

Land Use, Planning and Development Guidelines; Open Space, Natural Resources and the Environment

Land use, planning and development guidelines in support of maintaining and preserving the desired “mountain and rural” character of the residential and commercial land uses. Public support for the maintenance of open space.

The ecosystem and management and/or utilization of renewable and non-renewable resources supplied by nature. Physical conditions, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, noise and sometimes selected artifacts.

Land management activities are regulated by a number of different local, state and federal agencies. The county has adopted a General Plan which designates particular uses for all the land in the county. Zoning for one particular use may prohibit other types of uses. Each zone has a primary allowable or permitted use, and a secondary set of uses which may be allowed only with the issuance of a special or conditional use permit by the Planning Department.

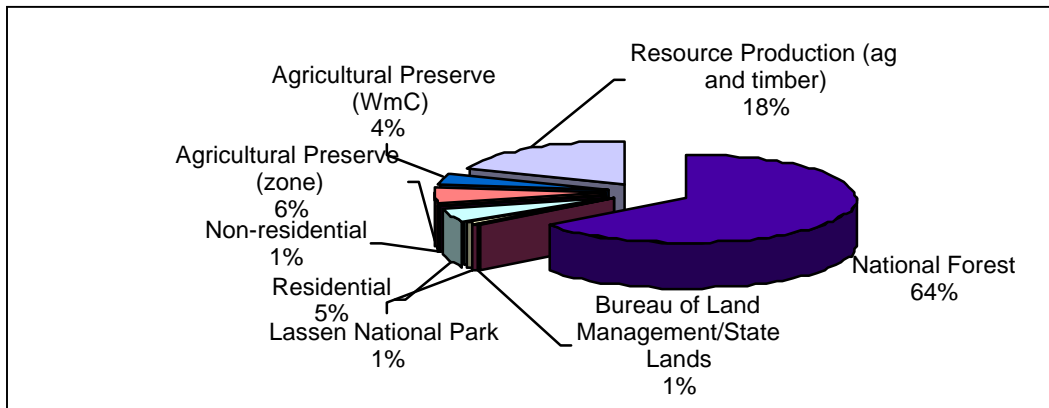
Several zones have been created expressly to protect production-based land uses. Lands zoned for agriculture or forest uses have minimum parcel sizes – typically some amount over 80 acres – and restrict the uses an number of dwellings that may be constructed.

Agricultural and Timber Preserve and Production Zones are designated to encourage long term production from these lands by allowing landowners to trade their rights to use their property in other ways in exchange for a tax advantage.

Since livestock may cause water quality problems in streams running through grazing lands, landowners who graze livestock must develop a plan to comply with the Clean Water Act, which is administered by the State Water Resources Board.

As can be seen in Chart 1, most of the land in the county is national forest land (64%). Most of the rest is in agricultural or resource production (28%). Only 5% is residential.

Chart 1: Total County Acreage



Source: California Department of Finance, *Population Projections by Ethnicity, 1990 – 2040*. Planning Department Documents.

Most of Plumas County is timber land(87.25%). Furthermore, 94% is for natural resources, including significant wetlands, agricultural, timber and mining. Just five percent of the land is set aside for residential use, including multiple residential, single family, prime expansion, suburban, agricultural buffer, secondary suburban, rural, and limited opportunity areas. Less than 1% is commercial. (Plumas County Planning Documents.)

The Pacific Crest Trail runs the length of the county along the crest of the Sierra Nevada. When complete, it is intended to allow one to complete the journey under maximum possible natural environmental conditions. The vast majority of the trail in Plumas County runs through public lands and is under the jurisdiction of the US Forest Service.

Also of importance for planning purposes is the population forecast, showing that while the county population grew 5.6% in the last ten years, it is estimated to grow 28% in the next twenty.

A. The Management of the Ecosystem

Plumas County has three National Forests covering about 60% of the county, and can be describes as a rural, mountain, recreational area. Of the 1,644,800 acres in the county, a substantial portion is related to the abundance of natural resources. As stated earlier, the National Forests have a substantial impact on regional sales figures. They bring 6.1 million visitor days to Plumas National Forest, which is popular for camping, summer sports, fishing, and nature study. Due to weather conditions and the number of forests, the fire hazard is rated either “very high” or “high” in 80% of the county.

