

C R A H T A C

County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee

New Statement of Purposed and Intent, Goal and Objectives: *The Plan lacks clear goals and objectives that identify the importance of parks, open space, recreation and trails and that strongly promote acquisition and development of such public facilities. Without measureable objectives, it will be difficult to determine the effective implementation of the Plan.*

Direct P&D staff to insert the following into the revised draft Gaviota Coast Plan:

Purpose and Intent: The County recognizes that provision of new parks, open space, trails and recreational opportunities is a key element of the Gaviota Coast Plan and that the level of such improvements should reflect this Planning Area's National, State and County significance as a recreational resource. Outdoor recreation is an important activity for residents of our County and for countless visitors that fosters an appreciation of the natural world and promotes public health and welfare. While trails, open space and parks must be sensitively designed to respect agriculture and biological resources, they are a Coastal Act priority use and a high priority for the County. As a high priority, these types of improvements must be actively pursued.

Goal: Protect existing public access and actively promote expansion of recreation, open space, coastal access and trails along the Gaviota Coast as a high priority.

Objective: Substantially increase opportunities for the provision of public trails and open space within the Gaviota Planning Area, including completion of the California Coastal Trail, well planned coastal vertical access points, and foothill trails, located on both public and private lands.

Action Item: The County shall strive to complete the following improvements by 2025:

1. Acquire near shore bluff top easements for the California Coastal Trail from the Bacara Hotel to El Capitan State Beach, and develop and open the CCT throughout this reach. ✓
2. Work with California State Parks and the California Coastal Commission to reopen the closed segment of the existing Class I bikeway that links El Capitan and Refugio State Beaches. ✓
3. Acquire and develop at least two coastal access points along the east end of the Plan area at Dos Pueblos Ranch, Edwards Point, Santa Barbara Ranch or Paradiso del Mare. ✓
4. Work with California State Parks to develop and open a three- mile-long bluff top segment of the California Coastal Trail, south of US Hwy 101, from Gaviota State Park east to the Gaviota Marine Terminal. ✓
5. Develop at least one major coastal access point and associated public improvements along the west end of the coast at Arroyo Hondo or Gaviota Marine Terminal. ✓
6. Acquire easements for and develop at least two foothill trails that link coastal areas to public lands in the Los Padres National Forest on the east and west ends of the Coast. ✓
7. Work with Caltrans, the Union Pacific Railroad and interested organizations to complete a Transportation Corridor Plan to address public access issues and ensures that all future improvements to these facilities accommodate and foster public coastal access. ✓

New Policies: *The Plan lacks policies that support trails and recreation: Add policies to the Draft Gaviota Coast Plan to commit the County to actively support recreation and trails, to defend public access, to address location of the Coastal Trail, to protect existing parking, to guide acquisition and management of trails and open space, and to govern US 101 and UPRR improvements.*

Direct P&D staff to insert the following into the revised draft Gaviota Coast Plan:

Policy REC-1: The County shall actively promote expansion of public trails, coastal access and recreational opportunities within the Gaviota Planning Area through the use of its regulatory authority, incentives and other tools. For all pending private and public development projects with planned or existing recreational uses, the County shall use the environmental and planning review process to fully explore options for new trails, coastal access and parking, and ways to promote their acquisition and development. ✓

Policy REC-2: The County shall protect and defend the public's right to access to and along the shoreline, including the active pursuit of the acquisition and development of a near shore alignment of the California Coastal Trail and planned coastal access points. Consistent with adopted State policy, the California Coastal Trail along the Gaviota Coast shall be located "as close as physically and aesthetically feasible to the shoreline" and "within the sights and sounds of the Pacific Ocean", generally shoreward of both the Union Pacific Railroad and US Hwy 101 wherever physically feasible. ✓

Policy REC-3: Existing free roadside parking on county roads and US 101 are key to public use and enjoyment of the Gaviota Coast and shall be protected. Blocking off such areas or posting of no parking signs shall be strictly limited.

Policy REC-4: All improvements to the US Hwy 101, Union Pacific Rail Road and County roads shall be designed to protect and expand public access to and along the coast. The County shall prepare a Transportation Corridor Plan to govern all future improvements to US Hwy 101, the UPRR and County roads along the Gaviota Coast. ✓

Policy REC-5: All future purchases of open space on the Gaviota Coast using public funds shall include public trails and access as a priority use; opportunities for public review of and input into the management and recreational use of such open spaces areas shall be provided. ✓

Acquisition Tools: *The draft Gaviota Coast Plan lacks tools to ensure acquisition of trails and open space. Placement of lines and designations on a map will not alone accomplish these goals. The Gaviota Coast Plan needs to provide a mix of regulatory exaction tools (e.g., rezones, home size restrictions, building envelope limitations, specific plans, development standards) and incentives (increased home size, limited increased density, increased building envelope sizes) in exchange for dedication of open space or trail easements. The County has regularly used such restrictions to provide for environmental protection and to achieve policy goals. These tools have applicability for many sites or parcels in the Plan area, but are strongly recommended for Las Varas Ranch. These changes should be “initiated” by the Planning Commission as part of the hearing process to acquire some force of law and be included in EIR.*

[Direct P&D staff to investigate and draft a mix of land use regulations and incentives to ensure acquisition of coastal open space and/ or easements for a near shore alignment of the California Coastal Trail on the Las Varas Ranch as follows:](#)

Las Varas Ranch: *Initiate a Specific Plan overlay on Las Varas Ranch that mandates that the 108 acre coastal bluffs south of the UPRR be retained as rural open space either for use as grazing land, habitat preservation or acquisition as public open space. Existing bluff top development potential (2 units) shall be transferred to inland portions of the ranch at the rate of 2 to 1 (up to 4 units). Include a set of development standards to ensure near shore location of the Coastal Trail, public coastal access, habitat restoration, etc. Initiate a rezone to clustered agricultural zoning only if required to implement a specific plan. *The County has planned the bluff tops at Las Varas Ranch for public acquisition for 30 years and the Gaviota Coast Plan is the County’s best opportunity to achieve this long held goal while compensating the property owner through development transfer.**

Home Size Restrictions: *An alternate approach would be to place a building/ use envelope (e.g., 1 acre) and home size restrictions (e.g., 2,500 square feet) on the bluff top areas in order to protect sensitive visual resources, Environmentally Sensitive Habitats and sensitive archaeological resources. The County could permit larger building envelopes and increased homes sizes only upon demonstration that potential impacts have been substantially mitigated and contingent upon receipt of the public benefits of dedications of easements for the Coastal Trail and access. *The use of such limitations in development size and intensity, and the easing of such restrictions upon provision of public benefits is a standard widely employed planning tool. The County, using home size restrictions in the communities of Summerland and Montecito (Floor to Area Ratios), has regularly reduced development potential on properties (e.g., downzones) due to constraints, but has permitted increases to gain community benefits if impacts can be successfully addressed. The County has done this in Goleta and through the Housing Element to acquire the community benefit of increased affordable housing, and in Orcutt to acquire open space.**