

Letter to the Editor
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Open Space Plan Update

Dear Editor,

According to a brief report from Planning Director Bret Sampson at the end of the August 14 Planning Commission meeting, staff will be bringing forward their proposed update to the County's Open-Space Plan "sometime in October" in order to meet the statutory deadline.

California Government Code Section 65565.5 states, "(a) Every city and county shall review and update its local open-space plan by January 1, 2026. The update shall include plans and an action program, as required by Section 65564, that address all of the following:

- (1) Access to open space for all residents... correlated with the environmental justice element or environmental justice policies in the general plan, as applicable.
 - (2) Climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, correlated with the safety element.
 - (3) Rewilding opportunities, correlated with the land use element.
- (b) For purposes of this section, "rewilding opportunities" may include, but are not limited to, the following:
- (1) Opportunities to preserve, enhance, and expand an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics.
 - (2) Establishing a natural communities conservation plan...

Deputy County Counsel Julie Moss-Lewis was quick to remind commissioners that they must approve an update for adoption at least a month before January 1, because the update will only go into effect 30 days after it is adopted by the supervisors. A pretty short window for an update which planning staff have been aware of for years.

Director Sampson let the commissioners know that they would have to work hard, but not for long. "We're definitely doing a triage attempt." Sampson wants to get "back to state standards, to an even playing field." That must mean he thinks the County currently has an adequate open space plan which a quick fix can update to include an action plan that will provide environmentally just access to open space, preserve open space ecosystem services that benefit public safety, and create rewilding opportunities that don't conflict with the land use element. He continued, "It won't be a comprehensive update, obviously." Obviously.

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