildlife Corridors

ENV-3: Restoration and Enhancement, Green Infrastructure

ENV-3.1: Support restoration of natural areas based on habitat and species documentation and needs.

ENV-3.2: Enhance natural areas as appropriate to support habitat and species, sequester carbon, and provide community amenities.

ENV-3.3: Support green infrastructure in the built environment.

ENV-4: Water Resources, Health and Conservation

ENV-4.1: Support bank stabilization of river and creeks, prevent erosion and runoff

ENV-4.2: Protect water quality and health of river and creeks.

ENV-4.3: Prevent pollution and pollutant discharge.

ENV-4.4: Support sustainable development and conservation.

ENV-4.5: Enact and maintain green infrastructure throughout Petaluma.

#### ENV-5: Community Support of Nature

ENV-5.1: Encourage and support community involvement in neighborhood and area natural restoration and enhancement.

ENV-5.2: Support community groups and nonprofit organizations in stewardship and care for natural areas.

ENV-5.3: Seek conservation expertise and integrate into ongoing restoration and enhancement of natural areas, open and green spaces, and habitat/species protections.

I hope this input is useful for your Commission's deliberation.

Susan Kirks

Naturalist, Paula Lane Action Network

President, Madrone Audubon, Sonoma County