The number of acres in Williamson Act agricultural land preservation contracts has held steady at over 82,000 acres since 1990. However, over 94% of cropland and pasture is

unprotected from conversion to other uses, as is over 95% of montane riparian habitat, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Plumas County Habitat Types and Percent Unprotected

Habitat Type	Square Miles	Percent Inprotected	Habitat Type	Square Miles	Percent Unprotected
Pasture	50.4	97.2%	Lodgepole Pine	10.8	30.4%
Cropland	14.9	93.8%	Sierran Mixed Conifer	1168.4	25.3%
Montane Riparian	7.4	96.0%	Douglas Fir	51.3	25.8%
Orchard and Vineyard	15.0	84.7%	Ponderosa Pine	89.1	22.7%
Blue Oak Woodland	0.0	0.0%	Montane Chaparral	142.9	22.1%
Bitterbrush	2.5	74.7%	Montane Hardwood-Conifer	4.4	27.0%
Lacustrine	55.5	77.7%	Jeffrey Pine	371.9	20.7%
Wet Meadow	25.4	68.0%	Red Fir	155.1	11.6%
Sagebrush	170.7	45.8%	Montane Hardwood	26.1	24.0%
Blue-Oak Pine	1.9	52.9%	Mixed Chaparral	23.0	18.4%
Low Sage	20.4	49.9%	Barren	5.8	19.8%
Annual Grassland	11.0	27.1%	Sub alpine Conifer	2.4	0.3%
Eastside Pine	63.1	35.1%	Juniper	3.7	6.0%
White Fir	111.3	32.7%	Closed-Cone Pine-Cypress	0.0	0.0%

Source: Sierra Business Council. *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index 1999-2000 Edition*.

B. Endangered Species

Recently, the Plumas National Forest has had to ensure that all timber sales meet guidelines designed to maintain the viability of the California Spotted Owl as well as fur bearing animals. There are a number of animals and plants on the endangered and sensitive species, according to the Endangered Species Act.

Endangered animals: Bald eagle, peregrine falcon
 Sensitive animals: Goshawk, California spotted owl, great gray owl, fisher, Sierra Nevada red fox, pine marten, willow flycatcher
 Sensitive plants: Arabis constancei, astragalus lentiformis, astragalus webberi, fritillaria eastwoodiae, ivesia aperta, ivesia baileyi, ivesia sericuleuca, ivesia webberi, lewisia cantelowii, lubinus dalesiae, penstemon personatus, sedum albomar ginatum, senecio eurycephalus var. lewisrosei, silene invisiva, and vaccinium coccinium.

In addition, the State of California has classified the following species found in Plumas County as endangered or threatened:

Endangered: Bald eagle, peregrine falcon, great gray owl
 Threatened: Greater sandhill crane, Sierra Nevada red fox, wolverine.

C. Air Quality

Plumas County is in the Mountain Counties Air Basin. It has enacted an agreement with the Northern Sierras Air Quality Management District for air pollution monitoring on an as-needed basis or at public request. In January 1991, air quality in the region exceeded National Ambient Air Standards for particulate matter for the first time (in other words, the air was clearly polluted with particulates). The single largest percentage of pollutants emitted into the air is caused by residual smoke from wood burning fireplaces during the cold winter months. In 1994, according to the General Plan, Plumas County was in “non-attainment” for particulate matter by virtue of exceeding standards on nine measurement days. The number dropped, according to the Sierra Business Council’s Sierra Nevada Wealth Index, from 14 days to three days per year in 1994 – 1997. However, ozone pollution is low: the state standard was exceeded only one day in the past eight years. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, in 1998, Plumas County has met air quality standards for carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and lead.

Community Input

Residents of each community in the county participated in community meetings or completed surveys which were tabulated separately for adults and teens. At the community meetings, each participant was asked to name key issues in fourteen areas and then to prioritize their top five local and top three countywide priorities, by using red dots for local and blue dots for countywide priorities. Therefore the number of times an item was mentioned in a community meeting would not match the number of dots. Respondents to the surveys were asked to comment on each of the fourteen areas and to set three priorities for local and countywide improvements. The survey totals show the number of times a topic was commented upon in a survey. Each respondent had several opportunities to comment on each area and generally took that opportunity. The number does not address the range of comments within a topic, for instance, “log” and “don’t log” or simply the comment “yes.” The “total” column adds up all the dots, participants and responses from the surveys. Each response was counted and reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Input about Environment and Land Use, Planning and Development Guidelines from Community Meetings and Adult and Teen Surveys, by Community

	Community Meetings			Adult Survey	Teen Surveys	Total
	Red	Blue	#			
Chester/Lake Almanor	48	51	93	106	130	428
Indian Valley	21	15	34	58	3	131
Mohawk Valley	53	43	63	193	4	507
Portola	49	42	93	114	36	334
Quincy	59	14	49	79	306	334

Table 3 shows the number of responses in the subtopics mentioned most frequently in the area of environment and land use, planning and development guidelines, by community and type of input. They are listed in the order of most frequently mentioned, from most frequently to least.

Table 3: Most Frequently Raised Issues within Environment and Land Use, Planning and Development Guidelines by Community and Type of Input

CM = Community Meetings T = Teen Surveys A = Adult Surveys	Total			Chester/Lake Almanor			Indian Valley			Mohawk Valley			Portola			Quincy		
	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T
Land Use, Planning and Development Guidelines	170	153	33	20	30	25	44	22	1	44	54		37	27	7	25	20	
Protect water	68	40	25	25	5	5	1	7		19	14		23	9	1		5	19
Protect environment	58	115	15	10	16	6	1	11		17	34	3	21	33	3	9	21	3
Protect forest	45	59	70	14	13	25	7	11		16	20		7	9	6	1	6	39
Don't deplete natural resources	30	52	17	5	17	2	5	8		12	14	1	4	6	2	4	7	12
Keep open space/meadows	44	45	10	10	9	10	4	11		2	14		18	4		10	7	
Support QLG	24	15	39	12			6	2		6	4						9	39
Use natural resources	28	25	3	11	2	3	3	3		7	9		4	3		3	8	
Environmental recreation	30	10	10	22	3	7	1	1		2	3		5	2	2		1	1
Controlled growth	19	17	8	7	1		1	2		1	9		8	4		2	1	8
Agriculture, ranching, mining	22	12	9	1				4		3	4		8	3	3	10	1	6
Its good/don't change	0	20	17		6	13					10				3		4	1
Log	8	19	8	1	5			2		7	3			3			6	8
Protect wildlife	6	10	3	1	2	3		2		1	1		4	4			1	
No roadless areas	12	3	2	9		2		1		1			1	1		1	1	
Stop/limit wood burning	11	5	0							11	3			1			1	

Detail of categories in Table 2:

- Land use, planning and development guidelines: Mention of any planning type action – zoning, Master Plan, population density, beautification.. Please note that comments about controlled growth were separately tallied.
- Protect water: including streams, rivers, lakes, water supply, preventing erosion. This includes banning certain recreation from lakes.
- Protect environment: including specific reference to environment, or air.
- Protect forest: this includes fire protection, tree protection, thinning, cleaning brush.
- Don't deplete natural resources: this includes the sustainable use of resources.
- Keep open space: this includes meadows.
- Support QLG: this specifically refers to the Quincy Library Group plan.
- Use natural resources: this includes using timber, water, fish, etc. Usually it also implies sustainable use.
- Environmental recreation: this includes non-invasive forms of recreation: nature hikes, fishing, etc.
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- Controlled growth: this includes specific mention to controlling or limiting growth.
- Agriculture, ranching, mining: this includes any mention of these activities in terms of preserving, maintaining and supporting them.
- Its good/don't change: this includes comments that all is well.
- Log: this includes all comments that logging should be allowed, without provisos specifically to protect the forests.
- Protect wildlife: this includes habitats and specific reference to wildlife.
- No roadless areas: this refers to access to public lands and the need to extend it.
- Stop/limit the causes of smoke: this includes pollution caused by burning trash, pine needles and old technology wood-burning fireplaces.

Sources

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